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Videogames, distinction and subject-English: new paradigms for pedagogy

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Abstract

At a time when the proliferation of videogame ownership and practice has led to greater attention on the consequences of increased engagement with these texts, schools and educators are engaged in active debate regarding their potential value and use. The distinctive nature of these texts, especially in contrast to those texts which have traditionally dominated school environments, has raised questions about their possible affordances, as well as the pedagogies most appropriate for supporting teaching with and through these texts in the classroom. While much has been written about the learning benefits of videogames, especially in terms of opportunities for the negotiation of self (Gee, 2003), there has been less research addressing the impact of applying existing English subject-specific pedagogies to their study. In particular, there are few case-study investigations into the suitability of subject-English classrooms for the play and study of videogames.

The project utilised a naturalistic case-study intervention involving eight 15-year-old students at a co-educational school in the outer-Northern suburbs of Melbourne. Data was collected during a five-week intervention in an English classroom context at the participants' home-school. This involved the teacher-researcher leading a series of learning and teaching activities informed by dominant models of subject-English (Cox, 1989), Cultural Heritage, Skills, Personal Growth, and Critical Literacy, that focussed on several popular videogames. Data was analysed using Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) to reveal a social reality at the centre of this intervention co-created by a dialectical relationship between the habitus of students (especially in terms of their videogame, school and gendered identities) and the field of the classroom, with its own historically constituted and legitimised/authorised ways of being and doing textual study, as realised by the teacher. Mediating this relationship were the intrinsic features of videogames.

The findings are presented through a *Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English* which synthesises the relationship concerning past and present approaches to textual study in the subject, and the need to embrace what Locke terms, an "informed and critical eclecticism" (2015, p. 25). Firstly, the study found that the inclusion of videogames in subject-English provided the material for rich, rigorous and authentic learning experiences. Much of this can be achieved through the appropriation of existing paradigms of subject-English and their associated pedagogical practices, resisting the privileging of any single component of the framework and instead encouraging an awareness of the different purposes which each part serves. Secondly, analysis demonstrated the ways in which dominant approaches to the subject must evolve in response to the unique design features and intrinsic textual practices associated with these texts. Lastly, the study revealed that

attempts to bring these texts into English classrooms will need to negotiate the disciplinary forces which organise these spaces, in terms of both the habitus of students, and the historically constituted structures which establish what is possible in such places.

This work contributes to the field of research examining videogame literacies in classrooms, especially in terms of the impact of bringing technologies typically engaged for entertainment into subject-English learning contexts. The study suggests that future research is needed to test the efficacy of the Framework, and to identify ways for teachers to respond to inevitable developments in the design features of videogames so that current and future iterations of videogames can be incorporated into schools for rigorous learning and teaching.

Declaration Page

This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- (iii) the thesis is fewer than 100 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices as approved by the RHD Committee.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Pocock', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Contexts

1.1 Introduction

“There is no way out of the game of culture” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 12).

This chapter introduces the key ideas which have informed the study, focussing on changes in textual practice as a result of technological developments, and how this relates to school-based literacies developed within subject-English contexts. The three research questions are then discussed, followed by a detailed description of the contexts which have informed the issues at the centre of each question. Subsequent to this, a summary of the study’s research design is offered, establishing the naturalistic case study approach taken, as well as a brief account of the nature of the intervention adopted for this project. The chapter concludes by providing an outline of the thesis structure, briefly detailing the focus of each section of the report.

Learning from Pac-Man

In 1982, during the very early years of the mass production and consumption of videogames¹, Bowman (1982) used the game Pac-Man to offer a critique of modern schooling. The critique was important because it utilised what would now be considered a rudimentary and simple videogame to contrast the learning and teaching observed during the playing of this game, and the learning and teaching believed to characterise education at the time. Bowman’s analysis included comparisons between the way traditional schooling required learners to learn at one pace with little control, and the way Pac-Man players controlled how much they played and when. He also found that unlike the passive absorption of information occurring at the same pace regardless of achievement in classrooms, Pac-Man encouraged the player to be actively engaged in quick and varied activity which took place at a pace appropriate to the individual. In essence, Bowman was drawing his audience’s attention to the learning affordances he recognised in videogames which existed in contrast to those found in institutionalised learning. In an age of rapid technological development, and the integration of many of these new devices and practices into mainstream schooling, Bowman’s concerns are just

¹ The term videogames, as it is referred to throughout this thesis, refers to an artefact in a digital visual medium, which is intended primarily as an object of entertainment, and to provide such entertainment through the employment of one or both of rule-bound gameplay or interactive fiction (Tavinor, 2008).

as relevant today as they were in the 1980s when educational researchers turned their attention to these digital texts.

What counts?

The proliferation of digital technologies throughout the everyday textual practices of young people has had a significant impact on the way that literacy has come to be conceptualised within educational contexts. The New Literacy Studies (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008b; Gee, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Street, 2003) and Multiliteracies movements (Gee, 2009; Kalantzis, Cope, & New London Group., 2000; New London Group, 1996) have questioned traditional approaches to literacy education and argued in favour of more flexible definitions and practices. At a time when communication technologies, characterised by mobile phones, personal computers, the internet, and videogames, are changing the ways that many young people communicate, socialise and connect with the world around them, the focus has shifted to what tools and resources learners require in order to understand the multimodal and digital texts that have come to dominate their lives (Kalantzis et al., 2000). However, attention to this 'new communication order' (Snyder, 2001), epitomised by the coming together of written, oral and audio-visual modalities of human communication into the same electronic system, has not been without challenge.

An ongoing debate continues over what texts are studied in, and legitimised by, schools. This debate has been described by Snyder (2008) as a conflict between conservative forces seeking to preserve 'valued' traditions, and those seeking to prepare children for the demands of the future through the inclusion of popular new-media text-types. The close relationship between literacy and the discipline area of subject-English (Campagna-Wildash, 1994; Green, 1993) has focussed much of this debate around English Teaching and the aims and ambitions of this subject area. Luke and Luke (2001, p. 105) attribute the conservative movement's disdain for new-media text types to adult-anxieties about supposed declining moral, cultural and literacy standards, which are compared to romanticized reminiscences of their own schooling in a previous, mythologized, past. Ognyanova's (2010) analysis of literacy reporting in the mainstream media indicates that whilst academic discourse emphasises new social, technological and critical evaluation skills, the mainstream media stress basic, print-based, competencies. Furthermore, many of those participating in these debates have experienced contrasting paradigms of subject-English. While some have come to understand the subject through a cultural heritage approach, including the enriching and civilising effect of acquiring knowledge associated with 'great' literature (Arnold, 1869; Leavis & Thompson, 1933), others bring views framed by personal growth (Dixon, 1975) and critical studies perspective (Freire, 1972; Morgan & Australian Association for the Teaching of English., 1996) which focus on valuing

students' life-worlds and the critical study of the everyday texts which exemplify these worlds. The result has been the production of divergent discourses similar to those found in the 'Literacy Wars' (Snyder, 2008), and juxtaposing those seeming to represent the past and those representing the future. The struggle over what constitutes legitimate learning and teaching in schools, and the extent to which videogames have a place in education, frequently preferences the voices of adults, silencing young people and the meaningful textual experiences that characterise their lives.

The digital age, of which videogames are but one part, has been responsible for significant social, cultural, and technological change, especially amongst today's youth (Gee, 2007d; Prensky, 2001; Steinkuehler, 2006b). Much of this change has resulted in increased anxiety about the types of texts occupying young people's lives (Beavis, 1998; Donnelly, 1998; Luke & Luke, 2001). Research into the ways that students participate, connect and learn in online environments has often revealed the affordances of such spaces (Coiro et al., 2008b; Gee, 2007c; Squire, 2005) and has more recently concentrated on the pedagogical issues associated with bringing new media texts into school (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 1996). Over thirty years after Bowman's work on Pac-Man, a specialised field of research, captured by the term videogame literacies, has developed focussing primarily on the language and literacy implications of working with videogames in classrooms (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Apperley & Walsh, 2012; Beavis, 2014; Gee, 2012b; Gee & Hayes, 2012; Squire, 2012; Steinkuehler, 2010). The message from this group of academics, to appropriate from the title of a seminal piece of work from the field, is that there is a great deal that videogames can teach us about learning and literacy (Gee, 2003)². Yet, questions remain as to what place, if any, these texts should have in the work teachers do with students within the space of subject-English.

My motivation

By bringing videogames into a Year 10 subject-English classroom for study, I sought to investigate the learning opportunities of working with these texts while negotiating a range of expectations and demands associated with this discipline area. As the growth of digital device ownership amongst my students increased during my early teaching career, I decided that I would not ignore their significance. I began asking questions about the nature of these texts and their influence on young people. How were young people making sense of videogames? What effect were they having on socialisation? Did videogame play involve reading? And if so, what kind? What place did they have in

² While the first edition of Gee's *What videogames have to teach us about learning and literacy* was published in 2003, all subsequent references to this text refer to the revised and updated second edition, published in 2007 by Palgrave Macmillan.

the subject-English classroom? My interest in these initial broad questions was distinctly framed through the lens of a subject-English teacher. I wanted to be able to understand whether there was space within the subject-English classroom to work with these texts, and to explore what this work might look like.

In those early years as a classroom teacher, I observed a disjuncture between deficit models dominating teacher perceptions of student textual practices and a diverse, social and active world of textual activity enjoyed by these same young people. In the schools where I taught, students resisted compulsory reading, yet spent copious time engaging with online fantasy football competitions, comparing results, and making calculated decisions about which players to trade. The ways my students were engaging with videogames, and their associated para-texts³, led me to query the social and cultural influence of these texts on their lives. It was common for students to be found playing videogames on school computers during class or playing networked games against each other in computer rooms at lunch-time. Gaming magazines and sojourns to online gaming forums were frequently the catalyst for much student-talk. I realised that for many of these young people, the traditional novel was not the dominant text-type in their lives.

In 2010, when I began this journey, teacher interest in digital texts was hardly a new phenomenon. Over the years I had attended many practitioner-based subject-English and literacy conferences across Australia and noticed the increasing number of presentations and workshops focussing on multimodal communication and electronic devices. These conferences brought to the fore a modal shift from the page to the screen which was also being explored by literacists (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Snyder & Joyce, 1998) and was taking place within broader debates about the current state of young people and what kinds of literate individuals schools should be creating (Beavis, 1998; Donnelly, 2005; Snyder, 2008). Curricula and policies across Australia were also responding to technological change, through official recognition of the importance of multimodality and digital texts (for example, see The Hobart Declaration (Australian Education Council, 1989), The Adelaide Declaration (Australian Education Council, 1999), The Melbourne Declaration (Australian Education Council, 2008), the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VCAA, 2005), and the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b)). The latter of these curriculum developments, the Australian Curriculum: English⁴, provided the catalyst for extensive reflection about the form and purpose of the subject and how educators might respond to the impact of technology on literacy and schooling (Davies, 2008; Green, 2008; Howie, 2008; Sawyer, 2008; Unsworth, 2008b). The sanctioning of new

³ Paratexts represent a zone between text and off-text, a place of transition and transaction, or on “The fringe of the printed text, which in reality, controls the whole reading” (Lejeune, *in Genette*, 1997).

⁴ Constitutionally and in practice, curriculum development and dissemination had been the purview of State and Territory governments since the arrival of the British in Australia in the late 18th Century.

ways of conceptualising literacy and literacy pedagogy was an invitation to look beyond print-based texts, and address the challenges of bringing new digital texts into schools for study.

Understanding these challenges is at the core of this study's purpose. Developing this understanding involves first focusing on the social reality at the intersection of three phenomena: videogames, identities⁵, and literacy pedagogy. The research questions introduced below focus on what happens in the dynamic space that is the subject-English classroom and the practices produced as a result of playing and studying videogames under the guidance of a teacher. While the field of research has sought to define and articulate videogame literacies⁶ (Beavis, 2014; Burn, 2007; Salen, 2007; Squire, 2008b) and what these literacy practices might look like in modern schools (Apperley & Beavis, 2011; Pelletier, Burn, & Buckingham, 2010), this study expands on previous work by positioning the learning and teaching associated with these texts within a subject area in a manner which recognises the historically constructed nature of such a discipline (Green, 2003; Green, Cormack, & Reid, 2000) and the impact this has on the pedagogy and practice mobilised in such a space. Those who have spent time in schools over the past decade are aware of the increasing presence of digital technologies in classrooms. Exercise books are being replaced with laptops, whiteboards with smartboards, and communities of practice are moving into online spaces. At the same time, the teachers working in these classrooms have been predominantly trained through print-based texts and in print-based pedagogies. When these factors are coupled with a generation of young people who bring to their schooling a repertoire of digitally-inculcated dispositions⁷, the result is the appropriation of ways of 'doing' and 'relating' to texts in social contexts potentially in conflict with traditional classrooms. This study is designed to capture the dispositions of eight students involved in a five-week intervention playing and studying videogames in a subject-English classroom, and the pedagogical practices of one teacher, guided by the research questions below, to analyse and understand the complex social reality where the three phenomena meet.

1.2 The Research Questions

The study is guided by three research questions.

⁵ Identity is referred to in its plural form, identities, so as to recognise the many selves which people enact in their actions in the social world. Through performances of self we see evidence of the identities that are constantly being negotiated and revised as a result of new lifestyle choices and the changing demands of daily choices (Branaman, 2010).

⁶ Videogame literacies incorporate elements of both the design of these digital texts and their practice in social settings. The concept is considered in the plural to recognise the multitude of approaches that have been applied to the playing and studying of videogames, just one example of which is the distinction between reading and writing with videogames versus creating and playing.

⁷ Dispositions refer to habits or tendencies which individuals take on in order to take a position or act within a given context (Bourdieu, 1984). Dispositions incline a person to act in a particular way, and are thus generative.

1. What are the pedagogical issues associated with working with videogames in subject-English classrooms?
2. What are the intrinsic practices associated with videogames which will impact on the study of these texts in subject-English?
3. How does the projective identity capacity of videogames, both inside and outside of subject-English, affect learning and teaching with these texts?

Each is identified below with a brief explanation as to its significance and the ways in which it has guided the study. A more detailed contextualisation of each research question follows, outlining the historical and cultural circumstances which frame their conceptualisation.

Question One: What are the pedagogical issues associated with of working with videogames in subject-English classrooms?

The 'how' of bringing videogames into subject-English classrooms for study remains rich for research. Textual practice is always dependent on the social, cultural and material contexts in which it occurs, and therefore, the playing of videogames outside of schools is a vastly different exercise to playing and studying videogames inside classrooms, not least of all because the context of school classrooms is characterised by objective structures that limit what actions are possible for agents, and which agents disproportionately possess the capabilities to 'play' in such a space. One element which distinguishes subject-English classrooms differently to out-of-school gaming is the presence of a classroom teacher, themselves possessed with their own sense of what constitutes subject-English and what *should* constitute the subject. The impact of pedagogical choices on learning and power-relations between teacher and student has been extensively written about, including issues associated with; learning by doing (Dewey, 1916) language acquisition (Bernstein, 1973), oppression (Freire, 1972), inequality (Apple, 1990), and cultural acquisition (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), to name just a few. What these authors reveal is that pedagogy impacts the experiences students have with these texts, and the meanings they develop.

The movement towards more flexible frameworks to support teachers in their work with multimodal and digital texts has incorporated print and non-print based strategies (Burn, 2016; Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 1996; Zammit & Downes, 2002). However, the speed with which digital devices have entered classrooms, coupled with the wide-spread popularity of these devices, has raised questions about how ready today's teachers are to work with a new generation of technologies and their associated and often unique forms of enactment (Beavis, 2009b; Unsworth, 2008b). Though curriculum policy in the Australian context includes a rhetoric associated

with preparing today's learners for employment and participation in the twenty-first century (ACARA, 2011a; MCEETYA, 2008), it is at the classroom level that teachers must navigate a paths of exploration, experimentation, and struggle as they negotiate the appropriateness of old and new literacy frameworks for working with videogames as text (Jewitt, 2008; Luke & Luke, 2001; Macintyre & Canale, 2009). Research into the pedagogies most appropriate for studying videogames in literacy contexts has already begun to establish how classroom learning and teaching with these texts can utilise the home-literacy practices of students in order to make links to curriculum demands (Apperley & Walsh, 2012; Beavis, 2014; Buckingham & Burn, 2007). Where this study advances the field is in terms of investigating how the application of existing subject-English approaches to the textual study of videogames-as-text impacts on learning and teaching, and developing a sense of the new pedagogies that will be necessary in the future. This merging of current and new approaches to text is crucial as it recognises the disciplinary history of the subject, embedded in the collective memory of teachers and curricula, as well as the innovative practice that will need to be tailored to the specific textual features of videogames.

Question Two: What are the intrinsic practices associated with videogames which will impact on the study of these texts in subject-English?

The first step involved in answering this question involves unravelling the 'doing' of videogames. Not only are videogames framed by other videogames and other texts, including novels and films, but the practice of videogames, the engagement with these texts in such a way that they become more than the binary code which structures them, is also framed by the players, their dispositions, and the characteristics of the social field within which gameplay occurs, and has occurred. This complicates the task of defining videogame practice as it has the potential to be almost anything to anyone given the range of contexts within which gaming takes place. Recent technological advancements have enabled forms of social gaming in ways not seen a decade ago. The ability to engage with these texts in highly social ways, where tyrannies of distance disappear and geographical boundaries become blurred, has been made easier due to access to the internet and changes to the design of games in favour of multiplayer participation. However, the ever-expanding range of videogame genres (Brand, Lorentz, & Matthew, 2014) and the development of new devices on which they are played, means that, as with all texts, they "only derive their social value from the social use that is made of them" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 21). Measuring how long gamers play for and what kinds of games they play is a statistical exercise, which has produced extensive quantitative data (see the Digital Australia 2015 study (Brand & Todhunter, 2015) and the US-based Computer and Videogame Industry study (Entertainment Software Association, 2014)). The challenge which this study responds to is revealing

and understanding the characteristics of the practice of these texts when they are enacted within the social space of a subject-English classroom.

If videogames encourage participation in ways not possible with print-based texts, then this will have implications for classroom-based textual practice. Similarly, if multiplayer gaming, which involves anywhere from two to twenty thousand players working together to achieve common goals, has the capacity to facilitate collaborative learning, then this should be a catalyst for educators to rethink the relationship between texts and social learning. Other practices attributed to videogames, such as play, interactivity, and narrative-based learning, will also be addressed, especially in terms of the potential for informal learning (Gee, 2007d, p. 27), and the types of identity-practice they actualise. This question responds to a gap in the field of research by testing whether the affordances so often cited by those investigating the relationship between learning and videogames (Gee, 2003; Salen, 2008a; Squire, 2003; Squire & Jenkins, 2004) remain active when the context of play shifts to a focus on the study of such texts within educational contexts.

Question Three: How does the projective identity capacity of videogames, both inside and outside of subject-English, affect learning and teaching with these texts?

All deep learning involves identity practice (Gee, 2007d, p. 54). As young people's engagement with videogames has increased, questions have been asked about the types of identity practice associated with this form of textual work. Gee's (2007d) 'Identity Principle' provides a framework with which to explore this question as it targets the interplay between real-world and virtual identities. Gee sees videogames as opportunities for people to project their own values and desires onto virtual characters, a risk-taking act less possible in real-world circumstances where consequences are heightened. The projective identity acts as an interface between one's real world identities and the virtual identity. For Gee, the projected identity is the most important one for understanding the power of games because it makes us think about what we value and our desires. However, despite Gee's extensive explanation of the power of projective identity work, little research has investigated what this might look like in classrooms. The extent to which studying videogames facilitates an interplay between virtual and real-world identities will be examined throughout the study, with a particular interest in the projecting which is afforded, both in terms of students to videogames, and vice-versa.

Gee's ideas on identity practice are important because they allow this research to build on the work that has already been done establishing how a subject such as English develops individual and collective identities (Doecke, 1997; Green, 2008; Green et al., 2000), and focuses on how new media

digital texts similarly contribute to identity practice. This question investigates tensions between identity practice related to the pedagogies of subject-English, themselves the product of a range of paradigms and ideological movements (Cox, 1989; Green, 2003; Locke, 2015; Thompson, 1998), and the tensions associated with identity practice related to engaging with texts.

If we accept the premise that all people carry with them multiple identities which are enacted at different times, in different contexts and for different purposes, then it stands to reason that a multitude of identities will be 'performed', or be 'in-play', when students play and study videogames. The possession of dispositions differently structured for meaningful investment within specific fields, and tied to socially and historically structuring contexts, complicates the practices exhibited by students who are expected to exercise field-specific dispositions they disparately possess, and the conflict this poses to their own sense of self. This research question addresses both the problem young people might face when trying to offer the 'right' type of self, deemed socially and academically appropriate for subject-English contexts, and the potentialities associated with identity play connected to videogames. While the theory associated with Gee's identity principle has been explained in detail (Gee, 2005a, 2007d, 2008), rarely has it been investigated within formal educational contexts. This study explores the concept within a classroom setting, testing the extent to which projective identity work is possible under the guidance of a teacher.

1.3 Contexts

The contexts of the phenomena as constructed by the researcher

The aim with the three research questions described above is to understand a lived experience, albeit partially, subjectively, and momentarily. At the intersection of the research questions lie three phenomena: videogames, identities and pedagogies. Each phenomenon will be unpacked in detail below. The social reality constructed as a result of the teacher-researcher's videogame intervention in a subject-English classroom is dependent on how these phenomena have come to be understood, specifically, by this researcher, and in the context of this study. This focus on contexts is an exercise in revealing the social and historical origins of the language of this study.

This section adopts a process of reflexive historicisation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989) whereby the genealogical descent of the study is revealed through an exposition of ideas, language, and events which combine to construct each phenomena. One benefit of taking this approach is that it goes some way to dealing with the challenge of representations of fields presenting themselves as if they have always characterised that field (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). These representations have

histories. Employing a reflexive sociology is sensitive to the taken for granted assumptions of these representations. As Bourdieu states “beware of words” (1989, p. 51), because though they present themselves as value-neutral, they hide the socio-historical contexts which construct their meaning. The contested nature of key terms and concepts, and the circumstances which have shaped their use are also established, so that the ways these terms have come to be constructed by the researcher and their use throughout this paper is understood.

Historicisation is a tool of the reflexive sociologist. This tool allows the sociologist to escape, to some degree, their own socially-situated relationship to the object they wish to objectivise (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 32). The process of historicisation makes the use of language to (re)produce realities overt and involves positioning the research subject, and the language used to construct the subject, within determinate social spaces and times (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 119). To do this, the objects of study (videogames, pedagogy, and identities) are explicated. This resists the naturalisation of these phenomena and maintains “the rigor of the *construction* of the object” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 51). The examination of the study’s phenomena acts as a weapon against seemingly common sense views of ‘how things are’, and at the same time is cautious not to create new histories, or treat old/current ones with disrespect, maintaining, as Lyotard suggests, a scepticism towards any meta-narratives that seek to make claim over history (1984).

The work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is used prominently throughout this chapter with two purposes in mind. The first purpose is evident above and can be summarised as *Bourdieu for sociological understanding*. It includes the aforementioned historicisation process, but also ways of understanding the social world which focus on the capacity of individuals to participate in such a world. Terms such as field⁸ and habitus⁹ are important for this purpose. The second use of Bourdieu’s work can be called *Bourdieu for understanding culture*. It makes use of the author’s work on forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to interrogate the way some forms of textual and classroom practice have become legitimised at the expense of others.

The context of pedagogy

The practice of pedagogy takes place within ideological frameworks about the function of schooling and the content of curriculum. Notions of schooling have always been tied to ideas about what knowledge and skills, or cultural capital, students should have (Yates & Young, 2010). When placed within the historical structures which have shaped these disputes, it becomes evident that changes

⁸ Field is a term coined by Bourdieu to describe the social world, and its associated social structures, within which an individual plays (Bourdieu, 1989).

⁹ Habitus refers to an individual’s dispositions realised through schemes of perception thought and action (Bourdieu, 1989). These are socialised norms and tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking.

to models of subject-English, and their associated impact on English teaching, are the product of various disparate discourses competing for influence and power. Tracing the history of schooling in Australia, its politicisation, and the shifting paradigms of subject-English demonstrate the genesis of decision-making about texts at the classroom-level.

Debates about the role of modern-schooling

The history of Australian schooling reveals the contested and political nature of such a project. Barcan (2005) paints an epistemic image of curricula shifts in Australia. He begins by identifying the humanist-realist tradition adopted by most states in the early twentieth century, and heavily influenced by Western civilization as far back as the late Roman period. This tradition, captured by the 1964 Australian Teachers' Federation statement identifying 'The Aims of Australian Education' as including: fundamental skills and knowledge, citizenship, ethical characters, and aesthetic appreciation (as cited in Barcan, 2005), was concerned with character, a set of moral values, and mental training, and in the Australian context, was the dominant model until the 1960s. Yates (2011) and Reid (2011) describe how the period of the late 1960s and 1970s were typified by numerous voices calling for change. Emerging women's movements, those calling for the rights of indigenous populations, the influence of educational psychology, 'progressive' educationalists, and calls for alternative or community schools all contributed to debates about schools and the type of future they were building for individuals and for the nation. Likewise, in his analysis of schooling in Australia, Campbell (2007) highlights concerns during this time about the way that the development of public high schools to achieve universal secondary education had failed to solve the problem of the working-class adolescent and the impact this was having on projects of national defence, economic prosperity, and industrial advance. One effect of this anxiety was the production of an array of reports and guidelines, from the 1970s onwards, addressing questions about the purposes of schools and what kind of student development they were aiming to produce (Yates, 2011).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a narrative of progressive education was being articulated and distributed. This was evident in the Australian Teacher's Federation curriculum policy of 1988 listing the essential elements of curriculum provision as:

- The multicultural nature of Australian society
- The pronounced inequality in the distribution of social, economic and political resources and power between social groups
- The role of the economy, the sexual division of labour, the dominant culture and the education systems in reproducing inequality (cited in Barcan, 2005, p. 37)

In more recent times, the 2002 Vinson Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in New South Wales (Vinson, 2002) highlighted changes in Australian Schooling demonstrating how the growing conservative movement was being expressed in terms of discourses of: choice, efficiency, accountability, deregulation and privatisation. Described as glorifying a golden past, lamenting lost traditions, and calling for more discipline and competition, this movement had a significant effect shaping the educational landscape across the globe, including England, the USA, New Zealand and Australia (Apple, 2001, 2004; Barcan, 2005; Luke, 1994). Competing for influence in the educational field, neoliberal forces pushed for the marketisation of schools whilst neoconservative forces pushed for standardised testing and greater regulation of content and behaviour (Apple, 2004). These attempts have been criticised for the way they privileged “old literacy” and “old schooling” deemed inadequate by those calling for a multiliterate and active citizenship for youth (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 172). Those competing for influence over the aims of education represent an example of what Foucault termed “the battle for truth” (1980, p. 74). This battle around the status of truth reveals much about who is sanctioned with saying what counts as true, as well as the systems of power which produce and sustain it. The most recent iteration of this battle has taken place over the nature of the Australian Curriculum, a project which affects the work that all Australian teachers undertake.

Culture and the politicisation of Australian Curriculum

A contemporary example of this ‘battle’ is evident in recent attempts to review the Australian Curriculum. The intense politicisation of the Australian Curriculum was manifest in the decision by the former Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, to review the Australian Curriculum, despite railing against political interference and decrying the negative effects of partisan bias in the development of curricula (Ireland, 2014). The Minister of Education, Christopher Pyne, claimed that the justification for the review was the need for a “modern and relevant curriculum” (2014 para. 4) with a focus on “the knowledge and skills they really need”, a “determination to lift standards”, and a greater recognition of Western civilisation and national events like ANZAC Day (Pyne, 2013 para. 7). Despite clear parallels to neoconservative approaches discussed earlier, the claim by Pyne to “take the politics out of this issue” (Pyne, 2014 para. 5), was immediately contradicted by the appointment of far-right conservatives to head the review. The selection of staunchly conservative voices to review the entire structure and content of the Australian Curriculum, which Australian teachers are required to adhere to, included the selection of Kevin Donnelly, a former advisor to the government, who criticised what he saw as the way contemporary education prepares students to be socially critical or empowered to challenge the status quo (Donnelly, 2004). He condemned the way modern school curricula favoured “Australian history being taught from a politically correct,

black-armband view" (Donnelly, 2006 para. 2), and blamed the supposed failings of Australian education on progressive education, the ideology of the 'left', and the attack of postmodernism (Donnelly, 2004). The second reviewer appointed, Ken Wiltshire, in 2010 described the group which had facilitated the creation of the Australian Curriculum as a "misguided team" who had "botched" the exercise despite the fact it was still being written and revised at this time (Wiltshire, 2010, para. 2). Curriculum developers, he argued, had "fallen prey to the propaganda of the Left", a bunch of "loony nihilistic deconstructionists" uninterested in the study of literature and the richness of language. Wiltshire's attack extended to the "current cohort of teachers...most of whom have never read a good novel themselves", and, not surprisingly, film and computers are partially blamed for this. All of this matters, concluded Wiltshire because "the whole being of our youth is at stake: in other words, the future of our nation" (2013, para. 13). The work of this thesis is similarly implicated in the battle for the future of the nation, and the role of subject-English in constituting 'the whole being of our youth'. Speaking about these ideologies 'out-loud' provides, in a small way, a chance of "knowing what game we play and of minimizing the ways in which we are manipulated by the forces of the field in which we evolve" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 198-199). These battles are important because they determine what culture will be legitimised through reproduction during schooling and the role that teachers will play in disciplinary domains.

The transformations of subject-English and literacy

Pedagogical approaches to subject-English have been shaped by shifts in how both literacy and subject-English have been conceived over time. While the two terms have become conflated (Campagna-Wildash, 1994; Goodwyn, 2003; Green, 2002), an examination of how understandings of each have developed is necessary to frame the pedagogical decisions made throughout this project.

Subject-English has been synthesised into paradigms, or 'models', to capture differences in the way the subject has been theorised over time. The Cox Report (Cox, 1989), a designation for the 1989 English Curriculum for England, described in its introduction five models of English teaching: personal growth, cross-curricular, adult-needs, cultural heritage, and cultural analysis. In the Australian context, four similar, but distinctive approaches have been used to capture the predominant approaches to English, namely: the *Skills* model, the *Growth* model, the *Cultural Heritage* model and the *Cultural Analysis* model (Locke, 2015; Macken-Horarik, 2014; Thompson, 1998; Watson, 1994). Macken-Horarik (2014) offers a brief account of the characteristics of each model. The *Skills* model involves students gaining control of specific skills which tend to have a practical quality. Involving knowledge of language and guided practice, students are apprenticed into mastery of particular competencies, such as: writing an essay, identifying figurative language in a

poem, handling the apostrophe, and correct spelling. The *Cultural Heritage* model is associated with the study of literature and acquisition of knowledge of the canon of texts. With a tradition back to the Nineteenth century, the focus is on the close study of texts which represent the ‘great works’, from authors such as Shakespeare, Yeats and Austen. The *Growth* model, also known as Personal Growth, is tied to the life-worlds of students (Dixon, 1975). It begins with an interest in their experiences, and ways of talking and creating texts. Students’ selves are at the heart of this model, where the classroom comes to represent a language community focussing on personal engagement, often through a privileging of the role of language. Lastly, the *Cultural Analysis* model, also referred to as Cultural Studies or Critical Literacy, has been the most recent addition to English teaching. It is associated with postmodern and poststructural understandings of language and knowledge, and takes the form of classroom practice which scaffolds students to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and adopt a resistant reading position to texts. Figure 1, below, captures some of the practices which typify each of these models.

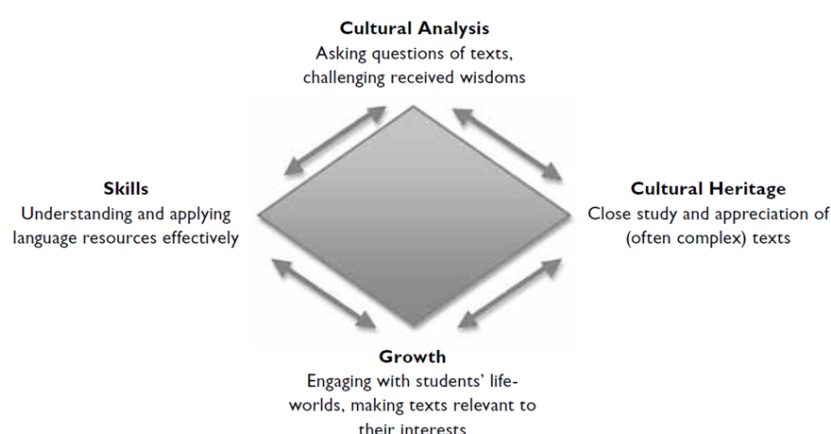


Figure 1: Four models of subject-English (Macken-Horarik, 2014, pg.17)

These models of subject-English¹⁰ are products of history which have become embodied in classroom practice to various degrees. Rather than thinking of subject-English as a value-neutral discipline, they reveal connections between the past, present and future. They also become important throughout this study as a way of reflecting on the pedagogical decision-making associated with intervention activity.

It is difficult to establish precise moments in time when curricula and teacher-practice transitioned from one model to the next, but analysis of the changing state of the field in Australia over the recent past reveals elements of change and continuity. Patterson (2000b), reflecting on the rewriting of syllabi in all states and territories across Australia throughout the 1990s says that pedagogy has

¹⁰ Referenced throughout this paper as: Skills, Personal Growth, Cultural Heritage, and Critical Literacy.

remained mostly the same, a combination of personal expression and moral instruction in a way designed for the management of students populations (p. 298). Green (2002), looking at debates in the state of Queensland over curriculum change identified familiar versions of subject-English being reasserted, namely “a New Age combination of ‘Cultural Heritage’ and ‘Personal Growth’, albeit with a dash of explicit language awareness” (p. 4). Patterson (2008) argues that in the past four decades, the subject has undergone a significant shift from the study of culture, or Cultural Heritage, to cultural studies, or Critical Literacy. These shifts, she continues, are tied to beliefs amongst English teachers about the type of person they want their students to become.

There has also been resistance to the use of models as a means to discuss the pedagogies of the subject. Howie (2005) argues for less strident and more fluid allegiances to particular approaches, suggesting that a plurality of practices is preferable. Likewise, Doecke (2014, 2016) is sceptical of the “pedagogical bandwagons” (2014, p. 97) associated with the use of models, and prefers thinking of the history of the subject in terms of dispositions towards various method and goals. There have also been calls to open up these models in order to include new pedagogies associated with technological developments, including those arguing for a subject-English based pedagogy to facilitate classroom work with digital texts and information and communication technologies (Beavis, 2009a; Green, 2001; Unsworth, 2008b). As Locke (2015) highlights, given the range of factors impacting on an English teacher’s professional knowledge and classroom practice, it is unlikely that a ‘pure’ form of any single model of the subject exists within classrooms. Despite the reductionist nature of the models, they nevertheless capture the most significant approaches to English teaching in the Australian context, all of which are still evident in contemporary classrooms and within current curricula.

The change and continuity characterising subject-English has similarly been wrought upon notions of literacy. What literacy has become is always at the expense of other uses, meanings and practices (Street & Street, 1991). While the question of an evolving theory of literacy, which has changed to include elements of print, screen, and digital modes, will be unpacked in more detail in the literature review, it is important to highlight here how debates about literacy have implications for subject-English. Green and Cormack’s (2008) work mapping the development of subject-English in Australia ties the history of English teaching throughout the early twentieth century to empire building, and a desire to connect the learner to the empire. The dominant means to achieve this connection was a focus on tasks to be achieved about and through print literacy (Kress, 1997; Luke & Luke, 2001).

Thus, as challenges to a single definition of literacy have emerged¹¹, and the conflation of subject-English and literacy accelerated (Campagna-Wildash, 1994; Green, 2002), the consequence has been an increased interest in the practices of subject-English, including by those who see changes to literacy as a threat to the nation (Donnelly, 2004, 2012; Slattery, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Wiltshire, 2013). The resulting disagreements between those wanting to preserve traditional conceptions of literacy and those advocating for change has contributed to a discourse of crises, conflicts and even 'wars' (Durrant, 2012; Green, Hodgins, & Luke, 1997; Snyder, 2008). This discourse is reflective of what is at stake in this particular game of cultural legitimization, where schools are political sites and the work they do cannot be removed from historical contexts (Giroux, 2001, 2007). One outcome of broader, more future orientated definitions of literacy, has been the inclusion of popular culture texts into subject-English classrooms, representing a change to the status-quo which has not passed without challenge.

When literacy expert and academic Catherine Beavis delivered a lecture in 1998 advocating, amongst other things, for computer games to be studied, like other popular culture texts, alongside more traditional texts in the English curriculum (Beavis, 1998), a debate about what should count as literacy ensued. Opposition included that from Donnelly (1998) who made a case against videogames based on the premise that they were anti-social and that their study takes away valuable time needed for other more valued and worthwhile concerns, such as the appreciation of literature. Beavis explained the reaction by referring to fears that technology could cause the "abandonment of literature and cultural heritage" (1998, p. 48) and compared struggles over curriculum to conflicts about the "ownership and purpose" (p. 24) of culture. In this instance, those advocating bringing popular culture texts into the classroom represented a challenge to dominant ideas about culture, causing apprehension. The game of culture continues on.

One's initial capital, or put another way, initial position in social space, itself a product of the capital possessed, is always sensitive to changes in the objective conditions of the field. As Bourdieu (1984) argues when talking about the fluid nature of the dispositions we possess, sometimes practices generated by the habitus are ill-adapted to a particular field despite their earlier successful functioning. What this means when applied to fears about new texts in subject-English (Beavis, 1998; Luke & Luke, 2001) is that there are many people for whom a change in the field that constitutes legitimate cultural goods challenges the position of those who possess the cultural capital which in

¹¹ Challenges to a single discourse of literacy have come from those representing: critical pedagogies (Apple, 1990; Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1983), multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000a; New London Group, 1996), new literacy studies (Coiro et al., 2008b; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) and critical literacy (Christie & Misson, 1998; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Morgan & Australian Association for the Teaching of English., 1996).

the present exists as the supreme and most valuable form of capital, such as the canon of literature. The greater the number of texts which are included in the canon of legitimate texts, and therefore, legitimate culture, the more diffuse the value of the cultural capital which must make way for inclusions. Bourdieu calls this process of cultural legitimisation an “economy of cultural goods” (1984, p. 1), where a specific logic establishes which culture will be considered legitimate, and the conditions in which one’s taste for them will be produced. Within the economy that is literacy practice in Australia, the goods possessed and valued for practice are heavily influenced by the institution-level structuring described in battles over curriculum and literacy outlined above, but the structuring effect of these battles on the individual differs depending on the habitus each individual brings with them. The diversity of habitus makes many trajectories of practice possible. Whilst the ‘doing’ of literacy in one way will allow some individuals to draw on historically-constituted dispositions to produce context-appropriate practice, differently ‘doing’ literacy is just as likely to have the reverse effect. Thus, as important as objective forces are in structuring social space in such ways as to delineate between acceptable and unacceptable forms of practice, the habitus possessed by individual agents also matters. This is especially the case for individual teachers and the historico-cultural factors that shape their habitus.

Historicisation must point the reflexive lens inside, at the researcher, as much as at institutional forces. The way I have come to understand literacy and subject-English needs to be explored. From the early years of my teaching career, I was enculturated through my peers into notions of text and textual practice which favoured socially-significant meaning-making (Love, 2001; Love, Baker, & Quinn, 2008; Love & Hamston, 2001; Misson, 2006; Misson & Morgan, 2006). In 2007, when I began teaching, film-as-text had been fully incorporated into the curriculum, to the extent that at the most senior and high-stakes level of the English curriculum in Victoria, students were required to complete a film analysis of a motion picture. Despite the objections from traditionalists, who protested at the idea of working with anything other than the written word on paper, cartoons, graphic-novels, and even websites were being used in the schools where I worked. Like many of my students, the texts I was engaging with outside of school were not the canonical texts of older generations of subject-English teachers. I did not consider reading a novel or playing videogames as either/or propositions. A lifetime of social and culture practices contributed to produce taste which determined that the enjoyment I received from attending an Arthur Miller theatre production did not diminish my desire to sit down with friends, take up a controller, and ‘kill’ zombies in a virtual environment. Perhaps because of the pleasure I received from playing videogames, and the validation that came from sharing these pleasure with others during social gameplay, I became comfortable around these texts. When I witnessed similar textual preferences and dispositions

amongst many of the students I taught, I began to ask questions about which texts were valued, why some were omitted from study, and who might benefit from a broader approach to textual study in subject-English classrooms. Experimenting with non-traditional texts and reaching out to colleagues in other schools to uncover what they were doing with texts led me to realise that literacy could be both fixed and fluid. Whilst there was a dominant and definitive literacy produced by the authorised forces, captured by mandated curricula and the dominant discourse, the practice of literacy also took on a plethora of forms once it reached the classroom. The conclusion was simple. Yes! Texts mattered, but not nearly as much as what teachers did with them in their classrooms.

Interrogating subject-English also requires interrogating subject-English teaching. Green (2008) poses some important questions about how secondary English teachers are prepared for classrooms, including:

“What kinds of preparation does, in fact, an English teacher need, today? At a minimum, what should s/he have read (or watched)? What range of reading formations should s/he have practical knowledge of? What protocols of language usage need to be understood?” (p. 36)

Green goes on to argue that teachers occupy a difficult position within the policy-practice nexus. Constantly changing policy landscapes, coupled with rapidly changing modes of communication, have required teachers to remain active in turning policy into practice, and similarly, using classroom practice to influence future policy. However, his question “what constitutes and counts as English teaching” (p. 38) simply produces more questions: With which students? At what age? In what cultural contexts? By which teachers? For what purposes? Lankshear, Snyder, and Green (2000) describe the relationship between policy and practice as “mutually conditioning” and “directly interrelated” (p. 55). The stress here is on the multiple roles of teachers, and the various levels of interpretation and translation they enact as they make sense of policy with consideration for their own ideological positionings and contexts. The task of navigating the path between policy and practice has always been challenging.

One obstacle affecting the take-up of digital pedagogies is the divide between today’s students and teachers. Prensky (2001) uses the language of digital natives and digital immigrants to establish the differences between those who now learn about technology, the immigrants, and those who have been raised in an entirely technological state, the natives. The students of today are digital natives. They grow up speaking the digital language of computers, videogames and the internet. In contrast,

an aging teacher population in Victoria¹² suggests that most teachers are digital migrants, who are learning to adapt to their changing environment but inevitably retain some degree of their ‘accent’ which reveals a foot in the past. Prensky argues that the biggest educational challenge today is that “Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language...are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (p. 2). The disparity between natives and immigrants has real implications for the types of learning and teaching that is occurring in schools. The reading/writing and producing/consuming practices that today’s learners bring with them leads Prensky to state emphatically that “today’s learners are different” (2001, p. 3). It has been over fifteen years since Prensky used terms like digital native and digital migrant to describe differences between age and technological capacity, and advancements in technologies, and their inclusion in the classroom, have made it even more important to understand their integration into classroom instruction and the pedagogic frameworks which will facilitate this.

The New London Group were instrumental in drawing attention to pedagogy and the role of teachers in working with multimodal texts in schools (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 1996). In their 2009 revisit of their original ideas from 1996, two of the group’s members emphasised how “The world was changing, the communications environment was changing, and it seemed to us that to follow these changes literacy teaching and learning would have to change as well” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 165). They argued that literacy pedagogy should not ignore the trajectories of change, and teachers needed to reassess their pedagogical choices. The shift to a multiliterate world required a reconceptualization of meaning-making away from considering learners as “passive recipients” or “agents of reproduction” (p. 175) and in recognition of the range of textual practices with which young people engage. They called for a redesign of pedagogy for our changing times. The development of pedagogies incorporating non-print based media, and which move beyond entrenched didactic teaching practices, have become more prevalent in the past decade (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Bull & Anstey, 2010; Unsworth, 2002; Zammit & Downes, 2002), with each of these approaches explained in more detail in the *Literature Review Chapter*. The worthwhileness of any textual work in subject-English classrooms is significantly dependent on the practices made possible by the effect pedagogy has on classroom learning. This has the capacity to invite learners for rich learning and meaningful experiences, or to disempower and alienate them altogether.

¹² Research into the demographics of school teachers in the Australian state of Victoria found that the percentage of teachers over 50 in government schools increased from 26% in 2001 to 37% by 2011. In Catholic schools, the figure increased from 20% to 40% over the same years (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012).

The context of gaming as textual practice

Videogames-as-texts and textual practice

The contemporary nature of videogames does not diminish their status as texts. Access to the technology necessary to engage with videogames has been available to the everyday consumer since about the late 1980s. In a relatively short period, innovation in this area has reached a point where gaming devices are now built into televisions, mobile phones, and personal computers, not to mention purpose-built gaming consoles, the most popular of which have attained sales of well-over 100 million worldwide (Statista, 2015b). As technology has developed, so too has the nature of these texts, making a singular definition of videogames challenging (Aarseth, 2003, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the Future Lab definition is adopted. It states that, a digital game:

- Provides some visual digital information or substance to one or more players
- Takes some input from the players
- Processes the input according to a set of programmed game rules
- Alters the digital information provided to the players (Kirriemuir & McFarlane, 2004, p. 6)

Unlike serious games, which aim to simulate real-world events or processes for the sake of training or educating users, this study works with videogames created for entertainment (although this is not to suggest that the latter do not contain complex forms of learning and teaching.) What has become apparent is that as videogame design and innovation continues, and their use expands, referring to this text in the singular ignores the many forms which videogames now take, and the countless social contexts in which they are enjoyed.

The belief that videogames are texts, in the same way that novels or plays are texts, reflects a political position that derives from the principle that all objects of knowledge are constructed (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 52). A text, in the way the word is used throughout this paper, is considered in the broadest of terms. Various definitions as “crafted, communications – visual, graphic and electronic representations of language and objects...such as maps, diagrams, photographs, posters, magazines, school textbooks” (Freebody, 2003, p. 174), “the outcome of engaging in social activities of various kinds” (Williams, 1998, p. 20), and “meaningful and cohesive units framed within a medium and genre” (Bell, 2001, p. 15), we are left with a term that encapsulates more than simply printed forms of language. Therefore, videogames are also forms of texts in the sense that they are crafted, they involve intentional activity, and they are social in the interaction they demand from, and between, people. Given the affordances of multiplayer and online gameplay, we can argue that these are texts enacted in social ways not typically associated with traditional print-based subject-English texts. Videogames are a form of text because they contain coherent and cohesive markers,

available to those with the dispositions necessary to make sense from them. These simple markers for deciphering can take the form of text on the screen, background music, or coloured symbols. There are also complex markers which require consideration, such as features of a game's design, the narrative, the computer AI¹³, and the effect of player input. However, it is the practices associated with videogames that reveal the most about these texts.

It is important to look past static notions of videogames-as-text and explore the more complex world of videogames as textual practice. Whilst videogames are the products of their designers, until they are brought to life through play and practice they are relatively inactive and meaningless. Kristeva's (2002) concept of intertextuality¹⁴ is one way to capture the importance of focusing attention on the 'activity' associated with any textual practice, or textual practice as a process, rather than texts as objects. Intertextuality calls for a shift away from the text as a 'thing', where meaning is transferred from the writer to the reader. Kristeva argued that meaning must first be filtered through 'codes' held by both the writer and the reader that have been enculturated through exposure to other texts (1986). Presuppositions are therefore brought with the reader to the process, making impossible the notion that any meaning is found exclusively in the text and highlighting processes of meaning-making, or rather textual practice, as fundamental to understanding what meaning is attached to any text, be it a first-person shooter videogame or *Macbeth*. Barthes' announcement of the 'death of the author' and his assertion that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1977, p. 148) shifts the focus towards the predominance of the role of the reader, or the gamer, in meaning making. This concept is complicated by the design of modern videogames where the player takes on the role of the writing-subject through use of the game's codes and design, and then subsequently makes new experiences out of this writing, fracturing the reader/writer binary. Since all objects, or texts, have no meaning until they exist in the social world, illuminating the practices associated with texts helps reveal the potentials of these texts.

Practices and perceptions of gaming

Any notion that videogame practice is limited to the realm of niche groups of technologically-minded individuals is challenged by figures outlined the popularity of gaming. The most recent Digital Australia report (Brand & Todhunter, 2015) reveals that ninety-eight percent of Australian households with children have a device for playing games and that typical gameplay occurs daily for about one hour. Young people identify 'having fun' (p. 5) and 'social interaction' (p. 16) as amongst

¹³ Artificial Intelligence

¹⁴ Intertextuality refers to the relationship between texts and the extent to which the meaning derived from one text is the product of meanings and discourses imposed on it by other texts (Kristeva, 1980, 1986)

the main reasons why they play videogames. Of those parents who play videogames, ninety percent play with their children. Evidence from other national studies reveals similar trends. In the United States, a comparable large-scale quantitative analysis (Entertainment Software Association, 2014) found that fifty-one percent of households had a dedicated gaming console and sixty-two percent of gamers said they play games with others, either in person or online. These statistics reveal a generation of people, both young and old, who are surrounded by the types of devices needed to engage with videogames, and who are connecting with them with increasing frequency. To put the popularity of videogames into perspective, the 2013 release of the videogame *Grand Theft Auto V* had sales of \$800m on its first day (Garside, 2013) setting the record for the first 24 hours release (Lynch, 2013). In comparison, the most successful film release of all time, *Marvel's The Avengers* had sales of \$207m in its opening weekend (IMDB, 2014) whilst *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* brought in \$197m in the same time-period (Kotaku, 2009) to hold the same record for a book release. The worldwide gaming market is estimated to have had a value of US\$91.95 billion in 2015 (Gaudiosi, 2015), compared to global box office sales of all films reaching just US\$36.4B in 2014 (Statista, 2015a). Games like *Grand Theft Auto V* attract millions of online players, who communicate, interact and socialise online. They represent a new textual-world inhabited by people who commit their own time, money and energy to game-playing, but also a world which has become popular amid much concern about its potential negative influence (Dill & Dill, 1999).

There is continuing public debate about the possible negative effects of gaming. In daily newspapers and on popular talk and news programs, commentators are quick to lament the popularity of videogames amongst children and teenagers, usually phrased as being at the expense of more 'worthwhile' forms of culture. Some common themes include: videogames cause gun violence (Jaccarino, 2013), videogames contribute to vitamin deficiency (Bowcott, 2010), videogames taunt children (Mack, 2011), and videogames encourage social isolation (Wachter, 2013). Fear derived from individual and collective presumptions about what kind of textual experiences today's young people should have, and a glorification of what it was like to grow up a child in a pre-gaming world, have led many to blame videogames for the social and educational ills young people face. Jenkins (n.d) outlines eight of the most significant concerns as including:

- The availability of videogames has led to an epidemic of youth violence.
- Scientific evidence links violent game play with youth aggression.
- Children are the primary market for videogames.
- Almost no girls play computer games.
- Because games are used to train soldiers to kill, they have the same impact on the kids who play them.
- Videogames are not a meaningful form of expression.
- Videogame play is socially isolating.

- Videogame play is desensitizing

Ignoring the factual inaccuracies associated with many of these concerns (for example, forty-seven percent of gamers are female and the average gamer age is thirty-two (Brand & Todhunter, 2015)) these concerns have played a part in shaping the discourse associated with videogames and will continue to influence the way many people conceive of videogame practice and its potential value in educational contexts. Clayton's (2003) study of the primary leisure pursuits of primary-aged children in the computer-age found growing levels of parental anxiety regarding time spent engaging with technological pursuits, despite the data also revealing that both girls and boys aged six to eight spent less time playing videogames on weekdays than all other categories surveyed (television, indoors, outdoors, homework). Whilst literacists like Gee (2007d) counter these parental concerns by highlighting how all technologies, books and films included, do not have any effects by themselves, but only after they are situated within specific contexts (p. 12), too often the discourse used to establish such arguments is not easily accessible to members of general public. The result has been that those negative assertions disseminated through popular media have shaped perceptions and created a resistance to the legitimisation of gaming as a form of cultural practice. Teachers wishing to work with videogames must deal with this resistance.

Cultural acquisition and the print-based canon of texts

Central to understanding the resistance to the growth of videogame practice is the threat it poses to existing cultural forms. The ongoing shift from the page to the screen, and subsequent move towards digital forms of communication and online interaction, has resulted in a challenge to the cultural and social orientation of many fields, not least of which is education (Luke, 2004). Distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate, or high and low, forms of culture have implications for the organisation of people and the power they possess. Bourdieu (1984), through analysis of works of art, demonstrates the strong correlation between those with mastery over 'legitimate taste' and educational and social success. Contrary to legitimate culture, which is concentrated amongst small groups of the dominant class, richest in educational capital, illegitimate culture often takes the form of knowledge accumulated by the self-taught or through practice undertaken outside of the control of institutions (p. 25). The extensive schooling required to understand the nuances of Shakespearean theatre or Homer's *Iliad* is juxtaposed to the self-taught approach many people apply to learning how to play a new videogame or engage in other forms of supposed 'low' culture. Whenever these illegitimate forms emerge to compete with authorised competencies they face rejection from those sanctioned to determine 'what counts'. The hierarchy inherent in the language

used to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate, or high and low culture, further highlights the political contest being fought. The 'high' in high culture implies a more valuable form of culture, perhaps containing a moral sense of something worthy of attainment, knowledge for example. The feelings aroused by exposure and understanding of such culture are therefore a worthy pursuit. In contrast, the popularisation of low culture immediately devalues it. Devoid of pretension or artistic ambition, entertainment becomes the perfectly acceptable goal of low culture (p. 16). Possession of the right types of cultural capital represents an instrument of domination (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 44).

Culture has the capacity to include and exclude with devastating effects. Struggles over the definition of legitimate culture are struggles over who participates. The popularity and accessibility of videogames makes it easy to consider them a form of low culture, where practices and knowledge realised by these cultural products distinguish them against the canon of literature and its supposed humanising and enlightening effect. Debates about the relationship between culture, literature and subject-English date back to the very origins of the subject's development when Matthew Arnold, arguably the primary shaping force on the development of English as a subject (Peel, 2000), concerned with a declining culture as a result of industrialisation and the destruction of older values, established the study of literature through schooling as the best way of defending people from a moral decline (Arnold, 1869). An expansion of this view in the 1920s and 1930s in England, particularly through the influence of F.R Leavis, who supported the role of literature in cultivating literary taste (Hilliard, 2012), contributed to the formation of a Cultural Heritage approach to English teaching which included a canon of works, such as Shakespearean texts and the Romantic poets, that gained, and have retained, legitimacy (Peel, 2000, p. 87). Snyder (2009) explains how those seeking to expand the canon have faced resistance from those who fear that today's children will miss-out because they will not experience the 'great' pieces of literature. This argument is built on the premise that one form of textual practice, for example reading literature, is considered to contribute more to the development of the individual than other forms of textual practice, such as playing videogames. The effect is the cultural legitimisation of one form of textual practice and the exclusion of others.

Legitimising videogames

Research and discussion focussing on the affordances of videogames discuss their importance as both a cultural product and cultural activity. Embodied in new academic journals (Game Studies, Games and Culture, the International Journal of Computer Games Technology), Aarseth posits that this field is focussed on ideas which see videogames as cultural products in the hope of exploring the "new ways of thought and communication" (2001, p. 1). Much of the research highlighting the

possibilities of videogames shifts the discourse away from externalised value-based judgements, and refocuses attention on gamers themselves and the ways in which they construct their own experiences and what these mean to them. Gee, for example, constructs today's teenagers and their technological capacities in terms of the opportunities these capacities enable for employment. The current socio-historical context, he argues, demands "shape-shifting portfolio" people who can flexibly rearrange their attributes and skills (2000, p. 414). Gee's research suggests that for many young people, playing videogames produces experiences that lead to affinity groups where knowledge, tools and technologies are leveraged for powerful networking (2007d, p. 208). A more thorough outline of these aspects of the field is found in the *Literature Review Chapter*, however, a brief summary of the research focussing on how gaming becomes meaningful to individuals includes studies which have shown that: online communities represent spaces of multifaceted affiliation and disaffiliation tied to gamer identities (Steinkuehler, 2006a); game-environments encourage active learning to support feelings of success (Journet, 2007); role-playing games provide the means to try out 'new selves' (Gee, 2005d), and non-gaming related agency and confidence grows as a result of successful participation in simulation games (Gee & Hayes, 2010). What these and many other studies reveal is that there is a complexity associated with gaming practices that requires more than the production of statistical data evidencing the hours of gameplay of various demographic groups.

Personalising the construction of the phenomena

My socially and historically situated relationship with videogames has necessarily and unavoidably produced dispositions and systems of difference which construct videogame practice in some ways, and not others. Historicizing the way these texts have come to take the form of valuable cultural artefacts for me involves reflecting on the circumstances which produced favourably orientated predispositions (a process made easier by a temporary turn to the first-person voice). My own experiences with videogames began at a very young age. I have vivid Christmas memories, when I was seven or eight years old, of my older brother and I receiving a Nintendo Entertainment System, one of the first mass-produced videogame consoles from the early nineties. We spent countless periods of our holidays playing the console together. Sometimes we took turns completing a level each during a single player game. At other times, we plugged in two controllers and played together. These experiences progressed to 'mobile' gaming through the use of portable Gameboys, with days of battery life, in the back of the car on long holiday car trips to far away locations. It must have been heavenly for our parents to have these devices which kept us totally engaged and quiet for such long periods. Through my teens, the late 1990s, as personal computers became more affordable, my interest in turn-based strategy games developed to the point where I sat for hours in front of the computer screen, totally transfixed. Soon my younger sister joined me during these

gaming experiences. At first she sat and watched me, learning through observation. Eventually, she developed the confidence to play on her own. I can't remember visiting the playground with her, or building sandcastles together, although I am told we did these things frequently. However, I distinctly remember helping her master the videogame, *Civilization 2*. It is not difficult to recount similar anecdotes to this one that describe utilising code to edit and reformulate videogames during high-school, playing live multiplayer games with friends during my early twenties, and more recently lecturing and presenting workshops to teachers interested in the potential of videogames to enhance their classroom teaching. The results of these life-moments have contributed to the construction of a teacher-researcher positively orientated towards the types of social practices possible when playing videogames, and which have been internalised and incorporated into other schemas which function as a way of seeing the world and the possibilities for action within this world.

Schools as sites of social reproduction are highly resistant to change, making the exercise of introducing new text-types and new textual practices challenging. As a result, the range of knowledge valued for investment is limited. In this way, knowledge reproduction in schools acts as a form of institutionalised power (Teese & Polesel, 2003), where those with access to the codes gain admission to school subjects, and those without, are excluded. In the case of subject-English in the Australian context, these codes were narrowly conceptualised by curricula throughout the 1990s to strongly favour print-based texts orientated predominantly towards a particular cultural heritage model of subject-English (Green, 2008; Green & Cormack, 2008; Locke, 2015). Videogame playing as social, textual and cultural practice represents a relatively new phenomenon in the context of schooling, a phenomenon as dependent on the real-world enabling and disabling identities of those individuals who participate with these texts, as the texts themselves.

The context of 'being' in the twenty-first century

The practice of identity/ies

Different conceptualisations of identity will produce different interpretations of the data, and so it is important to begin by outlining what the term means in the context of this study. Whilst modernist constructions of identity are grounded in discourses that emphasise the stable and fixed nature of the individual's core (Elliott, 2011), for example, Hall's (1904) focus on identity as related to biological stages in life, and Erikson's (1968) developmental approach emphasising sameness and consistency over time, contemporary theories suggest people are no longer reliant on notions of fixed inherited identities. New ways of thinking about culture, people, and the manner in which

identities become embodied, predominantly founded on postmodern and post-structuralist philosophies, developed in a range of fields including: sociology (Bauman, 1998; Giddens, 1991; Goffman, 1969), gender (Butler, 1990; Kristeva, 1980), education (Gee, 1992, 2003) class (Bourdieu, 1984) and history (Foucault, 1978; Lyotard, 1984). The result was a shift in emphasis from identity as singular to multiple, from static to fluid, and from an essence which is carried by the individual, to practices constituted through action. The stress on the making of the subject and the taking of subjective positions challenged the notion that a subject's essence exists internally. Simone de Beauvoir captures this stress on the 'making of the subject' through her claim that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, *becomes* a woman" (1953, p. 249), provoking us to consider the acts that must be performed to constitute 'woman.' The poststructural construction of identity adopted, henceforth, draws attention to the practices performed by the study's participants, and what is revealed by these performances as they take place in the social world.

The social nature of all identity work demands that we focus on the performances of individuals acting in the social world, and also on the way social worlds act on individuals. When talking about the role of power in such a relationship, we must consider the forces operating in both directions. Bourdieu (1984) provides a model with which to understand this relationship through the relationship between habitus and field. Habitus refers to an individual's dispositions; the socialised norms and tendencies which have been internalised and guide their behaviour and thinking (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). Field represents the social world within which an individual plays, with the logic of different fields providing the conditions by which different agents participate (Bourdieu, 1989, 1996b). As Bourdieu states:

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting field). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 44).

In other words, if we consider the actions of research participants to be expressions of their identities, or habitus, then in order to make sense of these actions, we must pay close attention to the social structures of their context, the field, which limit the types of practices that are constituted as acceptable for investment, and rewarded. This approach forces a shift away from understanding practice through a focus on the origin of the act, and towards a bidirectional relationship between the individual and the context.

Identity as realised through practice requires an understanding of the variables which combine to shape acts of self. Bourdieu's formula '(habitus)(capital) + field = practice' (1984, p. 101) can be of assistance here. It demonstrates how dispositions we carry with us, our habitus, in association with particular forms of capital, be they social, economic or cultural (Bourdieu, 1986), engage with a social context, the field, to produce a practice (an utterance, facial expression, choice of attire, behaviour, etc). The equation, an articulation of the various forces necessary to make sense of practice, is firstly a warning to those conducting analysis, and the tendency of researchers to focus on the effects which underlie practices without establishing the "practice-unifying and practice-generating" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101) habitus which has been internalised as a result of activity in some form of conditioned and objective context. Secondly, it warns against conducting this form of examination at the expense of discussing the "fields governed by different logics" within which all practice is realised. Making sense of the social spaces within which agents perform requires a sensitivity to social, cultural and historical contexts, all of which help the researcher "reconstruct what has been taken apart". One of these social spaces which requires unpacking is the subject-English classroom.

Not all students are equally possessed with the dispositions to participate and perform in subject-English classrooms. The geographic place where subject-English takes place, through the presence of people, and the repetition of cultural and historical acts, is transformed into a social space, highly constraining and precisely structured. This space invites participation, but only from those with the requisite means. It invites individuals to invest themselves into these spaces in a game where the possession of the right forms of capital, or symbolic goods, represents "the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 66). In this environment, not all forms of capital produce the same results. Not all tastes are equal. The students whose practice shows evidence of legitimate taste, are those who have had exposure to the "taste of legitimate works" (p. 16) and whose educational capital will return the greatest investment. However, legitimate taste is unequally accumulated. Taste, "the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices" (p. 173) produces distinctive preferences. When the taste that is required for accumulation and later use in a given field comprises classifying characteristics which conflict with other classifying characteristics already possessed by the subject, a struggle ensues. In other words, many students, in order to participate and perform successfully, are required to accumulate and incorporate into their identity particular ways of thinking and acting about reading, writing and speaking which invariably conflict with who

they already are. The effect of this conflict is a form of symbolic violence¹⁵, “exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996, pp. 167-168) and equally experienced by those who can act within a field and those who cannot.

The decision to include and exclude texts in subject-English curricula material and in classroom practice can be understood as one such act of symbolic violence, allowing some selves, or citizens, to be developed while excluding others (Brass, 2015b; Hunter, 1988; Patterson, 2000a). This is drawn to attention in Mackenness’ (1928) account of English teaching in England in the 1920s. In most secondary classrooms, English was allotted five periods a week, with half a period dedicated for grammar, half for the novel, one period for composition, one for poetry and two for Shakespeare (p.23-24.) This account reflects ways of thinking about the purpose of English teaching and the texts to be used to achieve that purpose. Students with access to the discourses associated with Shakespearean study will be better positioned to participate in such a classroom in comparison to those whose out-of-school textual experiences reflect more popular and less ‘literary’ forms of text. Classrooms are not neutral geographic places easily accessible to all. As the dynamics of the field change, for example through a shift in the texts that are studied from print-based novels to digital multiplayer videogames, or through a change in the agents authorised to make legitimate some forms of practice at the expense of others, so do the requisite dispositions which can be invested for distinction.

My early-career teaching years were formative in terms of introducing me to some of the conflicts associated with literacy and text. Working in a single-sex boys’ school English faculty, I was witness to a discourse which constructed the student body as disengaged with reading. It was common to hear teachers complain about the boys in their class who had not read the set-text and to compare the reading practices of their students, or perceived lack thereof, with their own love for the reading of literature. My observations of students’ reading practice revealed a different picture. I saw students who frequently rushed to the library to use the computers to develop their fantasy football teams. Some groups of students sat around engrossed in sporting magazines, reading in pairs or over each other’s shoulders. Others brought in dense and complex guides to playing their favourite videogames. The type of reading the students were engaged in was incongruous with the way reading had been conceptualised by those authorised to determine what reading was, and was not. Students *were* positively disposed to reading, and through conversations, they revealed a world of knowledge about a range of topics. When this practice was positioned in particular fields, these

¹⁵ Symbolic violence refers to “acts of knowledge and practical recognition which takes place below the level of the consciousness and will and which gives all its manifestations – injunctions, suggestions, seductions, threats, reproaches, orders or calls to order – their ‘hypnotic power’” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 42)

reading dispositions manifested into practices that allowed them to perform in ways that resulted in social positions of meaning and value. In contrast, the field of the subject-English classroom was structured in such a way that many boys lacked both the cultural capital¹⁶ and the ways of thinking and behaving to produce the practices necessary to successfully navigate such a space. To paraphrase Bourdieu (1989), if habitus is necessary for constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, where an individual sees such a world as worthy of investing one's energy, then those who lack the habitus to see the field as meaningful and worthy of investment will make fewer successful investments, producing limited returns, and leading to experiences of exclusion.

There is substantial room for optimism, however, when considering the agency individuals possess to act in particular ways in order to express their multiple identities in particular contexts. What is needed is an emphasis on identity as a process of making the self, or many selves, often contradictory in nature, differently dependent on context. As Gee explains:

Being recognized as a certain "kind of person," in a given context, is what I mean here by "identity". In this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their "internal states" but to their performance in society (2000-2001, p. 99).

The recognisable traits of this 'kind of person' are the identities that people perform constantly. These identities are always performed within specific contexts, making identity inextricably linked to discourses which act as guides or frameworks of 'being' in the world (Gee, 2001). Recognition of these ways of being is a social and political process, firmly established in the workings of people's minds as a product of prior socialisation and historicisation (Gee, 2000-2001, p. 109), reinscribed outside of the mind through real world reproductions, but also increasingly, in digital contexts.

Online environments as opportunities for performances of self

People of all ages, socio-cultural backgrounds, and from all parts of the globe are choosing to use digital devices and online platforms to make expressions of self. Turkle's (1995) early work on identity-construction in the age of the internet described how computers were changing the way we think, the nature of our sexuality, the form of our communities, and our very identities. Turkle argued that our everyday lives involved a culture of cyber-space based simulation which had affected our ideas about mind, body, and machine. Cyberspace is significant, she contends, not only

¹⁶ Cultural capital, which Bourdieu (1986) argues can be found in the form of long-lasting dispositions, cultural goods, such as books or machines, or through educational qualifications, has also been defined by Lamont and Lareau as the "widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviours, and goods)" (1988, p. 164)

because of the blurred boundaries between the real and the virtual, but also because simulated experiences which take place in virtual contexts are contributing to the construction of our identities. As Turkle said, "As players participate [on the net] they become authors not only of text but of themselves, constructing new selves through social interaction" (1995, p. 12). Within these contexts, virtual experiences are constructed in terms of possibilities, such as the ability to 'play' with a sense of self that is close or far away from one's real self, and allows the creation and recreation of an identity more fluid and multiple in nature.

However, the potential liberating and democratising effect of digital environments to open up spaces for the meaningful 'doing' of self has also been criticised. Baudrillard reveals the complexities with practising self digitally in the globalised world saying that in the same class as television and the media, which act as forms of social control (2007), the internet is significant not because it allows freedom and democracy, but rather the simulation of these things (2005). Baudrillard argues that in terms of the digital, a "radical fetishism" (2005, p. 5) has taken over, epitomised by the imperative of reinforced participation and interactive investment. The result is the perception that technologies of the screen are bringing us closer to reality and utopia when in fact they have blurred the distinction between 'man' and machine. Machines produce machines, continues Baudrillard, as those immersed in virtual practice experience a "comfortable dizziness" (p. 8) generated through electronic interactions which act like drugs, interactions which are themselves the product of people operating within known elements and established codes in highly automated ways. When Baudrillard speaks of "putting on one's life like a digital suit" he conceives of the suit as a constraint, a straight-jacket (p. 6).

Similarly, Buckingham (2008) challenges the supposed flexibility of 'doing' identity in cyberspace. Buckingham appropriates Foucault's notion of the panopticon (1980) to reject the empowering nature of digital spaces. He argues that processes of self-monitoring and self-surveillance which typified the panopticon, literally a prison surveillance system whereby inmates self-regulated their behaviour due to the belief they were under constant monitoring, are just as prevalent when young people act and interact in different online spaces. Rather than the liberation of the individual as a result of individual choices made possible by late modern societies, Buckingham believes that these spaces are typified by a form of disciplinary power, in the Foucauldian sense (1984), where choice and power are characterised by individuals regulating themselves to ensure their behaviour falls within acceptable norms. Buckingham concludes his critique of the liberating possibilities of technology by suggesting that general shifts in the way that identity is defined and lived is as much a part of broader social and historical developments as it is technological change (Buckingham, 2008, p. 10).

Concern over the social, cultural and technological landscape in which young people today are growing up has often manifested into a societal discourse espousing a fear of technology. One result of the mass proliferation of digital devices such as smart-phones, computers, and videogames, is a change in the availability of spaces for 'being' oneself. The result of continued activity in these spaces has meant that "For the first time in history, children are more comfortable, knowledgeable and literate than their parents about an innovation central to society" (Tapscott, 1998, pp. 1-2). This has caused uncertainty regarding what these children do with their new-found power. Seidler (2010) suggests that online activity represents a virtual world which many parents know little about, and that in a postmodern cultural world, "there is a sense that new technologies have further undermined shared moral values" (p. 148). As evidence, he refers to the estrangement between young people and their parents, a consequence of growing up in different worlds. This has created anxieties and a feeling that virtual activity represents a threat not only to young people as individuals, but also to modern family life.

The 'problem' of technology has been exacerbated by the discourse of youth as a homogenous group whose relationship with school is in crisis. An Australian Gallup Student Poll (2015) concerned with student engagement utilised a twenty-question survey to measure the hope, engagement and well-being of students in Years 5-12. It revealed that forty percent of students were either 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged' in school. In terms of hope, described as 'The ideas and energy we have for the future [which] drives effort, academic achievement and retention of students of all ages' (p. 1), over fifty percent were either 'stuck' or 'discouraged'. In contrast, the PISA¹⁷ 2012 results revealed "Australian students, on average, demonstrated a higher level of intrinsic motivation...than the OECD average" (Thomson, De Bortoli, & Buckley, 2013, p. xx) and seventy-eight percent of Australian students agreeing with the statement 'I feel like I belong at school', and eighty percent agreeing that 'I feel happy at school' (p. 266). Despite an AITSL, Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership, report discussing the problems with measuring engagement concluding that the data in Australia is not good enough to provide an accurate picture of the extent of engagement (2013), other studies point to Year 12 completion rates and national testing results to support the argument that the Australian student is in crisis. The 2015 Mitchell Institute (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015) report revealed less than three-quarters of young Australians achieved their Year 12 completion, "meaning an estimated 81,000 young people have not been adequately supported by the education system at this stage." (p. 46). All this matters, claims the report, as "not completing school is a major issue for Australia because those who do not gain a Year

¹⁷ The Programme for International Student Assessment is a worldwide study of OECD members, and measures the academic performance of fifteen year olds across a number of areas, including: mathematics, science, and reading.

12 or equivalent certificate have lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment” (p. 22). To further complicate the picture, education ‘think tanks’, such as the Grattan institute, provide support for NAPLAN¹⁸ standardised testing (Jensen, 2013), at the same time that the research literature reports that the effect of NAPLAN has been to distort teaching practices, constrain the curriculum and narrow students’ educational experiences (Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2014). The positivism inherent in much of the research above reveals little about the complexity of the relationship between students, teachers, culture, and the social worlds. Relying on statistical data to understand the nature of young people, or who they are, in schools is a trap of comforting simplification. A brief look at how this has manifested in debates about boys’ literacy further demonstrates this point.

Discussion about the relative underperformance of boys in literacy contexts highlights the formative role played by social and cultural factors in informing identity practice and the importance of considering how we might respond to such factors. Numerous national and international studies have highlighted boys’ underachievement in literacy, relative to girls (ACARA, 2009; Collins, McLeod, & Kenway, 2000; Teese, 2001), with 2012 PISA testing demonstrating that in every participating country females significantly outperformed males in reading literacy (Thomson et al., 2013). One explanation for these differences refers to ‘natural’ differences between girls’ and boys’ brains which predisposes behaviour, interests and preferred ways of learning (Baron-Cohen, 2003; Blum, 1997; Gurian, Henley, & Trueman, 2001). This view ignores the long labour of socialisation that differentiates the sexes from birth. An explanation sensitive to the effects of socio-cultural factors contributing to disparities between the literacy performance of females and males recognises the effects of dispositions of thought and action, themselves the product of a lifetime of exposure to social structures which are lived and actively reproduced by individuals and groups. For example, OECD data from the 2000 PISA Literacy test found that in all but one country boys chose to spend 30 minutes reading for leisure less often than girls (2003, p. 154)¹⁹. It is argued that these differences are the product of the pressure on boys to conform to socially constructed gender roles that constrain their ability to engage with literacy practices which, when perceived as feminised acts, challenge their masculinity (Martino, 2000, 2001). When Bourdieu, in trying to understand masculine domination, says that “the worst humiliation for a man is to be turned into a woman” (2001, p. 22), he captures the symbolic violence acting upon sexuality that constructs male/female division. Research has shown that for many boys of school-going age, language and literacy is a risk (Alloway

¹⁸ The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is an Australian government administered national assessment for years 3, 5, 7, and 9. All students are expected to complete standardised tests in areas such as: reading, writing, language conventions, and numeracy.

¹⁹ Although it is worth noting that reading is not defined in the survey question, but rather is left to the respondent to decide its meaning.

& Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert, 1994; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Martino, 2003). It threatens the masculinity which stands at the core of their multiple identities. The extent of this threat is mediated by what teachers choose to do with texts they bring to literacy and subject-English contexts (Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2002).

Conclusions

Revealing the historical contexts and presuppositions which inform modern schooling and the recent history of English teaching makes explicit the interpretative schema of this thesis. The historicizing of videogames, ways of 'being' and subject-English pedagogy brings to the surface assumptions about the nature of these phenomena. Whilst each has been introduced separately, in the social world, they are intertwined. Moreover, while each phenomenon appears to align logically with each of the study's three research questions, 'subject-English pedagogy' with the question of pedagogical issues in subject-English classrooms, 'videogames' with the question of intrinsic textual practices, and 'ways of being' with the question of virtual, real-world and projective identities, in fact, these relationships are more complex, enmeshed and tangled in the relations between people and space. Further classroom-based research is needed to understand these relationships. Therefore, this study pursues an in-depth investigation of the social world of students playing and studying videogames in a subject-English classroom that untangles this reality in a way which is responsive to the limitations of sociological research.

1.4 Summary of the Research Design

A Naturalistic Case Study Intervention

To address the research questions, a naturalistic case-study intervention, in the qualitative tradition, was employed²⁰. This approach focussed on the practices at the intersection of the three phenomena of pedagogy, videogames, and identities. The four-week intervention involved videogames being introduced into a Year 10 subject-English classroom where eight 15 year old students played and studied these games whilst being taught by an experienced subject-English teacher who was also the primary researcher. The types of activities conducted included²¹:

- Deconstructing videogame box covers
- Talking about experiences of gameplay
- Watching and writing about the introductory sequences to several games
- Playing games in pairs

²⁰ Detailed justification for all research-design related decisions are outlined in *Chapter Three: Methodology*

²¹ An outline of each intervention lesson is included in section 3.2 Design Considerations.

- Observing and discussing the multimodal elements of several games.

There are two reasons why a secondary school subject-English classroom was chosen as the setting to explore the study's questions. Firstly, the pedagogical practice of teachers is crucial in shaping the types of textual practice that occurs in classrooms; therefore, it was essential that the case study's location was a classroom environment with a teacher authorised to take on the role of facilitator of learning. Secondly, given the study's conceptualisation of textual practice as a social-mediated activity, it was important to base the intervention in a social space where students' identities are realised through interactions with others. The aim was to expose taken for granted assumptions about how the world comes to exist in the social space that lies at the centre of the three phenomena. (Re)constituting the social reality at this centre of these forces opens up possibilities for the analysis of practices by the agents who constitute this centre, and through these practices, understandings about the agents, and the structures which they negotiate, become possible.

While a case study was selected as the shell for exploring the complex relationships and 'lived reality' produced as a result of playing and studying videogames in a subject-English classroom, this shell was filled with a participatory action research method. This allowed a teacher-researcher to work with students in a classroom context where learning activities were the catalyst for the production of practices. Making sense of the data collected during the series of lessons, henceforth referred to as 'the intervention', required a data analysis tool sensitive to the 'messiness' of qualitative research.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is presented in five chapters. *Chapter One: Introduction and Contexts* introduces the study's key research questions, as well as outlining the historical contexts which frame these questions. *Chapter Two: Literature Review* contains a discussion of literature covering the rise of videogame play, as well as literature relating to the study of videogames in educational contexts, especially in relation to the implications for learning, teaching, and identity work. *Chapter Three: Methodology* outlines the qualitative naturalistic research design. It discusses the influence of post-structural theory on the study (Foucault, 1972, 1984) and the use of the work of Bourdieu as a data-analysis tool (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). *Chapter Four: Data Analysis* provides a thematic analysis of the data organised into three parts, in order to align with the three key questions which guide the study. *Chapter Five: Findings and Conclusion* presents the study's findings and concludes by explaining the implications which videogames in subject-English classrooms will have for students, teachers, and the future of the subject itself.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by introducing the catalyst for this study. It described three research questions focussed on building understandings associated with the pedagogical implications of bringing videogames into subject-English classrooms, the nature of videogame textual practice, and the phenomena of young people's identities. Attention then turned to developing the contexts which have informed the study. These contexts are important as they shed light on the experiences and motivations of the researcher. The next chapter presents a review of key literature, both in terms of theoretical approaches to the questions and practice-based research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“It is better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot” (France, 1914, p. 12)

This Literature Review focuses on research related to the study’s questions. The purpose is to introduce the theoretical and practice-based work which has informed the study whilst establishing the gaps that exist in this relatively new field. The Review begins by contextualising the textual world of young people today, including the changing participatory and collaborative practices that characterise the digital texts that have come to play such an important part in their lives and identity creation. It then concentrates on work associated with learning and videogames, with an emphasis on theories which address the relationship between videogame affordances and learning. Lastly, the relationship between videogames and school-based literacy is explored. This is done by summarising the work of literacy academics arguing in favour and against incorporating videogames into subject-English contexts, and through a synthesis of the findings of practice-based research. This section concludes by exploring how theories of projective identities have been used to understand these digital practices.

2.1 Self and Text in the twenty-first century

The first section of the review chronicles the impact of globalisation on Australian youth, explaining how experiences of youth have become fractured. Research has focussed on altered digital spaces for identity-work as one way to understand how young people reconcile their sense of being and belonging within these spaces. The extent to which these spaces have impacted on young people’s textual practices will be investigated, as well as research outlining the characteristics and frequency of their videogame play.

Experiences of youth

As a result of globalisation, what it means to be a young person studying and growing up in an Australian school in the twenty-first century is ever-changing. Bauman (1998) claims that as a result of globalisation, an epoch has developed which is lacking in terms of a uniformity of effects, and is emphasised by the compression of the time/space continuum. The break-down of borders and ever-increasing experiences in cyberspace are said to isolate people and bodies from their locality, to the extent that distance no longer seems to matter so much to subjects (p. 77). Others suggest that the impact of globalization on youth identity reveals a tension between homogenizing trends and cultural heterogeneity, between flow and closure (Meyer & Geschiere, 1999). Lesko (2001) argues that the way young people interact and engage with the world around them has been challenged to the extent that what constitutes adolescence is being redefined. In order to better understand

young people, we need to shift the way we think about adolescence to recognise the diversity of experiences rather than uniformity. However, globalization, often constructed in a negative light due to its supposed destruction of cultural identities (Tomlinson, 2003), is not the only variable shaping the experiences of youth.

In association with the consequences of globalisation, broad changes have been identified in the life pathways of Australian youth. Luke and Luke (2001) note that the fragmented nature of today's youth, coupled with the struggle to track new life pathways and identities, requires different conceptual lenses from those which decades ago were used to create early-childhood theories that captured human development as structured according to predictable patterns. They make reference to a backlash against technologies and forms of virtual and online culture which young people practise as a stalling tactic initiated by those who are unable to come to terms with the ways that young people are choosing to live much of their lives in digital environments. Studies capturing these changing life pathways have included a focus on the pathways young people take from schooling to adulthood (McLeod & Yates, 2006), and the range of citizenship practices children and youth participate in (Harris, 2006, p. 222). These 'new times', impacted by deindustrialization, a restructured economy and labour market, and the retreat of the welfare state, have produced new ways for individuals forming their sense of self, and for some, an increase in youth apathy about civics and citizenship. The absence of traditional moorings for identity, at the same time as the hypermobility of communications and increasingly sophisticated media, has transformed the relationship of the self to society (Best, 2011), which has not always been constructed in positive terms by those seeking to understand this relationship.

The notion of youth as deficit is paradoxical. For example, Wyn, Harris and Younes' *Rethinking Youth Citizens* project (2008) surveyed almost one thousand young people from both physical and virtual sites across the Australia state of Victoria capturing the levels and types of civic participation of this cohort. They found that only four percent of young people surveyed had been a member of a political organisation with just seventeen per cent saying they felt they could 'have a say' in their local electorate or local council. Whilst these results appear to support the idea of a 'civics deficit', the authors concluded that in fact young people were engaged in civic participation, just in less formal ways, such as social media and digital networking. Edwards (2009, p. 23) has highlighted the irony of governments which are critical of supposed youth political disengagement, making connections between the neo-liberal state and the effects of enacting social and welfare policies that disenfranchise many young people. An additional consequence of the changing status and choices of young people (Anlezark, 2011) has been the development of the view that linear and simplistic trajectories used to discuss young people today no longer apply, and rather than deriding

their online practices, research should shift to what can be learnt from the ways that young people create, challenge, and explore their identities in digital and online spaces (Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2011).

An alternative to adopting a 'deficit discourse' to explain youth practice in online spaces has been efforts to understand why young people are increasingly turning to these virtual spaces. This has been supported by a move to construct youth participation as 'different' rather than 'deficit'. In the previously referenced *Rethinking Youth Citizenship* project Wyn, Harris, & Younes (2008) also found that many of today's youth experience social membership and civil participation in fundamentally different ways to traditional notions, and that there is a need to engage differently with young people today. Twenty-nine per cent of survey respondents²² stated that they had signed up to an online group and forty per cent utilised online forums to express themselves. Furthermore, sixty-two per cent of survey participants felt "comfortable and like they belonged" when online (p. 15). Attempts to explain these patterns of participation include arguments about online spaces which: encourage new democracies with positive implications for learner dispositions (Jewitt, 2008), act as a forum for the expression and debate of social and political concerns (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010, p. 26), and facilitate shared endeavours and meaningful interactions between individuals (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008, p. 256). The diversity of viewpoints about the impact of these online spaces has been met with a similar diversity of labels regarding how we refer to those who practise their sense of self through digital technologies.

In order to categorise the experience of those twenty-first century youth engaging actively in a digital and globalised world, new descriptors have been coined. Tapscott (1998) uses the term 'N-Geners' to describe those who have grown up entirely surrounded by digital media and use digital media for learning, communicating, and entertainment. They are a generation who want to be users, not just viewers or listeners. Alternatively, Prensky's (2001) popular metaphor of 'digital natives' captures those people whose exposure to technology has led them to think and process information in fundamentally different ways to their 'digital immigrant' predecessors. Buckingham (2006b) uses the term 'digital generation' to problematize this group of youth who have come to be defined according to their experience with digital computer technology, while recognising that the consequences of technology ultimately depend on how it is used and what it is used for. Robertson's (2009, p. 287) concept of 'netizens' refers to a generation of self-actualizing citizens whose focus on social networks and a high sense of individual purpose have come at the expense of traditional obligatory politics, and Mallan, Ashford and Singh (2010) have coined the term 'iScape' to discuss

²² 970 respondents aged predominantly 15-17 completed the survey.

the ways that Australian youth are constructing themselves and their social relations through a networked society. Though the development of these descriptors provide convenient labels with which to describe the digital practices of many twenty-first century people, they also risk generalising across diverse social groupings.

Assuming all members of a similar age group possess similar capacities and motivations has been criticised as reductionist. Coombes (2008, 2009), referencing Prensky's digital natives/digital migrants binary, is critical of assumptions about the information-seeking behaviour of today's students, and argues that unless the ICT²³ capacities of young people are addressed at the school-level, so that these students know how to use the electronic environment effectively, we will be left with a population of digital refugees, as opposed to digital natives. White and Le Cornu (2011) are also critical of Prensky's digital natives and digital immigrants metaphors. They propose a continuum of 'visitors' and 'residents' as a replacement, arguing that the continuum better represents the range of ways that people use technology and avoids categorising based on age or background. Debates about the language used to describe and characterise the online and digital practices of young people demonstrate the difficulty involved in constructing categories to neatly generalise across populations of people, and while there has been a lack of classroom-based research investigating differences in student ICT capacities, and how these might differ across different subject-areas, extensive quantitative work has been conducted to quantify the digital and technological practices of young people in out-of-school settings.

Participatory culture and digital practices

Researchers have measured the types and frequency of devices typifying digital technology use. A comparison of studies focussed on technology uptake in 2008 and 2015, across Australian and American contexts, demonstrates the shifting landscape of device ownership. Snyder, Wise, North, & Bulfin's (2008) *Being Digital* project surveyed over two thousand five hundred Year 10 students and reported on young Australian's engagement with digital technologies in the various dimensions of their lives. It found that ownership of digital technologies (computer/internet, TV and phone) was almost universal, with over eighty percent using their home computers every day or almost every day and more than half of respondents spending at least one hour a day surfing the web, checking email, or chatting online. Ninety-three per cent of students had access to the internet and over ninety-percent owned at least ten digital devices (p. 16). In a sign of how rapidly digital technologies have evolved, Anderson's (2015) investigation of device ownership in the United States focussed on

²³ Information and Communication Technology

new devices which had been developed since Snyder et al's 2008 report. Smartphone ownership was eighty-six percent within the 18-29 age-bracket with game console take-up reaching fifty-six percent. Some technologies were rapidly increasing in popularity; tablet possession increased from five to fifty percent between 2010 and 2015, while other devices were rapidly decreasing, for example mp3 players dropped from seventy-five percent to fifty-one percent during the same period. Snyder et al and Anderson's studies reveal dynamic and rapid shifts in the both the types of technologies young people are engaging with and the changing nature of these technologies. A focus on gaming data reveals a similar dynamism.

A summary of the data relating to video-game practice in Australia shows the prevalence of this form of technology over the past decade. The *Literacy in the Digital Age* project (Beavis, Apperley, Bradford, O'Mara, & Walsh, 2009; Muspratt & Apperley, 2012) captured the patterns and experiences of game playing amongst students from four secondary schools in Victoria. A sample of 331 students revealed that eighty percent played videogames. Sixty percent of these played games in single-player mode while twenty percent partook in multiplayer mode and the remaining twenty percent in online environments. In terms of frequency of gameplay, half of respondents played for between one and five hours a week, and just under twenty-percent played for six to ten hours. The *Serious Play* project (Beavis et al., 2012-2015) also investigated school-age students gaming practices, surveying 270 primary and secondary school students in the Australian state of Queensland. Beavis, Muspratt and Thompson (2014) used these surveys to gather evidence relating to students' previous experience with videogames and their perceptions towards them. They found that fifteen percent of participants reported playing "a lot" (10 or more hours a week), and forty-four percent of participants playing games "sometimes" (1 to 4 hours a week). Figure 2 captures the gendered split in gameplay practice, visualising the higher levels of male gameplay in the 'often' and 'a lot' categories, and showing that only very small numbers of participants stated that they 'never' played videogames.

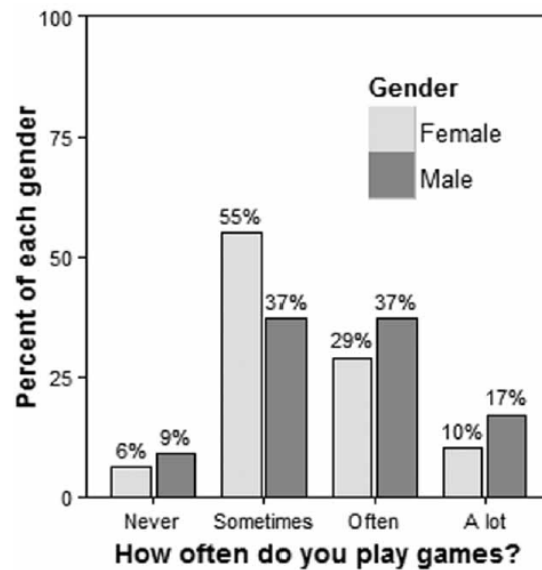


Figure 2: Gendered Gameplay Statistics

(Beavis et al., 2014, p. 5)

The most recent edition of the annual *Digital Australia* report (Brand & Todhunter, 2015) a gaming-related yearly survey of 1200 Australia households and 3400 individuals of all ages, revealed that ninety-eight percent of Australian households with children have a device for playing videogames, and ninety-one percent of 5-14 year olds and eighty-four percent of 15-24 year olds played games. Average daily gameplay was about the same for the youngest and older Australians, reaching 70 minutes a day for 5-14 year old females and about 110 minutes for their male counterparts. The pervasiveness of videogames in the survey-respondents' lives was evident in data which showed that eighty-four percent of parents restrict access to videogames as a punishment but contrarily eighty-one percent use videogames as a reward. These trends reveal that videogames are played by many young people, and often for extended periods of time. While the various studies summarised focus on different aspects of gaming practice, they capture the highly popular nature of this form of textual practice. The picture these statistics reveal can be enhanced by exploring research addressing perceptions and attitude towards videogames.

Adult and student attitudes toward videogames show how these texts are perceived in contemporary society. The previously mentioned 2012 study by Muspratt and Apperley (2012) of three hundred and thirty respondents across two schools also collected data about student attitudes to videogames by providing a series of statements and asking how important the statements were to them. 'Getting ahead', 'discovery finding and knowing things', 'competing with other players', and 'being part of a team' were deemed the most important of the fourteen statements. At the other end of the spectrum 'creating an avatar' and 'getting to know other players' were the least

important. When statements were clustered into social, competitive and creative factors, the study found that only half of students fit neatly into these clusters. Furthermore, those students who played on average 6-10 hours a week were not found to attribute a high value to digital games, based on their responses to the categories of statements provided in the survey. This suggests that categorising game players according to motivating factors based on hours of gameplay is problematic. Beavis, Muspratt, & Thompson's (2014) study of young people's gaming preferences asked young people why they enjoyed playing games, with the most popular response being "discovery", followed by "competing with other players". In terms of gaming experiences in the classroom, the study reported that ninety-three percent of participants believed videogames could be used to teach in the classroom, with eighty-seven percent of the sample reporting that they already used games in school learning contexts. Finally, when students were asked what they thought videogames were good at teaching, the most frequent responses were "making things interesting", and "solving problems" (p. 13). This demonstrates how some students have already discarded the notion that videogames do not belong in school-based contexts, and shows how they conceptualise of the possibilities of videogames positively and pragmatically.

Research investigating new forms of online texts shows the increasingly collaborative and participatory nature of these cultural practices. Commentating on the collaborative practices associated with new literacies, Lankshear and Knobel (2007) characterise these practices as privileging participation over publishing, distributed experience over centralised experts, collaboration over individualised authorship, sharing over ownership, experimentation over normalisation, and innovation and evolution over stability and fixity (p. 21). Examples of these practices include: blogs and online fan-fiction (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008), and the way hyperlinks are used to construct an open inter-connected web of contributors; Web 2.0 (O'Reiley, 2005), which unlike Web 1.0 allows users to both read and contribute to websites like Wikipedia.org; memeing (Knobel, 2005), facilitated by the ease of photo-editing and access to social-networking platforms to distribute these cultural products, and video-making and media-sharing, which encourages the sharing of material on sites like , , and , with their membership of groups who come together to join in a discourse community about these products (Buckingham & Willett, 2009). The nature of these practices has led some to suggest that the collaboration inherent in the ways young people design and produce media in popular culture represents the essential twenty-first century skills which we require to be effective problem-solvers (Bezemer & Kress, 2010; Gee & Levine, 2009), and are reflective of an online participatory culture with increased agency and participation.

Scholars have adopted a range of different field-specific lenses to explain the prevalence of identity work in digital spaces. Jenkins (2006) approaches the issue from the viewpoint of a cultural convergence, claiming that we have undergone a paradigm shift in the communication and media landscape which has resulted in a coming together of old and new media in ways that are changing the opportunities for people to participate and collaborate. Jewitt (2008, p. 8), speaking from the perspective of literacy education's response to New Literacies, points to the social connections formed between members of virtual communities, and the forms of cultural activity they engage with, including; affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations, which have been 'enabled' by technology. Fyfe (2009, p. 40), writing from the perspective of political participation, argues that digital technologies have become intrinsic to the everyday lives of most young people who are at the forefront of its use as an arena for political mobilisation and participatory citizenship. Similarly, academic work from the learning and pedagogy field (Gardner, Weigel, & James, 2009) emphasises the implications that access to almost infinite information through New Digital Media will have on learning, especially in terms of new forms of sociality, play, creativity, social activism, networking, and collaboration. Consistent throughout these various perspectives is a tone which conceptualises identity work online in terms of affordances.

Others working in the field of cultural studies have questioned whether digital technology offers any affordances that might encourage authentic identity practice in online spaces. Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel (2006) caution whether increased usage of digital technologies might cause young people to struggle to recognise how the media, and media-forms they contribute to, shape perceptions of the world. They warn against thinking about each technological innovation in isolation, and have advocated shifting the focus towards the interrelationship among different communication technologies, and the communities and activities which form around these technologies. Similarly, Bauman (2011) has offered a critique of the supposed communities digital technologies allow. In distinguishing between communities and networks, Bauman argues that we are born into communities, which precede us, but that networks are made and maintained. Networks are kept alive by connecting and disconnecting, and the attractiveness of these networks lies in the ease with which people can disconnect. Bauman is concerned that this undermines human bonds, bonds that young people are not aware of losing because they have never experienced this kind of situation. Bauman questions whether the technology of the twenty-first century truly has the capacity to advance us (2012). However, those advocating the projective identity capacity of digital spaces make connections between learning and identity work to support the view that texts like videogames provide many affordances for action not possible in the non-virtual world.

Projecting identities

Participation in the types of digital practices outlined above have opened up new ways of thinking about identity. Gee's (2007d) identity principle has been posited as one way to understand the extent to which people can project onto virtual characters, and vice versa, and the levels of empowerment and authorship afforded by this type of textual practice. The identity principle outlines how videogames encourage identity work and reflection on identities. Gee says:

Learning involves taking on and playing with identities in such a way that the learner has real choices (in developing the virtual identity) and ample opportunity to mediate on the relationship between new identities and old ones. There is a tripartite play of identities as learners relate, and reflect on, their multiple real-world identities, a virtual identity, and a projective identity (p. 64).

Projecting involves seeing the virtual character as one's own character in the making (p. 50). In order to achieve this, a person has to inhabit the identity offered by the game and make a commitment to the virtual world in which that virtual character exists (Gee, 2005a, p. 34). Gee (2007d, p. 55) explains how projecting has a double-sided meaning. Virtual characters are projects the player has been offered for command, and they are beings onto which a player can project their goals and desires.

Another way in which projecting has been conceptualised has been through the notion of a projective stance. We adopt this stance when we successfully mesh our own desires with those of a virtual character (Gee, 2008). We are thus both imposed on by the virtual character and their goals and characteristics, and are capable of imposing ourselves onto that character. When we look at the world, we see it in terms of possibilities for action. To this, we apply our desires and intentions as human actors. When we successfully mesh these two elements we take a projective stance to and in the real world. Projecting necessitates a connection between the virtual and the real which Unsworth (2006) says is one reason why there is a great deal at stake through projected identities.

The ability of videogames to allow people, through the design of virtual characters and worlds, to 'try-out' new selves is central to the identity principle thesis. Gee (2005d) makes specific reference to role-playing games as "equipment for playing with living" (p. 105). Characters in games, like characters in real lives, come with limited potential and capacities, and it is up to individuals to consider the best ways to work with those potentials to shape the kinds of growth that can occur. The equipment Gee refers to is embedded within the design of games, but also importantly in the predispositions that people bring with them when they begin a game, including their desires and goals. This identity-work is especially valuable for individuals in the twenty-first century as a

globalised world pulls on people and requires them to be many, often conflicting, identities, at once. It provides the means for young people today to be the “shape-shifters” (Gee, 2005d, p. 110) the world requires of them. It allows them to be risk-takers in a way that is more difficult to try in the non-gaming world where the consequences are heightened (Gee, 2005a, p. 35). Through projective identities, or what I sometimes refer to as projective work, people can transcend the limitations of their own real-world identities. The identity principle, the projective stance and projective work all refer to a theory of trying to understand the relationship between identity practice and videogame play and one which has been the basis of research centred around the playing of videogames.

While research has attempted to understand the relationship between identity formation and gaming, this has rarely been used to explicitly test the merits of Gee’s identity principle. For example Steinkuehler’s (2006a) analysis of player experiences within *Lineage*, a game which allows gamers to create virtual selves through the design of on-screen identities, revealed that the way these virtual selves were perceived and acted upon by other players during online gameplay was not always consistent with their desired effect. Beavis and Charles (2007) studied gendered identities as they were constructed and re-constructed within the context of cyber LAN cafes. They discovered that despite the male-dominated environment of the LAN café, which inhibited the participation of the girls who chose to visit this café, there were opportunities within the textual world of the game for the blurring of these same boundaries. Hawisher and Selfe (2007b) have used Gee’s projective identity to describe the identities developed during the gameplaying experiences of John, a sixteen-year-old high school student, whose choice of character, the development of this character, the completion of quests, and his immersion in the game *Final Fantasy XI*, all represented ways he could actively engage in constructing the world in which he was playing in order to suit his desires. Gee and Hayes (2010) describe a study of several gamers who chose to write and share their gaming stories in an online environment. The experience of one gamer, Yamx, involved taking on many new roles associated with her gameplay, such as mentor, teacher, dungeon master and player, and which the authors characterised as a melding of virtual and real-world identities. However, whilst these studies highlight examples of individuals who gained the capacity to play with ways of thinking, being, and doing through a negotiation of real-world and virtual identities, all either do not address directly Gee’s identity principle, do not relate to classroom-based contexts, or both. What we are left with are assumptions about the projective identity capacity of playing and studying these texts in formal educational contexts. Given Gee’s strong advocacy for the place of videogames in literacy learning contexts (2005a, 2007d, 2008), not enough is known about the extent of projective identity work possible when texts typically practised outside of school are brought into subject-English

classrooms and affected by teacher-led instruction. A similar gap in the research is also evident in establishing a connection between videogame-enabled projective work and improved learning.

The ability to play with identities has been identified as one way to achieve deeper learning. Gee (2005a) supports this idea by highlighting the need for learners to make an extended commitment of self in order for deep learning to take place. He says that one reason that gamers become committed to the new virtual world is through their commitment to their new identity (that of virtual characters), and through this commitment, learning occurs. This commitment is enhanced by story elements which are co-produced jointly by real-world players and virtual-world characters (Gee, 2006). Resnick (2007) develops this idea arguing that as players take control of virtual characters they become designers; they experience iterative cycles of creation whereby ownership of learning increases considerably. Jewitt (2008) has also highlighted the potential learning benefits of the way technology has opened up spaces for identity play. Jewitt found that as learners participate in a broad range of online spaces, multiple identities are produced and maintained. Thus, the 'design of self' becomes a complex and ongoing activity played out over multiple sites and media (p. 7). Finally, Squire (2008a) uses the term 'designed experience' to capture the way human players utilise virtual characters in virtual worlds, proposing that the simulations which take place through these interactions recruit creative problem solving and productive acts. Again, it is the opportunity to investigate classroom-based research focussing on the connection between Gee's identity principle and learning which motivate this study.

2.2 Videogames and Learning

This second section of the Review introduces research addressing the relationship between videogames and learning. The breadth of research into this area has expanded enormously over the past decade. This study's focus on the intrinsic textual practices associated with videogame play and study, produced an interest in the way videogames scaffold and support learning. The literature suggests that this occurs through a number of means, including; embodied learning, social practices, interactivity, narrative-centred learning, and gaming capital. What is revealed is evidence of relationships between texts and learning that are both familiar and strange in comparison to forms of learning found in many subject-English classrooms.

Embodied learning with videogames

Many theorists have focussed on the situated learning they argue occurs in videogames (Gee, Shaffer, Halverson, & Squire, 2005; Squire & Jenkins, 2003). The notion of situatedness, or situated experience, appears in several disciplines: in philosophy through Heidegger's phenomenological

philosophy (1927, translated 1962); in psychology through Gibson's view of environments and the 'affordances' they offer specific organisms (1979); in education through the work of Dewey (Dewey, 1938) and thinking as engagement in action (1922); and in sociology through Goffman's theory of identity creation through performances of self (1969). As Wenger (1998) says, what these many theories of situated experience have in common is the primacy they all attribute to the interactive relations of people with their environment.

One of the first authors to connect videogames to notions of situated learning was Bowman (1982) who focussed on one of the first mass-produced videogames, Pac-Man. He hypothesised that the supposed 'addictiveness' of the game could be explained by the presence of an action system within the game which balances skills and challenges with clear goals and immediate feedback. The centre of this action system is the player who takes the key role. In the field of education, Gee (2007d) has theorised extensively on the relationship between situated cognition, which he believes typifies videogames and good learning. Gee (2009) has articulated a view of situated cognition which says that language and thinking are tied to the experiences people have in the world. Meanings exist not in the head, but rather in and through social practices which are themselves characterised by highly contextual circumstances involving networks of objects and actions tied to specific times and places (Gee, 1997, p. 274). This theory of learning draws comparisons between learning as it is understood to occur during videogame play and learning as it takes place in schools.

One of the most common arguments in favour of videogames as learning tools focuses on their ability to facilitate constructivist learning environments and new ways of thinking about schooling (Carr, Schott, Burn, & Buckingham, 2004; Gee, 2007c; Squire, 2003). Gee's influential work *What videogames have to teach us about learning and literacy* (2007d) lays the theoretical foundations for much of the scholarship which followed. It sought to use videogames as a means of building schooling on better principles of learning, outlining thirty-six 'Learning Principles' found in good videogames which combine to scaffold gamers through hard, long and challenging experiences. Gardner, Weigel, and James (2009, p. 9) have similarly compared traditional didactic methods, in which the teacher is seen as the possessor of knowledge to be imparted to students, to a digital era redefining pedagogical roles. The results have been increased opportunities for constructivist epistemologies which elicit more engagement and investment on the part of the learner. Games are places of deep learning, Gee (2012b) argues, because they constantly assess players and provide feedback, a model of twenty-first century learning that has at its core the design of simulated environments.

Empirical research has revealed a relationship between learning and the textual practices taking place in simulated environments. A meta-analysis of serious games²⁴ (Wouters et al., 2013) found that they were more effective than solely conventional instruction methods, in terms of learning and retention, when the game was supplemented with other instructional methods, such as when multiple training sessions were involved, and when players worked in groups. Similarly, a systematic review and meta-analysis (D'Angelo et al., 2014) of the role of simulations in STEM²⁵ domains concluded that, overall, simulations had a beneficial effect over efforts where there was no simulation. It is worth noting that most of the studies reviewed above were in the sciences, and there is a lack of empirical work in the field addressing the efficacy of simulation-based learning in literacy or social-science contexts. Furthermore, Tobias and Fletcher's (2012) quantitative analysis of ninety-five empirical studies on the use of games in instruction was more tempered with regards to potential learning benefits. They concluded that the learning potential, when measured by the transfer from game play to performance on tasks external to the game, can only be expected when there is a connection between the cognitive processes involved in gameplay and the external task. Explanations as to how and why learning is supported by action in these virtual environments has taken a number of forms.

Many arguments have been proposed to explain why learning might be supported by student activity in simulated environments such as videogames. Juul (2001) highlights the narrative elements found in many videogames to explain why these might be such attractive and engaging texts for gamers. Squire (2003) focuses on the powerful emotions elicited by videogames, such as fear, power, aggression and joy, in association with game-players entering a state of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), to account for the learning which occurs in virtual worlds. The strength of these emotions is often such that time becomes distorted, self-consciousness disappears, and the motivation for continued activity is led not by external rewards, but intrinsic motivation. Further to the constructivist thesis discussed earlier, Gee (2007a) explains how the simulated and virtual spaces available to game players are not dissimilar to the way we create simulations in our real world learning; "we think and prepare for action with and through our simulations" (p. 200). Digital tools, like videogames, represent external goal-based simulations, similar to what we do internally in our heads, he argues. Thus, game worlds, whilst virtual in nature, in fact provide players with external simulation, encouraging learning not necessarily in the mind, but rather through action in the material and social world. Juul and Norton (2009) emphasise the distinct relationship between a game's interface and gameplay in contributing to learning. They say that good videogames have an

²⁴ Serious games aim to simulate real-world events or processes for the sake of training or educating users (Wouters, Van Nimwegen, Van Oostendorp, & Van Der Spek, 2013)

²⁵ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

easy to use interface, but provide difficult gameplay challenges, and that this facilitates learning. The arguments established here have been applied to practice-based research working with specific videogames to explore the learning potential of videogames.

Numerous edited collections have been compiled to bring together the findings of research investigating videogame-based learning (Hawisher & Selfe, 2007a; Hayes & Duncan, 2012; Khine, 2011; Salen, 2008a; Steinkuehler, Squire, & Barab, 2012). An examination of several studies focussed on specific videogames demonstrates some of the ways in which this type of research has contributed to the field of learning with, and through, videogames. Gee, Shaffer, Halverson, & Squire (2005) make reference to the army-simulation trainer and first-person shooter *Full Spectrum Warrior* to highlight the power of simulated environments, discussing how successful navigation through the game requires players to be able to think and act like a modern soldier. Steinkuehler's (2006b) work investigating the practices in *Lineage*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming, MMOG, concluded that the online space represented a learning environment with rich reciprocal teaching and apprenticeship. Journet's (2007) use of *Myst*, and Ruch's (2010) work with *Fable 2*, both showed that the combined effect of narrative, action, stories, immersion, agency, and transformation, produced an environment which encouraged active learning, and subsequent engagement and success. Deep learning in the games was attributed to player agency which occurred through embodied action. These, as well as other examples of researchers incorporating videogames into learning contexts (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014; Klopfer, Coulter, Perry, & Sheldon, 2012), establish the learning potential tied to this kind of textual work. In the content of contemporary schooling, student learning as a result of embodied action in these environments has also attracted significant research attention focusing on the social practices of gameplay.

Social practices

Videogames are often the conduit for the formation of communities of practice which foster learning. Aarseth (2001) and Prensky (2003) make reference to the innovative way videogames support social activity when they compare these texts with old mass media, such as theatre, movies and novels. Where the technological affordances were once social on a local level, the popularity of massively multiplayer games now makes them social on a global level as well, says Prensky. He rejects the suggestion that social practices in these settings produce short-attention spans, and proposes that students' 'so-called' short attention spans are more accurately short-attention spans for learning in old ways. Unlike schools, which tend to isolate and sequester students from one another, the practices associated with videogames immerse players within a community of practice, where application of new facts and information can occur in-context and in meaningful ways (Gee et al., 2005). Gee (2005a) develops the idea of learning through interactions with others in online

spaces, referring to the ways gamers share their virtual worlds and as a result are encouraged to think about their actions and the effects of these actions on other players. Called 'cross-functional teams' players must understand each other's specializations in order to integrate and work together.

Steinkuehler's (2006b) research into the communities that form in MMOG environments demonstrated that extensive learning takes place in these virtual spaces. Characterising MMOG as learning communities where problem solving requires access to a collective intelligence which is itself produced by individuals participating in that community, this type of social practice is valued for what it reveals about the relationship between cognition and action in a social world. In a different investigation of MMOGs, Steinkuehler and Williams (2006) found that they provided spaces for social interaction and relationships well suited to bridging social capital and social relationships which, although not necessarily providing deep emotional support, functioned to expose the individual to a diversity of worldviews. Furthermore, Steinkuehler's (2006a) investigation of the complexity of practices in one particular MMOG concluded that individuals do not just play the classes of characters that the game design provides (knight, prince, elf, etc), but combine community practices in association with interpretive systems to determine what they will do with these characters, implying that the online identities tied to these characters are never static or determined once and for all, but rather are indicative of who one is in the here and now, and with whom. The ideas emanating from Steinkuehler's research relate to work developing the notion of affinity groups.

The idea that videogames and their associated practices create good communities where players go to form affinity groups has received much attention (Gee, Herz, Hinrichs, Prensky, & Sawyer, 2004; Squire, 2006; Squire, Giovanetto, Devane, & Durga, 2005). The term 'affinity group' has been developed to describe the nature of these groups. It captures the way learners are bonded to a group through shared endeavours, goals and practices (Gee, 2007d), and where learning in these environments flourishes as expert practitioners shape what is deemed acceptable and recognisable within the group. Rather than learning constituting a private affair, it is intensely social as the novice is guided into an understanding of what counts. Gee & Hayes (2011) have built on Lave and Wagner's (1991) work on 'communities of practice', articulating the importance of affinity group in terms of scaffolding good learning, especially what they reveal about the lack of affinity spaces in modern schooling. For Gee (2005b, 2007d), affinity spaces are not just spaces where game-players come together but rather these spaces can occur anywhere that people gather and configure the spaces to facilitate common activities. The term has been applied to numerous digital contexts in order to explain why people come together and spend countless hours playing videogames socially in online spaces.

Various researchers have used Gee's notion of affinity groups to explain interactions between people in online and digital environments. Knobel (2005) has used the term to conceptualise how memes are shared and communicated across groups of people, and the role of the internet in mediating these relationships. Squire's (2008b) review of literature into the guilds or communities associated with MMOGs focussed on the ways these forms of games provided the scaffold for social structures. Gee and Hayes (2012) conducted studies of fan sites associated with the *Sims* game to identify features of affinity groups, noting how these support learning and contrasted to how schools were typically organised. What these studies reveal is that affinity groups involve social interactions that reveal forms of literacy and learning which have implications for school-based learning, especially with regards to how learners support each other.

One aspect of affinity groups which received further attention has been the manner in which they involve experts scaffolding less-experienced gamers. Gee (2012) explains how rather than segregating newcomers from masters, a whole continuum of people is accommodated by affinity spaces which in turn provide the circumstances for 'newbies' to learn from others. Thus, entry for newcomers is made easier. Gee contrasts this to schools which separate masters from newcomers through tracking and grade levels that limit the exposure of those most in need to advanced learners. This concept of a relationship between masters and apprentices has informed practice-based research in the field of social videogame play. For example, Squire and Jenkins (2003) in their analysis of the military game *America's Army* showed how extensive scaffolding from experts, more experienced members of the community of gamers associated with this game, guided novices to succeed in the game. Burn and Carr (2003), through their use and analysis of social semiotics to study sign-making and sign-interpretation during online multi-player RPG²⁶ *Anarchy Online* concluded that it was the combination of representational, ludic, and communal motivations which "meshed" (p. 20) during gameplay to inform one another and the shaping of meaning-making. These findings are similar to that of Carr et al (2004), who found that a significant feature of interactive gameplay was the input from friends within collaborative play. Again, there has been a lack of focus on the types of master and apprentice relationships which might evolve in school-based contexts drawing on videogame literacies. Other researchers interested in how gameplay might scaffold learning have focussed not on the relationship between one game player and another, but instead to the relationship between game player and game.

Interactivity

Research into the way gamers interact with videogames and other digital technologies has attempted to understand the bi-directional nature of this relationship and the extent to which a

²⁶ Role-playing game

gamer's input is incorporated into the overall system (Bogost, 2007; Gee, 2005a; Grodal, 2000; Murray, 1997; Ryan, 2001; Salen & Zimmerman, 2005). Ryan's (2001) theoretical work on interactivity distinguishes between interactivity which is figurative, where there is collaboration between the reader and the text in the production of meaning, and interactivity which is literal, meaning "textual mechanisms that allow the reader to affect the 'text' of the text as a visible display of signs, and to control the dynamics of its unfolding" (p. 17). In more practical terms, textual practices that involve a student reading a novel represent figurative interactivity as the student's reading of the text necessitates collaboration with the author's work. Textual practices which invite a gamer to use a controller to direct an avatar represent literal interactivity as the gamer's actions affect the actual text, as evidenced by visuals on the screen. For interactivity to be literal the text must undergo physical changes during the reading/making process.

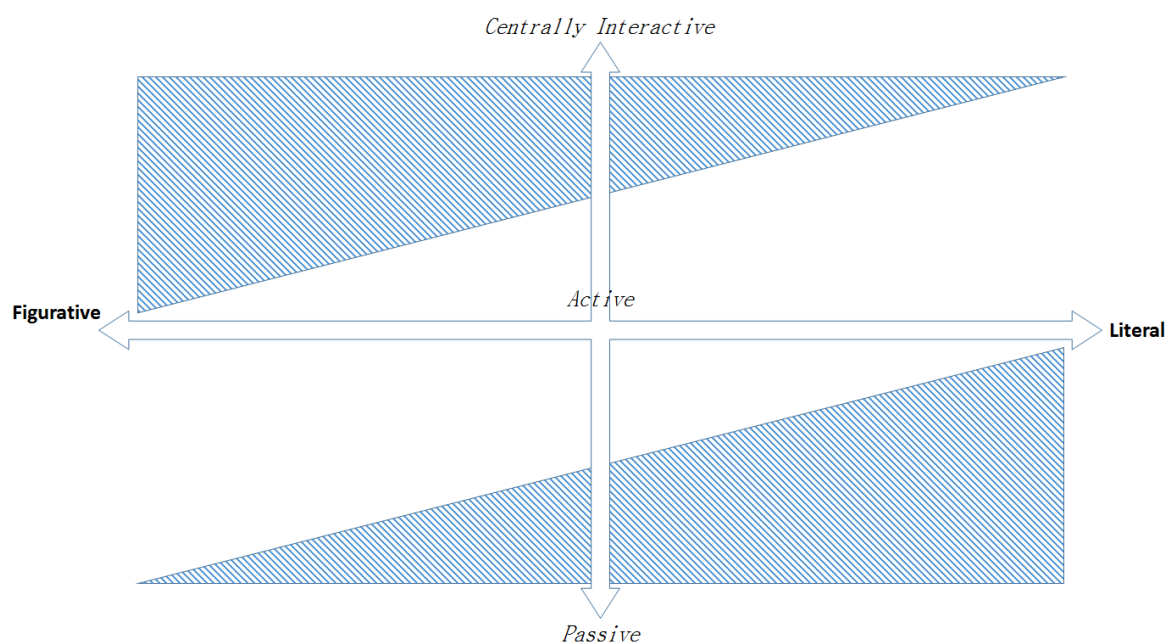


Figure 3: Ryan and Grodal Interactivity Chart

Grodal (2000) suggests a three-part typology of interaction different from Ryan's in that it focuses less on the meaning derived from textual practice, and more on the input-output connection between user and text impact and how this impacts upon interactivity. A linear spectrum is used to position each aspect of interaction. Passive interaction is at one end of this interactivity spectrum, where agents are witness to space, action, and processes, such as watching a film. In the middle of the spectrum is active interactivity, involving the exploration of spaces, actions and processes that are fully self-controlled, like walking through a gameworld. At the other end of the spectrum are centrally interactive interactions, where the player is confronted with processes and agencies that are only partly under their control and require the player to perform actions in response to other

active forces acting upon the player, such as monsters or villains who threaten the human player's virtual avatar. To various degrees, videogame play can be positioned on this spectrum.

However, some contributions to the field have been more sceptical about the role of the game during videogame enactment. Garite (2003), for example, describes the connection between player gestures and on-screen effects as the repetition of gestures, *ad infinitum*. Garite is critical of the supposed interactivity associated with videogames, instead characterising the choice element of these texts as "a relentless series of demands, or a way of disciplining player behavior" (p. 1). He uses terms like auto-surveillance and self-monitoring to demonstrate how players must police their game screens, and also police themselves. For Squire (2006), debates about interaction and gameworlds has created a tension over who exactly is the author of these texts. As a result of this tension, Squire argues that we can only understand the meaning of games by looking at what players 'do' with games and the subsequent meanings they create and take away from their gaming experiences (p. 21). Holmes (2007) is also critical of the presumption often ascribed to new media in relation to their interactive capacities. He argues that traditional media can be interactive and new media do not necessarily guarantee interactivity, and that the discourse associated with interaction has come to ignore embodied forms of interaction.

Narrative-centred learning

Research establishing the positive and negative mood effects readers experience during literary narratives (Gerrig, 1993; Gerrig & Egidi, 2003; Rapp, Gerrig, & Prentice, 2001), and narrative-centred learning environments (Mott, Callaway, Zettlemoyer, Lee, & Lester, 1999) has also drawn attention to the relationship between narratives in videogames and how they might function during videogame play. Focussing on emerging technologies and experiences in cyberspaces, Murray (1997) argues that these spaces provide the contexts for new narrative opportunities. She gives the example of a living person who can enter the world of a story through a 3D reality which can model complexities of life in new ways. Ryan (2001) takes a similar position when demonstrating how narratives within the realm of virtual reality can provide the ability to transcend the boundaries of human perception. Using rhetoric similar to that adopted by those advocating projective identity potentialities, Ryan says that as people strip themselves of their real world identities in order to enter these fictional worlds: an entire range of conceivable roles becomes available.

Several commentators have theorised about the way learning manifests in narrative-based digital spheres. For example, Consalvo (2003) argues that fan-based walkthroughs, whereby a gamer records, narrates, and shares their progress through a game with a larger audience via the internet,

function as narratives for gamers. Gee (2007d) emphasises how stories in videogames unfold differently, in the sense that players, in their exploration of gameworlds, can find different things and discover things which relate to the storyline in a different order. As a result, stories in videogames are dependent on different players' actions. Furthermore, levels of emotional investment in the story change due to the death of virtual characters who differently return to the game, or stay dead. This is in contrast to the way characters in novels exist. For Ito, (2010) the prevalence of digital and networked media has not had the effect of supplanting traditional media, but rather created new pathways for engaging with these imaginaries. She describes the context of Japanese media-mixing where there has been a significant shift towards stronger connections between traditional narrative forms and new interactive mediums, typified by gaming formats that have been tied to other media forms, such as television and comic-books. The result has been greater fidelity and effect in everyday life. Gee and Hayes (2011) note that videogames as stories are not better or worse than print-based stories, rather they offer different pleasures and frustrations, but they recognise the problem posed by a human's involvement in the action of the narrative which can be so demanding of our attention during gameplay that the larger storyline "seems to float somewhere vaguely above me" (p. 81).

Contributions to the field have focussed on the relationship between interactivity in videogames and narratives. Poole's (2000) work investigating what makes some games more engaging than others described how the design of games allows elements from one genre to be attached to other genres through a framework of narrative, which when combined with interactivity, contributes to the production of "an ongoing narrative constituted by the player's actions and decisions in real-time" (p. 167). Majewski (2003) argues that the interactivity component of videogames allows for a greater degree of subjectivity than one would expect from non-interactive narrative forms of media. He also describes how the author's abilities as narrator had to be shared with the game-player to various degrees. Additionally, a range of work has sought to understand highly realistic gameworlds in terms of how videogames: construct a sense of place which enhances emotional connection to certain locations (Ryan, 2009), enlist narrative story lines and interactive rules that support a dynamic unity of person and transformative play (Barab, Gresalfi, & Ingram-Goble, 2010), and contribute to designed narrative-centered learning environments (Spires, 2015). However, not all of those interested in the operation of narratives in videogames have been as positive about their learning potential.

There has been resistance to the idea that there is something distinctive about the way narrative is enacted during videogame play. Juul (2001) rejects the notion that games involving interaction can perform basic narrative functions. He explores the relationship between time and narrative to argue

that unlike novels or films, where time can refer to the time of the events being told, time can also be considered in the sense that reading a novel or watching a film requires time to reconstruct the story, to highlight how videogames are essentially in a state of perpetual pause until the player decides to take actions. As a result, games cannot perform basic functions of flash-forward or flash-back as they only ever exist chronologically. Aylett and Louchart (2004) have detailed the 'interactive paradox' which describes the conflict between an author who seeks control over the direction of a narrative to give it structure and the gameplayer who demands the autonomy to act and contribute to the unfolding story. There are conflicting positions regarding the relationship between gameplay and narrative which will raise issues for subject-English classrooms constantly asking questions about the author's intention as it is found within narrative choices.

Gaming capital

The connection between the possession and use of appropriate forms of capital in the learning process is well-established (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In more recent times, attention has turned to the forms of cultural capital associated with gameplay and their impact on learning. Malaby (2006) was one of the first to draw on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to discuss how material, social and cultural forms of capital can come to be transformed across the virtual and real world, and as a result, blur distinctions between these domains. In this context, Malaby develops examples of both social and cultural capital which are realised during gameplay, and uses these examples to talk about the resources humans use to move between synthetic and real worlds. Consalvo (2007) was the first author to theorise videogame learning in terms of gaming capital describing how players belong to particular groups that share similar practices, beliefs, and a sense of style, "a culture distinct from mainstream society" (p. 3). Gaming capital is accumulated as gamers gain knowledge about games and game culture, but more importantly, as they share that knowledge with others (Consalvo, 2009). Thus, players can develop gaming capital by playing a game a great deal and gaining deep knowledge of the game, which is then shared with fellow gamers. This social component of gaming capital is of particular interest to the learning potential of this form of capital.

Sotamaa (2009) also highlighted the role played by the game industry in shaping gaming capital. The interest commercial bodies have in packaging and selling different elements of gaming culture, such as game guides and hint books, contributes to a culture under constant negotiation. The result is that the flow of gaming capital must accommodate complex networks of players, hobbyists, and industry partners. Sotamaa (2010) expanded these ideas on gaming capital to include the dynamic cultures around which gaming capital was activated. Gaining currency in terms of knowledge and

opinions associated with game-related 'things' occurs in the context of relations with other people. The meaning of this capital does not exist in a vacuum, but rather, within cultural frames shaped by networks of players who engage in activities together.

An extensive investigation into the characteristics of gaming capital formed a key part of the *Literacy in the Digital Age* project (Beavis, 2009b). Using gaming capital to rethink literacy, Walsh and Apperley (2009) found that the circulation of information about gaming that takes place in the media ecology of videogames helps establish a hierarchy of gaming capital among adolescent gamers. They emphasised local sociologies affecting the patterns of value attached to gaming capital and argued that the capital has limited exchange value on its own as it is evoked only through the social element of games. In later studies, they concluded that players learn from each other through the exchange of knowledge and skills; the gaming capital required to succeed (Apperley & Walsh, 2012). As videogames increasingly make their way into classrooms, gaming capital as a manifestation of the 'world around the game' has been identified as one way to bridge the gaps between out-of-school and in-school literacy practices (Beavis, 2013b).

Walton and Pallitt's (2012) work identifies the difficulty with conceiving of gaming capital, or gaming literacy, in the singular. Their work researching young people's play practices in Cape Town, South Africa, found that there is a great diversity in their gaming practice. Income inequalities and highly differentiated technologies of digital gaming resulted in a fragmentation of gaming and cultural consumption. They suggest caution when speaking of 'game literacy'. This work has implications for how terms such as gaming capital are employed as a means to encapsulate the social and cultural capital gained through gameplay.

2.3 Videogames and the Subject-English classroom

The final section of this Review begins by tracing the ways that definitions of literacy have changed over the past few decades in response to increasingly multimodal and digital forms of textual practice and how the place of literacy in subject-English complicates responding to these changes. The focus then shifts to establish the main arguments made by those supporting and opposing the integration of videogames into subject-English contexts, a movement which has circulated around the notion of videogame literacies. Finally, a series of case-studies which have brought videogames into subject-English classrooms will be reviewed, including an examination of the pedagogical implications of working with these texts.

From literacy to videogame literacies in subject-English

The form and function of language and literacy in schooling has been a source of debate often centred around the way schools produce and reproduce knowledge, culture and social relations (Apple, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Dewey, 1938; Foucault, 1970; Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1983). Literacy academics have pursued the transformation of literacy pedagogy and policy, challenging the ways that subject-English has been conceptualised and practised. This has served to open up this area to new ideas about what constitutes literacy and how it might change in response to shifting textual landscapes (Freebody, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003b; Lo Bianco, Freebody, & Language Australia., 2001; Snyder, 2008). A shift in discourse from the literacy of the page to the literacy of the screen has come to reconceptualise literacy so as to include visual and multimodal forms of representation and textual work (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000a, 2000b; Gee, 2009; Kress, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; New London Group, 1996; Unsworth, 2001; Zammit & Downes, 2002). When accompanied with an increasing emphasis on the social and contextual nature of all language work (Barton, 2001), the result has been a broad move to consider literacy in the plural rather than the singular, and the articulation of new types of literacy, including: transnational literacies (Spivak, 1997), scientific literacies (Dillon, 2009), music literacy (Levinson, 1990; Tacka & Houlahan, 1995), civic literacies (Milner, 2002), mathematic literacy (Jablonka, 2003), and information literacy (Eisenberg, Lowe, & Spitzer, 2004), amongst many others. In the words of Cope and Kalantzis (2009), “the world was changing, the communications environment was changing, and it seemed to us that to follow these changes literacy teaching and learning would have to change as well” (p. 165). This change would include a move to recognise the relevance of digital forms of communication.

The changing nature of literacy practice in the digital age can be captured by disparate but related fields such as; New Media (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000b; Kress, 2003), Media Literacy (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Buckingham, 2005; Luke, 1997), and New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003a; Street, 2003). What these movements have in common is an interest in both the social and cultural practices which epitomise reading and writing in context, but also the changing textual landscape impacting literacy inside and outside of the classroom. The term ‘digital literacy’ was developed to capture the field of literacy practices taking place in electronic environments (Bawden, 2008; Gillen & Barton, 2010; Gilster & Glistler, 1997; Lanham, 1995; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Martin & Madigan, 2006). Snyder (2001) has characterised the field as the coming together of written, oral, and aural modalities into electronic systems, which have resulted in a new communication order typified by access to email, internet and the world wide web. Furthermore, Knobel and Lankshear (2008) argue that we must consider digital literacy in the plural to encompass multiple digital texts and a diversity of social practices characterised by experiences of agency,

efficacy, and pleasure that are made possible by this sort of literacy practice. Advocating the need for change at all levels of the education system in order to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving digital society, Gillen and Barton (2010) emphasise the need for students and teachers to develop knowledge and skills of digital technologies and tools, not as decontextualized competencies, but through connections to other aspects of their learning. Griffin's work on the assessment and teaching of twenty-first century skills similarly emphasises the central role played by information literacy and ICT literacy as tools for working (Griffin, McGaw, & Care, 2012). These literacies are characterised as 'basic enabling skills' which contribute to 'learning to learn' (Griffin, 2011, p. 15). A discourse of literacy has developed which makes explicit links between digital competencies and future learning and success, and one which will require a "seismic shift in thinking about pedagogy" (Gillen & Barton, 2010, p. 20) will have to accompany the rapidly changing textual and communicative environment.

Definitions of videogame literacies, or game/gaming literacies, are in their infancy. Burn (2007), in an attempt to capture what videogame literacy 'looks like', describes six characteristics of game literacy, saying:

- It draws on cultural experiences of games
- It requires access to technological tools and the ability to use them
- It requires an operational literacy
- It requires and develops an understanding of key concepts important to game-texts
- The process is multimodal and multiliterate
- A wider notion of game-literacy in order to include peripheral literacies (pp. 65-66)

For Salen (2007), gaming literacies emerge from a gaming attitude, a stance or attitude adopted and tied directly to play. Gaming literacies are not simply about how games work, as in their design, but also how they support "a performative and often transgressive learning stance based in play" (p. 307). Salen identified three examples of what gaming literacies might look like, including; learning to read a game system, modding²⁷ and world building, and negotiating the demands of fair play. Definitions have also come to emphasise two different priorities, games as design and games as social and cultural products. The former is central to definitions developed by Zagal (2008) and Zimmerman (2009), whilst the latter is more predominant in the theorising of Squire (2008b) and Hayes and Gee (2010). Beavis (2014) brings these two foci together in a model for critical games literacy based on the belief that videogames-as-text differ to other texts and forms of popular

²⁷ Modding refers to the act of changing a game, adding features previously unavailable, resulting in a game that operates differently to the original version.

culture. The model consists of two interlaced layers; games as action and games as text, and brings together aspects of how these texts exist as the active creation of new texts, but also in terms of how narrative forms or positions players in the real world.

However, these definitions have not been without challenge. Pelletier (2005b) points to the difficulty of positioning games within existing literacy frameworks due to the issue of semiotic systems and the extent to which games can be 'read' and 'written'. As a result of questions about what reading and writing involve, Pelletier argues that a collapsing of the differences between them has occurred. Other authors have pointed out the problem with the ludic, or play, element of videogames, namely that the difficulty of a game literacy is that it must also account for the playable aspect of videogames, which will likely require new and distinctive pedagogic methods (Buckingham, 2006a; Buckingham & Burn, 2007). Squire's (2008b) focus on the social dimensions of gameplay highlights the way that different gaming communities construct gaming very differently, and as a result, this will impact upon the systems of 'reading' or framing of gameplay that emerges. Some who have contributed to the notion of videogame literacies stress the importance of the 'systems-based' thinking and processing related to gaming (Pelletier, 2005b; Salen, 2007; Walsh, 2010; Zimmerman, 2009). Zimmerman (2009) explores how a gaming literacy which focuses on systems could represent a paradigmatic shift due to the fact that systems-based thinking is about process, not answers, and leads to improvisational problem-solving skills and unpredictable patterns of behaviour. This is not to suggest that other forms of literacy do not require and encourage similar practices, but that an attitude shift regarding what literacy is, and what it can be, might be necessary. What is significant about the various attempts to define videogame literacies is that few have dedicated attention as to where in the school curriculum this sort of literacy work should take place.

In one sense, the predominant role played by high stakes testing of literacy through print-based texts makes it difficult to envisage a space for the study of videogames. Two institutionalised forms of assessment contribute to this difficulty. Firstly, the construction of English to value "literary and logical skills and aesthetic and moral judgement" (Teese, 2001, p. 1), has had the effect of excluding many texts. As Teese writes:

"In disadvantaged schools, teachers try to bridge the gap between what the curriculum demands and the cultural capital that young people have available. However, frustration is common. Students show a lack of interest in English, a poor perception of its benefits, little understanding of its rationale, and a lack of enjoyment. They struggle to meet the expectations contained in the subject, which are diffuse and complex" (pg. 1)

What this reveals is that for a large number of students, who lack the cultural knowledge necessary to connect with the texts selected for study, excellence in English is seen as an impossibility, the effect of which is their regulation of effort. Secondly, national literacy benchmark testing at levels 3, 5, 7, and 9, which favour print based texts and the privileging of a particular genre of writing has had the effect of legitimising a reduced view of writing whilst marginalising other models of English (Frawley & McLean Davies, 2015). Together, these two examples of forces impacting on what English teachers can do in their classrooms demonstrates how spaces for digital practices such as those identified with videogame literacies are limited.

At the same time, the burgeoning spread of digital technologies has led many in the field to argue in favour of including more digitally-orientated literacies within the subject. Green, who describes subject-English in the twenty-first century as inescapably plural, has called for a reconsideration of the field so as to recognise the influence of new technologies (2001), and the way matters of literacy and technology are linked to matters of subject-English (2004). The focus is often on the lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with the impact information and communication technologies has had on the nature of literary texts and the new forms of text which have developed (Love, 1998; Snyder, 2001; Unsworth, 2008a). Patterson's (2000b) work researching the disciplinary background of pre-service teachers in two Australian states provides one explanation for why many teachers do not possess pedagogy appropriate for working with digital texts in their classrooms. Patterson highlights the prevalence of Literature and English-Literature undergraduate subjects during teachers' university studies, and the tendency of these same teachers to have not studied linguistic or language subjects (only 2 percent of pre-service teachers from one state studied had completed linguistic/language-based subjects.) This example makes evident how those training to become English teachers bring with them knowledge and understanding differently predisposed to support work within existing models of subject-English. Teachers with extensive undergraduate expertise in English-Literature are likely to be able to bring this knowledge with them to a Cultural Heritage model of subject-English more efficaciously than to a Cultural Studies model. Similarly, teachers who have studied creative writing and communication at the undergraduate level are likely to possess skills and knowledge transferable to a Skills model of subject-English which is print-dominated, but may be less confident in supporting students' skills development with digital texts. In the context of calls for new and open pedagogies orientated towards digital forms of literacy like videogames (Russell & Beavis, 2012), we must be cognisant of the histories that all teachers bring with them to their practice.

Arguments in favour of studying videogames in subject-English contexts

Those arguing in favour of studying videogames in classrooms have positioned their claims in terms much broader than solely subject-English contexts. It is possible to present the literature supporting videogame literacies in terms of three core schools of thought, organised according to geographic similarities. The American, British and Australian schools of thought concentrate on challenging exiting schemas of knowledge and practice associated with the place of videogame in predominantly, but not exclusively, literacy contexts. This section outlines the key contributors to each school regarding the potential of videogames in literacy-learning²⁸.

The American school

The strongest and most extensively referenced voice from the American school is that of Gee. Gee's (2007d) previously mentioned thirty-six learning principles contrast differences between how learning occurs in videogame play and the affinity groups associated with this play, and the learning that occurs in traditional schooling. As he states, the book "is a plea to build schooling on better principles of learning" (p. 9), and through these principles he supports the notion that using videogames in literacy contexts is a good idea (Gee, 2005a). Gee says that the learning theories built into games which are so successful at attracting and maintaining learners have a role to play in learning from kindergarten through to the workplace (2005c), even though he concedes that one problem with bringing the best educational games into schools is that educators would not necessarily know what to do with them (Gee et al., 2005), and that the challenge of integrating games into schools in an ongoing one, but necessary if the new skills of the future are to be developed in classrooms.

Unlike formal schooling, which Gee says too often gives students big blocks of information, decontextualized from experience, videogames represent "worlds in a box" (2004, p. 54), in that they allow players to feel what it's like to be different things, be they a biologist or a soldier in the army. Players become co-designers of games through their actions (Gee, 2005a) and as a result of their design, gamers are empowered to become producers, and not just consumers. The embodied experiences Gee (2007d) recognises as a key element of participating in virtual worlds is compared to what he describes is the traditional view, one that believes schools should teach children to memorise facts (p. 91). The passive learning Gee describes as present in too many classrooms in contemporary society can be challenged by the active learning that would come from engaging with videogames. Gee also argues that rethinking literacy for the twenty-first century needs to consider

²⁸ There is also a growing body of literature investigating the pedagogies and authentic learning associated with videogames in drama classroom contexts which have found that this kind of textual work demonstrates strong links between subject-English, media education and drama (Burn & Durrant, 2008; Carroll & Cameron, 2009).

the complex problem solving and thinking students will require and the way that videogames provide an avenue to this new learning (Gee & Levine, 2009). An innovation-based global age requires the types of literacy skills that students practice in virtual worlds where they learn to use language and other symbol systems to solve authentic problems.

Steinkuehler (2010, 2011) has taken a different approach to the debate over videogames and literacy, showing how one effect of omitting these texts from study, texts which recruit important digital practices and are an important passion area for many young men, is that these classes can become constructed as female domains which exclude interests of young men. Unlike the literacy classroom, where the highly gendered nature of practice often limits the capacity of many males to participate, Steinkuehler sees gaming as one way for young male learners to engage with complex literacy practices, practices which represent forms of literacy which match closely with national reading, writing and technology standards. In research conducted by Steinkuehler (2011), exploring boys' reading performance connected to a massively multiplayer online game, she concluded that videogames should be viewed as a solution to, rather than a cause of, the supposed deficits associated with boys' reading, and that one reason these texts are often omitted from formal literacy classrooms is because they are not to the 'taste' of many educators. Connecting with these texts and their complex practices might be one way to reengage young men in literacy classrooms.

Also from the American school, Squire has published extensively detailing the types of literacy found in videogames (Squire, 2003, 2005, 2008b, 2008c; Squire & Jenkins, 2003). Squire's contribution is one which seeks to harness the literacy which videogames 'do well', with the belief that videogame literacies have implications for teacher-instruction associated with literacy. Squire (2008b) explains how literacy researchers have been slow to focus on games as a medium of study for those interested in literacy. Where fostering games literacy has been successful it has developed literacies through playing, studying and designing games. Squire suggests that the greatest challenge might be teachers, parents and administrators who adopt an attitude of videogames as trivial, rather than as cultural artifacts and practices (p. 662). Squire establishes how videogames have become culturally entrenched and as a result the discourse is shifting from one which sees gaming literacies as an imperative, rather than just an opportunity.

The British school

The main ideas emanating from the British School are centred around the contributions of Burn, Pelletier and Buckingham, including their collective work documenting the creative literacy practices evident in videogames and media education contexts (Pelletier et al., 2010). Burn's advocacy for

bringing videogames into subject-English contexts is in response to what he says are three challenges facing subject-English (2003), namely: shifting away from language as the dominant communicative mode, embracing a different idea about the world of texts, and to look towards technologies as the apparatuses of signification. Burn argues that videogames represent the types of texts subject-English teachers need to address these challenges. While Burn recognises that subject-English teachers have commonly made comparisons between film and books (2004, 2007), game-based classroom practice represents an opportunity for literacy and media educators to address the way more contemporary texts function, especially in terms of point-of-view, narrative action, temporality, and narrative space.

Burn's interest is also in using unique features of videogames to reformulate subject-English, literacy and media education. In part, this reformulation is important because it more accurately foregrounds popular culture media as it is experienced by young people today (Burn, 2007; Burn & Nixon, 2005). While Nixon and Burn concede that this is likely to challenge the canon, there is room for accommodation and transformation in this respect. Equally important, Burn and Banaji (2007) and Buckingham and Burn (2007) highlight how recent debates about the creative capacities of young people and learning potentials of technology can both be addressed through classroom videogame learning. This kind of practice is perfectly positioned, they argue, to address questions of creativity and literacy in New Media, and to expand what constitutes creative work in this new age. The only way the potential of technology can be realised is through expanding disciplines like subject-English and media studies to investigate today's popular culture digital texts. Burn and Durran (2013) and Burn, Bryer and Coles (2016) work researching how students worked multimodally to transform literature (Macbeth and Beowulf) into computer games reflects how students can be supported to creatively mediate classical literature and videogames in the English classroom.

Pelletier's support for embracing the study of videogames builds on Burn's argument about student knowledge of popular culture texts which dominate their lives and focuses in particular on the benefits of students designing as well as studying these texts (Pelletier, 2005b, 2005c, 2009; Pelletier & Oliver, 2006). Addressing the appropriateness of game literacy as a metaphor for talking about the study of games in schools, Pelletier says that the value of practical game production in school contexts is that it develops both conceptual understandings around these texts, and creative abilities (2005b). Pelletier says we need to not just teach students how to analyse these texts, but that through design-work, students will be able to explore the relationship between internal design principles and external social purpose. This represents a way that literacy can develop complex

multimodal competencies which encourage critical literacy practices (Pelletier, 2005b), and will have implications for how students 'read' these texts.

Pelletier does identify areas where the learning and teaching associated with the integration of videogames into subject-English classrooms is problematic, due to factors including interactivity, agency and pleasure. Pelletier (2005a) explains how this is an under-theorised aspect of the videogames in classrooms debate, highlighting the paradox between videogame play, which produces pleasure and engagement, and 'too much' pleasure, which distracts from learning objectives. Recounting warnings given to teachers in the UK that suggest teachers should be told to interrupt the play process in order to prevent students from immersing themselves in the game and losing sight of the learning objectives, Pelletier says that the way games and gameplay will be understood in educational contexts is determined by the ways in which education itself is understood.

The Australian school

Theory emanating out of the Australian School has been heavily influenced by several decades of work opening up subject-English classrooms and practice to a diversity of pedagogic and theoretical positions, especially around the notion of multimodality and pedagogic approaches to multiliteracies (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Snyder & Bulfin, 2008; Unsworth, 2002; Zammit & Downes, 2002). Early theorising exploring the potential affordances of videogames in school-based learning environments were led by Beavis (1997) who problematised videogames in the context of how they might raise questions of textuality and engagement in a world of new technologies which were redefining literacy. Later work (Beavis, 1998, 1999a) sought to legitimise videogames as texts which belong in the subject-English classroom alongside a spectrum of texts worthy of study because of the way they could be used to explore the construction of values and identities, the transformation of reading practices, and new literacy practices and abilities required by a digital world. Furthermore, as these were texts which students already found engaging and exciting, they provided many opportunities for teachers to build connections between in-school and out-of-school worlds (Beavis, 1998). Student interest in these texts was constructed as something that could be leveraged and used to explore questions of representation. Beavis, referencing the shift in textual landscape at the time, argued that studying these texts could also encourage learning around visual, verbal and electronic modes to be investigated.

The rapidly changing textual environment and proliferation of digital devices in the lives and classrooms of young people led Beavis (2004) to argue in favour of better understanding the complex worlds associated with videogames and engaging with worlds where literacy was reconfigured and extended. English was "at a time of change" (Beavis, 2006, p. 61) she said, and

there were unique multimodal and technological features of these texts that demanded subject-English be challenged and transformed in order to address this. Reflecting on changing textual environments to ask questions about the future texts of subject-English, Beavis' work was instrumental in informing the work of other Australian researchers.

One approach that was adopted was that of Walsh and Apperley (2009) who suggested employing a 'media ecology' of videogames, in order to conceptualise researching learning and teaching *through* the medium of videogames. Videogames are not simply another text to be studied within the curriculum. Gameplay represents an entire new domain that lies outside of reading, writing and visual culture. Bringing videogames into classrooms is also advantageous when it addresses questions of gaming capital because this can be leveraged against other forms of capital. Therefore, simply teaching students how to 'read' videogames is not enough. They need to be able to critically understand how their game-playing practices are situated within a field of knowledge which can be moved and used in association with other tangible forms of literacy. Apperley (2010) later developed these ideas further, arguing that a classroom-based approach to studying videogames would require a framework which recognises the flow of meaning from the socio-cultural context of students into the game, and vice-versa. The complexity of the interactivity inherent in this flow is in many ways a result of the affordances of these digital texts and the ways they demand action from game-players.

In Australia, the results of a major Australian Research Council funded project, *Literacy in the Twenty-first Century* (Beavis et al., 2009), from 2007 until 2011, became the catalyst for a wide-range of findings supporting the capacity of videogames in subject-English and literacy contexts. The study juxtaposed different frameworks of analysis, including literacy, semiotic and pedagogical, in order to explore what literacy educators might learn from videogames. The publication of findings from the project offered insights into issues such as: multimodality and story-telling (Beavis, 2012), paratexts (Apperley & Walsh, 2012), game design (O'Mara & Richards, 2012), critical literacy (Apperley & Beavis, 2013), textual experience (Beavis, 2013b) and hybridity (Beavis, 2014). One key finding from the study was the realisation that videogames are dynamic texts and that in the context of classroom practice, they need to be explored in terms of *games as text* and *games as action*. Unlike traditional story-telling, games differ in that they include young people as more than just the reader, evident through the role of a player who must take action, and it is this action that they need to be supported in understanding. Another outcome was the clearer sense of what a transformed subject-English, with videogames as a focus, might look like. In response to the rhetorical question 'What do videogames have to offer to English/Literacy Curriculum?', Beavis identifies:

1. New ways of telling stories
2. Text or action?

3. Multimodal literacies
 4. Literacy practices/situated play
 5. Developing critical perspectives
 6. Creating texts
- (2012, pp. 18-19)

Some of these findings show parallels with existing approaches to subject-English, for example 'developing critical perspectives' with Critical Literacy. Others, such as 'situated play,' suggest new ways of working with texts.

A significant contribution from the project was the design of a pedagogical model to support teachers and educators working with these texts. The Critical Games Literacy model (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Beavis, 2013b, 2014) offered a scaffold for teaching with videogames, and includes two inter-woven conceptual wheels (see Figure 4: Games as Test, Games as Action). The first, games as action, has three elements: Actions, whereby games are enacted by the actions of players and by the console or computer on which the game is played; Designs, the elements of production enacted during gameplay or through participation in online communities and paratexts, and Situations, the contexts within which games as action takes place. The second conceptual wheel, games-as-text, utilises the four foci found in the wheel to form connections between the immediacy of game play to the work outside of the game. The framework recognises both the elements outside of the control of the player *and* student's responses. It responds to the "undomesticated and untameable" (Beavis, 2013b, p. 59), nature of videogame play which, through each iteration of the game contributes to the changing nature of this textual experience. Beavis (2014) explains the need to work

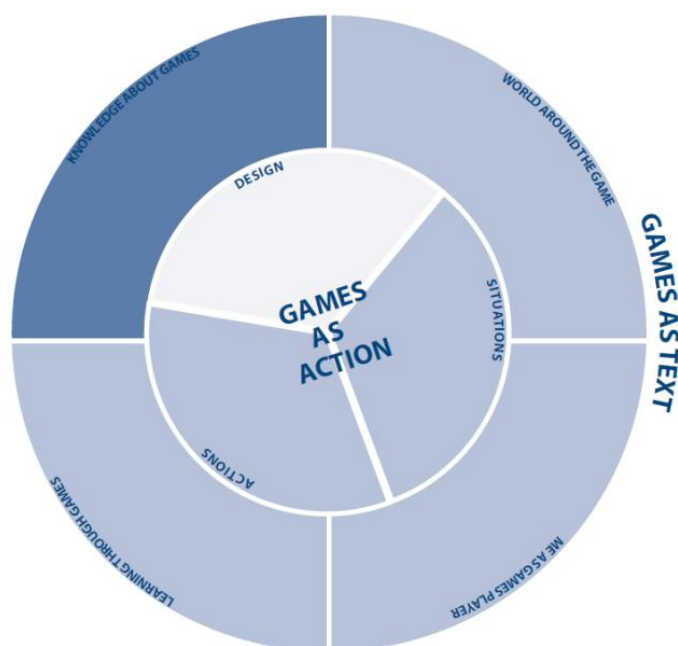


Figure 4: Games as Test, Games as Action (Beavis, 2014, P. 436)

with these texts through models such as this not only because of the pleasure and enjoyment people get from popular culture texts, but also the potential benefits that come with developing student capacity to analyse and discuss the design elements of games, as well as practice critical analysis and reflection.

More recently, the project *Serious Play: using digital games in schools to promote literacy and learning in the twenty-first century* (Beavis et al., 2012-2015) worked with schools to generate new knowledge about how students and teachers approach videogames across many discipline areas. The study was interested in the implications of videogame use, analysis and creation in classroom contexts broader than the purely literacy focus of the *Literacy in the Twenty-First Century* project. Teacher-focussed data to emerge from the study (Zagami, 2012) revealed that in twenty-six out of thirty categories of genre comparison, teachers had less gaming experience than the general population, and that the difference would likely be even greater given that the teacher sample came from a school designated a 'technological-focus' school. Furthermore, initial survey data of student experiences and perceptions with games, both outside and inside of schools, painted a positive picture of the possibilities of games, but this was tempered by a continued focus on 'Which students' and for what purpose (Beavis et al., 2014, p. 19). Findings emphasise benefits to traditional and multimodal literacies, and suggest that 'pro-social' learning skills and qualities, like risk taking, collaboration, and problem solving are promoted by this kind of textual work (Beavis, 2015).

Resistance to change

While opposition in popular media to videogames as an acceptable form of cultural practice is extensive²⁹, the novelty of studying videogames in subject-English and literacy classrooms has made critique of such a proposition rare. In the Australian context, one early opponent of videogames and their potential inclusion into schools was Donnelly (1998) who made a case against them largely based on the premise that they are anti-social and that time spent playing and studying games would take away valuable time needed for other more valued and worthwhile concerns, such as the appreciation of literature. From the American context, the *Reading at Risk* report (Bradshaw & Nichols, 2004) conceptualised videogames in opposition to books with the former held responsible for the decline of reading standards. While there have been very few criticisms within literacy and

²⁹ The following represent a summary of common news headlines adopted to capture the so-called dangerous effects of engaging in gameplay: 'The demise of guys: How video games and porn are ruining a generation', (Zimbardo & Duncan, 2012), 'Violent videogames should worry us (but shouldn't be banned)', (Ruddock, 2013), 'Nintendonitis: The secret dangers of video games', (Schupak, 2014), 'Plugged-in and tuned-out', (Kardaras, 2014), 'Video games linked to aggression in kids', (Turner, 2014), 'Teachers threaten parents over video games', (Hurst, 2015), 'Gaming as addictive as heroin', (The Sun Newspaper, 2016).

educational literature against the inclusion of videogames into literacy and subject-English contexts, a look at the tone adopted by popular media reveals how others have perceived of the legitimacy of this kind of textual work.

Declarations of videogames as harmful have been prolific in popular culture media. Some of the attacks are broad-based, such as Paul's (2011) critique of teaching students online and digital skills, arguing they should instead be taught more knowledge. Paul describes New Literacies and digital literacy as 'faddish', arguing for a greater emphasis on factual knowledge. Another example of this attack was evident through the popular talk-show, *Dr Phil* (2014), which produced and distributed an online summary of advice focussing on videogames which position them as "violent", lacking "moral consequences", and causing an "increased frequency of violent responses from children who play these kinds of videogames". Likewise, the American media has extensively reported on the efforts of serial-litigator Jack Thompson's (2014) efforts to sue videogame producers due to the supposed negative effects of sex and violence in videogames sold in the United States.

Many academics who support legitimising videogame literacies have contested the popular media's positions on the issue. Prensky (2003) points out that the myriad complex factors involved in shaping a young child's life make it impossible for researchers to determine whether videogames have an overall positive or overall negative impact. Steinkuehler (2007, p. 205) adds that what many people object to is that reading is taking place in spaces not sanctioned by adults, a concern exacerbated by the perception of videogames as a homogenous medium, rather than a diversity of games or specificity as to "which" games are the cause of the purported problems (p. 181). Snyder (2009) sees opposition to digital texts like videogames as a part of the larger 'literacy wars', a debate between conservative forces defending traditional approaches to literacy, and those of a progressive persuasion. Snyder has explained the way the media has been quick over the past decade to print stories about the so-called inadequacies of literacy education in Australia, with blame often ascribed to technology which is presented as a threat to books and the English Language. This view is supported by Campbell and Proctor (2014) who argue that the conservative movement's resistance to the current order of things has manifested into a media-sanctioned moral panic whereby the popularity of new communication technologies and young people's enthusiasm for digital devices is blamed for a perceived decline in reading. For these reasons, and many others, the inclusion of new technologies into the subject-English classroom, a place tasked with sanctioning what constitutes acceptable culture, has been contentious. This has not, however, prevented literacy-practitioners from bringing these texts into their classrooms to understand what happens at the level of practice when they are objects of play and study.

Case studies of videogames in subject-English contexts

Case studies of teachers and researchers who have introduced videogames into subject-English classrooms are highly relevant to this project. The research summarised below captures findings specifically from those studies which involved students and teachers studying and playing videogames in subject-English and literacy contexts. Five themes emerge from the case-studies. These are: games for design, games for critical literacy, games for traditional practice, games for engagement and motivation, and games for new learnings and affordances. What is worth noting with these case-studies is that the emphasis is almost always on student-outcomes, and less on teacher-practice or the pedagogies which impacted upon learning and teaching.

One aspect of the field has focussed on the way videogames in classrooms can facilitate learnings in terms of 'design'. Buckingham and Burn (Buckingham & Burn, 2007; Burn, 2007) describe a school-based intervention aimed at developing game-authoring software. Burn reflects on two students' experiences designing games using software, and also designing narratives. The case-study showed how students could be introduced into the metalanguage of game design and narrative and then use this knowledge to construct new representational systems. The study also found that this kind of textual work required students to be scaffolded into understanding relationships between representational and ludic elements, a relationship not common amongst other media forms typically studied in subject-English classrooms. In another classroom context (Walsh, 2010), teachers redesigned the content of a unit to include the design of an actual game, as well as encouraging students to research gameplay and gaming culture. The study found that as the teachers came to rethink digital games and their associated cultural practices, students were supported in the way they could transfer and re-create design of meaning across different forms. Finally, Beavis (2014) discusses a unit of work whereby students developed knowledge about games-as-text and games-as-action in order to complete the design of their own games. The design focus supported active and creative approaches to working with texts. In many ways, case studies bringing videogames into classrooms have also shown how these texts link to, and build on, traditional literacy practice.

Substantial practice-based research has attempted to understand how the play and study of videogames might impact upon and enhance school-based literacy. Mcfarlane, Sparrowhawk and Heald (2002), describe a games-related case-study taught across twelve primary and secondary schools across the United Kingdom. Teacher evaluations of the unit reported that the games provided a catalyst for learning and stimulated creative work. They also found that games encouraged the development of language and literacy competencies, such as explaining, sustained listening, and the use of talk to organise and clarify thinking. However, issues around the storage of progress during gameplay, the amount of time needed to complete the games, and difficulties

matching the reading age of complex games with the target age of the audience provided some challenges. Sandford, Ulicsak, Facer and Rudd (2006) conducted a similar study, across four schools from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and in classrooms which included subject-English. Teachers and students in the study reported increased motivation for learning but that there were numerous obstacles, such as teacher familiarity with the games, the lack of effective teaching skills necessary to incorporate the games, and a diverse range of student experiences and attitudes associated with gameplay. The latter obstacle, the range of student gaming literacies, resulted in some positives as the study reported five instances of teachers using the skills of 'expert' students to mentor other peers. Simpson and Clem's (2008) work using commercially available videogames to test the efficacy of game-anchored learning similarly resulted in students themselves becoming aware of the 'experts' in the group. The use of these types of game proved successful in meeting state-based content requirements and connections to standards. When this body of work is coupled with studies demonstrating how simulation based instruction can facilitate learning with English as an Additional Language students (Glover-Adams, 2009; Ranalli, 2008; Suh, Kimt, & Kim, 2010), the result is a body of research demonstrating how teaching about and through videogames can support traditional literacy learning.

The critical study of videogames in subject-English classrooms has also attracted research attention. A case-study involving a unit of work which incorporated the game *Sims* explored how gendered identities were formed and challenged through play and study (Beavis & Charles, 2005). Through their observations of students playing the simulation game, the authors found features of gameplay opened up occasions for girls to resist predetermined notions of what it meant to be a woman. The unit's integration of playing the game, imaginative writing, small group discussion, textual analysis work, and presentations to the class provided multiple opportunities for students to be both resistant and ready to enjoy the game, active in the "creation and representation of themselves in interaction with their peers" (p. 365). A similar focus on developing students' critical capacities in terms of understanding how videogames positioned audiences was evident in Burn and Durran's (2007) secondary school case study in England, and McNeice, Smith and Robison's (2012) games-unit, designed to allow students to develop their critical literacy skills within a context personally relevant to them. These studies capture how researchers have used videogames to explore the capacity of videogames to allow critical literacy work.

Several case studies have also found that game-based literacy learning positively impacted student motivation and engagement. Beavis and O'Mara (2010) recount a boys' subject-English class with fifteen students which promoted reflection on students' gaming selves and required students to undertake an analysis of games that interested them. As a result, students were directed towards

texts which appealed to them in order to demonstrate reflexive practice. Byrne (2012) describes a unit of work completed with disengaged and under-achieving Year 7 students. The unit aimed to improve literacy outcomes for the students and required them to prepare and present to the class on a computer game of their choice. The result was that the students were highly motivated and cooperative with each other, with most students writing more than they had before. Ostenson (2013) describes a unit of work whereby reluctant readers studied archetypal heroes across many genres of stories. The Unit included the study of narrative in videogames and resulted in students participating in deep and engaging conversations about the unique strengths and weaknesses of storytelling in videogames. Similarly, Carroll's (2016) research leveraged boys' interest with gaming to facilitate and improve literacy outcomes.

The final theme to emerge from case-study literature relates to the distinctive ways that videogames bring together visual and multimodal elements to create meaning. One investigation from Beavis (1999a) involved two case studies which addressed the implications of studying videogames and found that students were easily able to move between print and digital forms, showing they had a sophisticated understanding of the structure of games. Pelletier (2005c) describes a case study working with 12 and 13 year olds in a media and subject-English unit. Based on observations made during class sessions, and work samples produced by students, the author found that there was enough evidence to support the argument that literacy was a competence which could, and indeed should, be developed and evaluated multimodally, and not just in print form. The practical work of teaching games allowed students to explore how meaning was constructed *across* modes and in social contexts. Cuddon's (2012) gaming unit with Year 9 boys, focussed on deconstruction activities around the visual and textual context within two games, whilst Russell and Beavis (2012) and Beavis (2013a) describe units which combined the literary with more contemporary texts like videogames, multimodal in nature, which encouraged exploration, self-reliance and a sense of worth. The result was student-learning which connected traditional texts with videogames in a way that allowed the multimodal to be a catalyst for analysis and creativity.

2.4 Conclusion

This literature review has established the evolving nature of textual practice amongst today's youth, the relationship between videogames and principles of learning, and the arguments supporting the inclusion of videogames into subject-English classrooms. As Gee, Shaffer, Halverson, & Squire (2005) have articulated, one of the greatest difficulties with educational research around video games is the struggle to answer questions like: "(How) Do games teach? (How well) Can games teach students to read?", and the bigger question, "Where is the evidence that games work?" (p. 434). Positioning the research within the context of an Australian secondary school subject-English classroom allows the

study to address some of the gaps in the research. The next chapter provides an outline and justification for the research methodology adopted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“Nothing is less innocent than non-interference” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 629).

This chapter addresses the methodological considerations which guided the study. It begins by positioning methodological decisions within their relevant theoretical frameworks, highlighting the usefulness and the limitations of the various design elements of the study. It then outlines in more detail specific design factors affecting the study including the research site and its participants, data collection and data analysis processes, and issues of validity and reliability. All of this is undertaken with the study’s three research questions firmly in mind, and the aim of better understanding the textual practices associated with videogames, the interplay between real, virtual, and projective identity work, and the pedagogical issues associated with studying and playing videogames in a subject-English context.

3.1 Positioning the Research

Qualitative naturalistic research

A qualitative methodology has the capacity to provide understandings about the lived experiences of participants. A naturalistic inquiry prefers the natural setting, over a laboratory, as it is only in such settings that reasonable formulations and interpretations can occur (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In combination, these approaches provide the means to address the study’s research questions. They simultaneously value the words and experiences of participants, and the way that all meanings are mediated by symbolic representation (Denzin, 1997), be they actions or words, while also recognising the importance of “contextual relevance” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 235), a goal made possible when research focusses on the study of things in their natural environment (Denzin, 1994, p. 4).

Given the study’s interest in what happens when videogames are introduced into a subject-English classroom for play and study, the positioning of this study within a classroom, with the researcher (myself) adopting the role of teacher, recognised the importance of observing the ‘facts’ or ‘truths’ associated with such a social space as naturally as they might occur. The reality of such a space is that it is not experienced by participants through fragmented variables and processes, but rather holistically, and mediated by values, attitudes and beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus, the placement of the researcher at the heart of this social space allowed me to ‘hone-in’ on relevant

ideas (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 240), and to assume a level of responsiveness and adaptability (which I explain as 'reflexivity' below) consistent with the role of the classroom teacher, themselves reactive to the performance of their students. The words spoken by the students in the study, the work samples they produced, the questions asked by the teacher-researcher, and the language that constructs the data analysis are all characteristic of qualitative research that is simultaneously disorganised and rich in meaning-making. My role as qualitative researcher, is then to use interpretive practices to turn these meaning-makings into a series of representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), recognising the judgements I make which inform this process, including the implications of (re)representing reality.

But what counts as 'real'? The type of qualitative research practised was a product of my own poststructural theorisation of language and knowledge. In a postpositivist age, like many educational researchers, I have embraced the opportunities offered by poststructural theory (Peters & Burbules, 2004), doubtful of the existence of 'real' realities that can be found and captured, and interested in the constructedness of social reality and the particularity of all truths (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Positioning this study within an ever-growing body of social and educational research incorporating the philosophical ideas emanating from poststructuralist theory involves challenging the way institutions, like schools and universities, establish and legitimise particular discourses (Foucault, 1972). These ideas are fundamental in grounding many of my decisions around truth, knowledge and the researcher. The challenge of all researchers claiming poststructural allegiances is to avoid claims of being the voice of truth. Rather than the establishment of new truths, it is more useful to conceptualise this research as one aspect of what Foucault terms "the battle for truth" (1980, p. 74). The possibilities afforded by poststructural principles are found in their capacity to encourage sceptical and deconstructive questions to normalising practices, whilst working to destabilise taken-for-granted truths (McLeod, 2008, p. 6).

Bourdieu's sociology and a theory of practice

A sociological stance to my selected site of practice(s) provided the means to achieve the project's aims. The way sociology "denaturalizes, and thereby de-fatalizes" the social world (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 52) provides a capacity to conduct research aimed at both understanding and change. Bourdieu (2001) says that this requires turning the gaze at the established order to cause a "break with the relationship of deceptive familiarity" (p. 3). To achieve this, Bourdieu's theory of practice was adopted as the theoretical lens with which to make sense of one specific social space within the social world, the subject-English classroom. Described by Bourdieu as a "set of *thinking tools*" (1989, p. 50), the theory of practice is at its most effective when it is orientated towards a task

(Webb et al., 2002, p. 47). In order to escape the trap of objectivist or subjectivist ways of re-creating the world, Bourdieu encourages the researcher to turn their focus to practices, and the way they are mediated by a relationship between habitus and field. In short:

The habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history. The system of dispositions – a part which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles, an internal law relaying the continuous exercise of the law of external necessities...is the principle of continuity and regularity (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82).

All people exercise their habitus through practices within fields, the latter of which are historical by-products of the accumulation of practices. A theory of practice provides the conceptual tools to understand the characteristics of a particular field and to explain why fields allow some dispositions, and not others, to be invested. This theory focuses on the way social realities exist as struggles between agents differently possessed with the capacity to successfully match-make their dispositions with fields that will value them. This point can be further understood through the metaphor of 'the game'.

The struggle for distinction within a field represents a game. The habitus acts as a feel for this game, produced by a player's previous turns participating in the game. The results of these previous turns become embodied within the player and develops their "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 9). This gives them a sense of the moves that can be executed. The good player is one who at every moment does what the game requires (p. 63). The analogy of the game reveals a way of thinking about practice whereby "a set of people take part in a rule-bound activity, an activity which, without necessarily being the product of obedience to rules, *obeys certain regularities*" (p. 64) but also where strategies can be used by players to direct their practices, even though the execution of these strategies is neither conscious nor calculated, but rather tied to previous experiences playing the game. To understand the game at the centre of the project's key questions, a case study which revealed students participating in the game of subject-English textual practice was needed.

Case study approach

A case study approach, with its focus on a bounded system, including a specific site and individuals, allowed for a close and extended study of the particular (Hood, 2009). For this study, the selected case was a Year Ten classroom in a co-educational secondary school in the outer Northern-suburbs of Melbourne (a more detailed description of the site and its participants follows shortly). The focus

of textual study was a series of videogames. The time-frame was four weeks. The people involved included the eight students and the teacher-researcher. The bounded nature of such a case afforded a focus on the object of inquiry. Stake (1978) has suggested that the continued popularity of case study is a result of the “experiential understandings” (p. 7) associated with such research.

Given the research focus on what happens when videogames are brought into a subject-English classroom for study and play, I was determined that this approach would provide the relevant structure to produce “rich, real and uniquely human material” (Hood, 2009, p. 67). Merriam’s (1988) description of case study research emphasises the way it allows “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit” (p. 16), where the search for “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1997, p. 1) can be more easily achieved with a small number of participants. I wanted to move away from conducting research which has quantified how much game-playing young people were doing, and focus instead on engaging with individual students in order to understand the nature of this experience within a specific educational context. As the bounded nature of case study research determines what the study is, and is not, about (Stake, 1978), placing myself, as teacher-researcher, within the boundaries of the case led to observations and interactions facilitated by participatory action research.

[Participatory action research method](#)

Participatory action research is the method which fills the shell established by a case-study. Characterised by sayings, doings, and relatings, action researchers examine their own practices in order to develop new ideas for practice and praxis, new ways of doing things, and new kinds of relationships between those involved (Kemmis, 2010b, p. 420). The participatory variety of action research I adopted was particularly useful because it allowed me to engage in the reflective and iterative dimension of classroom pedagogy, while also bridging the divide between theorist *and* practitioner, and shifting the discourse to one of theorist *as* practitioner (Kemmis, 2009, p. 468). PAR recognises that as researcher I am well-placed to respond to the “shared perplexities, uncertainties, contradictions, conflicts and problems” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 481) associated with teaching and learning in my classroom by engaging with the ongoing struggles that occur when students play and study videogames. It provided a tool with which to address the question of negotiating a pedagogical approach appropriate to the study of videogames.

There are similarities between the relationship between inquirer and inquired, in the naturalist tradition (Lincoln, 2007), and teacher and student. A participatory action researcher not only accepts the influence they have on their participants, but embraces the opportunities this provides for interaction and learning. Commenting on research which sets out to learn from practices, Gustavsen (2003) argues that there is a need for social relationships between actors in order to develop this

learning. The authenticity of these relationships was best achieved by placing myself at the heart of the phenomenon of study, the classroom, and by engaging with those under inquiry, students. Furthermore, if educational research is to move beyond targeting the external and institutional conditions under which education occurs, then it should look to action research which seeks to inform the considerations of those whose work *is* education, thus seeking to transform the practice of education from within (Kemmis, 2010a, p. 22).

Accepting the place of researcher as practitioner, that is, from 'within', signals a break with dichotomous constructions of these roles, in a way that also tackles the problem of the symbolic violence executed by the social researcher whose point of view cannot help but involve the injection of perceptions of the object. This is a feature of all social science research and can be addressed by the reflexive researcher.

Becoming the reflexive researcher

The major concern with participative research is the problem of the investigator, the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and the arbiter of what matters and why it matters (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). The capacity for the investigator to discriminate from the data and select material to support a preconceived hypothesis, a bias, requires a recognition of the highly political nature of this form of research. What eventuates during this type of research can be understood as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991) as those agents recognised with the authority to produce 'namings', in other words, data interpretation and analysis, exercise power over those who are not authorised to do so. My position as teacher-researcher in this sense reflects the nature of all social research, whereby agents are differently equipped in the battle to shape and reshape the truth of the social world (p. 240). This problem is an unavoidable one considering the juxtaposition between producing a "detailed account of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1988, p. 38), and the fluidity of pedagogical practice which is responsiveness to learners. Rather than ignoring these challenges and leaving them on the periphery of the study's methodology, adopting a reflexive stance recognises the role of the researcher by including them as teacher-researcher, and incorporating elements of participatory action research brings the 'problem' to the centre.

A reflexive stance allows the researcher to challenge the tendency to insert oneself into the object of study. One criticism posited by Bourdieu (1989) at social science research is the neglect of sociologists who, intent on objectivising the social world, so rarely objectivise themselves, producing an uncontrollable relation to the object which results in "the projection of this relation into the object" (p. 33). What is needed is a methodological approach which overturns the natural relation of the observer to their universe. Researchers need to become reflexive operators, questioning and

justifying the assumptions underlying their decisions, and the likely contribution or challenge their research will have on particular discourses. One method of achieving this is through epistemological reflexivity (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). This requires researchers to:

Engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be 'found?' How has the design of the study and the method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation? (Willig, 2008, p. 10)

Thus, the reflexive researcher is encouraged to reflect upon the assumptions they have made in the course of research as a means to consider the implications of such assumptions on the research and its findings³⁰. The purpose of reflexivity is not to escape these assumptions, but rather to acknowledge and show how language, ideology, and culture permeate all scientific work (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Reflexivity is an approach which can also be applied to justify design implications regarding the selection of a research site, research participants, the types of data collected, and the means with which that data will be analysed.

3.2 Design Considerations

The site

The research site was Mountain High³¹, a co-educational Victorian Government Secondary School in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne. The choice of the site was a combination of the researcher's knowledge of the diversity of the student population at the school, and included an element of convenience sampling (Patton, 1990) as a staff member at Mountain High was known to the researcher prior to the intervention and indicated that the school would be interested in participating in such a project. The school's student population comprised a diverse mix of socio-economic status backgrounds. Approximately fifty-four percent of students came from the middle quartiles of socio-economic status, as determined by the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage, a measure of a range of characteristics such as parental education and school location (ACARA, 2014). A further ten percent of the student population were from the bottom quartile and thirty-five percent from the top quartile. The school was divided equally in terms of female and male students.

The buildings and grounds at Mountain High were undergoing significant renovations when the study occurred and it was not possible for the research project to take place in a standard classroom.

³⁰ A process already begin in Chapter One during the establishment of context.

³¹ Pseudonym

Instead, a room which formed a part of the Learning Centre, a multipurpose space adjoining the library, was used. The room was large enough to easily accommodate the eight students involved in the study, but was not a space typically used as a teaching classroom. Prior to the study the room was used by Year 7 and Year 8 teachers to store student work and materials. Two walls of the rectangular room were floor-to-ceiling windows. One side gave a view of an adjoining classroom which for the duration of the study was occupied by a Year 7 English class. The other windowed-wall opened up to a large learning area which was occasionally used for open learning by junior students but which during the study was rarely occupied.

The multipurpose nature of the intervention room made it easily modifiable to resemble a learning space not dissimilar to other rooms in the school. A number of chairs and tables were arranged in the middle of the room with a whiteboard standing at the front. A television on a moveable trolley was the predominant device used for displaying gameplay which was complemented on several occasions with two large overhead projectors used to project gameplay onto the white walls. The features of this physical space were notable without being overly significant. That the room was not the participants' regular classroom environment may have impacted their attitude and behaviour during the intervention lessons, however, the presence and arrangement of furniture and people in such a way as to resemble a typical classroom context minimised this potential impact.

The timetabling of intervention lessons took into consideration the requirements of the study and the demands of the subject-English teacher who had volunteered their class for the study. A standard week of year 10 subject-English classes at Mountain High comprised of two double periods (80 minutes each) and one single period (40 minutes). In order to minimise the amount of work missed while participants were involved in the study, it was decided that the students would spend at least one lesson each week in their regular subject-English class. On all other occasions participants spent their timetabled subject-English classes in the study's designated room participating in the intervention. Consequently, the study involved eight lessons, mostly double periods, over four consecutive weeks in June, 2012.

The participants

The preference for a small group of middle-years' students was justified in a number of ways. Firstly, the selection of only eight students allowed the researcher to pursue a detailed and deep understanding of the experiences of these participants. The smaller group size allowed for closer interaction between the researcher and the students, an activity which would have been more difficult in a full class of, up to, thirty students. Secondly, the decision to recruit students completing Year 9 or Year 10 at the time of the study reflected a desire to work with students who had already experienced several years of subject-English classes and as a result would have worked with a range

of texts that could then be explored, developed and potentially challenged through videogame study. Furthermore, given the prevalence of videogames amongst Australian youth, this age-group were identified as ideal participants because of the increasing independence they were likely to have experienced, especially in terms of gameplaying in contexts absent of adult supervision. When combined with the emphasis on selecting students who self-identified as gamers, it was assumed that this would facilitate the playing and studying of videogames without the need to spend time learning basic functional skills, such as operating a controller. The desire for a cohort of participants comprising a balance of females and males was sought so that potential issues around gendered learning and interactions could also be pursued.

The selection process was multi-faceted. The regular classroom teacher offered one Year 10 subject-English classes for use and this class was visited by the researcher, introducing himself to the entire class, explaining the nature of the study, and welcoming those who identified themselves as 'gamers' or who had an active interest in videogames and gaming on any platform to collect an information pack containing a plain language statement (see Appendix K: Plain language statement for students) and the requisite consent forms (see Appendix L: Consent Forms of Parents and Students). Approximately twelve students collected packs, with eight returning their signed forms within a week. At this point, the classroom teacher and the researcher met to discuss each potential applicant and the appropriateness of their participation in the study. All eight students were accepted for participation in the study based on the range of student abilities, collection of friendship groups, and the span of engagement levels taken into consideration. A subsequent informal meeting was held with the classroom teacher prior to the intervention to gather contextual information about each student and to facilitate teaching and learning. This is a common feature of teacher-practice, known as 'transition', whereby teachers share information about students in order to facilitate targeted and sometimes differentiated learning. The classroom teacher had taught these students subject-English for approximately five months prior to the intervention. Based on her responses, as well as data collected during pre-intervention interviews and the intervention, a profile of each student has been added below. In the interest of confidentiality, all names used are pseudonyms.

<u>Alicia</u>	• Sixteen years old • Plays videogames occasionally with her younger brother. • Describes herself as a quiet student who 'likes' English but questions her capacity in the subject.	<u>Adam</u>	• Sixteen years old • Has been an avid gamer in the past, however, now plays far less. • Described himself as a good English student who "gets good marks" but does not put in a lot of effort. • His English teacher described him as a student who produced excellent ideas
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	Her English teacher described her as a student who asks many questions but sometimes offers simplistic ideas, and struggles with complexity of thought.		which distinguished him as being more advanced in comparison to many of his peers. She added that through greater application he could turn his intellectual capacity into tangible work.
<u>Brad</u>	- Sixteen years old - Is an avid gamer who regularly plays socially with his family and enjoys first-person shooter games - Described himself as an “average student” who doesn’t often take part in class. - His English teacher described him as a student who worked to a good standard but had produced work ‘below par’ in recent assessment tasks. An infrequent reader of novels.	<u>Cam</u>	- Sixteen years old - Has spent over a decade playing a wide range of games, especially fantasy games - Described himself as an “okay” student who is “good at some things and bad at others”. Claimed English class was “not my most enjoyable at the moment”. - His English teacher described him as someone who worked to a good standard but rarely pushed himself. He could easily make improvements through greater application. One of the quieter students in the study.
<u>Harley</u>	- Sixteen years old - Plays videogames almost every night with a preference for open-world games - Described himself as a student who did not enjoy English. He said he found the subject difficult and was “not the best [at] English.” - His English teacher described him as a student who lost focus and motivation quite easily. This resulted in Harley falling behind in work frequently. Though Harley offered interesting ideas during classroom discussion, transforming these ideas into written expression was more challenging.	<u>Sharon</u>	- Sixteen years old - Plays games socially, on occasion, and just for fun. - Describes herself as a ‘reader’ who enjoys having to ‘absorb’ the story. - Her English teacher described her as a quiet contributor who rarely offered much in terms of classroom participation. Sharon fluctuated between being a ‘good student’ and someone who needed prompting in order to complete work.
<u>Kate</u>	- Sixteen years old - Has been an avid gamer in the past, especially the <i>Sims</i> series, but plays less often now.	<u>Rachel</u>	- Sixteen years old - Rarely plays videogames although enjoys watching friends play - Describes herself as someone who doesn’t normally like English classes

	- Described herself as being towards the more competent end of the class, especially in terms of writing. - Her English teacher described her as a student who possessed very high standards of verbal and written expression.		Her English teacher described her as a quiet student who went about her work with little fuss. She occasionally found English difficult but was studious and worked hard in the subject.
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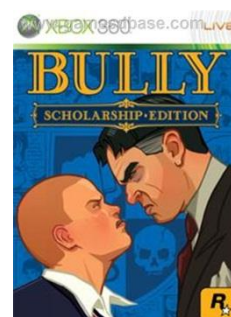
Figure 5: Student Profiles

The games

A number of considerations were made in terms of choosing the videogames for study and play throughout the intervention. University ethics' committee concerns regarding the use of MA+ rated games³², deemed not suitable for persons under 15 without accompaniment by an adult, meant that popular games with this rating could not be used during the study. Furthermore, other popular games which were within ethical guidelines required an internet-enable videogame console, a technical capacity that could not be guaranteed within the school's context. The result of these two hurdles was that videogames were selected that were unlikely to have been played in-depth by all students. The videogames used, and a short summary of each, were³³:

Bully

This is a sandbox action-adventure game, meaning the gamer can freely roam the game world and choose to complete a wide range of missions. This game involves playing as the virtual character of Jimmy Hopkins as he navigates the many challenges of day-to-day school life. Whilst the gamer has significant control over what they do with the virtual character, progression in the game involves following a somewhat linear narrative.



Dungeon Siege 3

This is an action role-playing game set in a fantasy medieval world. Human players have the choice of four virtual characters with which to re-establish the 10th legion and fight against the villain for control of the Kingdom of Ehb. The

Australian Classification Board, MA 15+ classified material contains strong content and is legally restricted to persons 15 years and over. It may contain classifiable elements such as sex scenes and drug use that are strong in impact.

³³ A copy of each game's box cover, providing more detail about the stories and gameplay mode of each game, can be found in Appendix A

game incorporates a number of visual/media forms, opening with a long sequence of narrated sepia images in a picture-story style.

Fable 2

Set in the fictional world of Albion, this game is an open-world style action role-playing game taking place during the time of the Enlightenment. The game is distinct in that the gamer's choice of actions causes morphing of the virtual character along the linear binaries of: good versus evil, and purity versus corruption. Thus, the physical features of the avatar, as well as the way other characters in the game respond to this avatar, evolve depending on the decisions made by the human player. The game can be played in single-player mode, but also cooperatively with a second player who can assist in the completion of quests and challenges.

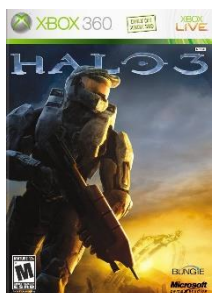


Forza Motorsport 4

This car-racing game involves the use of specialised graphics to provide a simulated car-racing experience for the gamer. There is a choice of sports cars, classic cars, and dream cars, to be played across a range of racing types, including career mode, single-race, online multiplayer mode (up to 16 players), and offline two-player mode. Players are able to upgrade their cars as they make progress and race on seventeen real-world tracks frequently used in elite motorsport competitions.

Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2

An action role-playing game drawing on the universe of Marvel comic book heroes, this game allows players to select from a pool of heroes and villains. Supporting a team of up to four human and AI characters working together, the story involves conflict between opposing sides over whether to obey or disregard a government passed act aimed at controlling super humans.



Halo 3

This first-person shooter is the third in the series of games based on a conflict on an interstellar world against alien races. The game has two modes of play. The first involves the set-story, as the gamer takes on the avatar of Master Chief as he leads a squadron of soldiers to defeat the enemy. Cinematic sequences are built-in to this mode to develop the storyline. The second mode involves Local Area Networked or Online games whereby up to sixteen players combat each other in multiplayer matches across a range of maps.

Another difficulty affecting game-selection related to decisions about how many different videogames to use during the study. A balance was required between the depth of study achievable through the close analysis of just one videogame for the entirety of the study, and the breadth of study possible by exploring a range of different game genres and stories through the use of many games. The compromise was to use six games across the intervention, with three of these, *Bully*, *Fable II*, and *Halo 3*, forming the focus of most activities. The consequences of selecting these videogames, and not others, will be addressed throughout the Data Analysis chapters, however, it is worth noting that this selection tended to favour action-based, first person gaming, dominated by male protagonists, and which represented a narrow range of videogame genres. One explanation for this selection was that I was familiar with these games and in order to support student understanding, felt it important that I could demonstrate this understanding where necessary³⁴. A second explanation was related to ethics approval issues connected to game ratings which reduced the pool of possible choices from which to select. As has previously been discussed, the adoption of a PAR method meant that decisions I made regarding game selection influenced the data which was subsequently produced, a reality which was unavoidable given the context of a study directly interested in how students respond to studying texts under the guidance of a teacher.

The intervention

The core component of the intervention was the four-week teaching unit. This involved the teacher-researcher working with the study's participants in a teaching space completing activities associated with videogame play and study. A range of playing and learning activities were conducted utilising the videogame console known as the Xbox 360, produced by Microsoft. Figure 6 provides a summary of the activities that took place during each lesson of the intervention, including titles for each activity that are referred to throughout the data analysis and findings chapter, and the material resources used or collected as a result of each activity³⁵.

A number of pedagogical principles guided the delivery of these intervention lessons. These included constructivist learning theories, such as those advocated by Vygotsky (1962) which emphasised the importance of scaffolding as a means to support students as they navigate their zones of proximal development and Bruner's (1968) cognitive learning theory. These principles of learning and teaching have been incorporated into two resources used throughout Australia in initial-teacher education and were instrumental in shaping the pedagogical dispositions of the teacher-researcher.

³⁴ This is not to suggest that there are no videogames featuring female protagonists, but rather that my own socio-cultural conditioning has resulted in exposure to a narrow field of gaming genres and examples.

³⁵ All classroom talk was audio-recorded and utilised during the data-analysis process.

The resources, B.U.I.L.T.³⁶ (Love, 2001) and L.A.S.S.³⁷ (Love et al., 2008) put language at the centre of social learning and emphasise the importance of a model where learners are supported through stages of: engagement, building knowledge, transformation, presentation and reflection.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Work samples collected</u>
Lesson 1 ³⁸	A. Introduction Activity Students worked in small groups creating a definition for the term 'videogame'. This definition was shared with the wider group. This was followed by a whole-class activity led by the teacher-researcher focussed on sharing prior experiences with gaming. B. Brainstorming Game Cover Activity This involved students working in two groups of 3, brainstorming the key themes, stories, and characters they observed based on five videogame front covers. Each group was assigned a scribe who took notes on around the front cover images.	Notes on A3 paper Annotated front-covers
Lesson 2	C. Genre introduction A teacher-led discussion about genre began this lesson followed by two short readings from the blurbs of novels. A brief discussion followed focussed on the language used in each blurb to construct the genre. D. Game Trailers Four videogame trailers were shown to the class. As each was presented students completed a table that required them to identify features of the trailer that related to: text, visuals, dialogue and music. E. Genre and Story Comprehension Questions Four comprehension questions were placed on the whiteboard. These required students to refer to earlier discussion and the table they had completed. The questions were: • How is genre created differently in videogames compared to novels? • Why is genre important in a text? • Which story is the most appealing to you? Why? • Should we study videogames? Why or why not?	Table of game introductions with text, visual, dialogue (See Appendix B: Table of Game Introductions) Answers to comprehension questions (See Appendix C: Videogames Genre and Story Comprehension Answers)
Lesson 3	F: Story Discussion The teacher-researcher began this lesson with an open discussion about any videogames that students had played over their holiday break. This was followed by a discussion about the elements necessary to create a story. G: Writing and Playing Bully Students were given booklets that included blank lines. The instruction was for the class to write the story they saw unfolding on the screen. At the same time, one student took control of the game's avatar and played the game. After approximately ten minutes, a second student switched places with the first. This activity was followed by a discussion about what aspects of the story were revealed by these game-playing moments. H: Free play Bully For the final four minutes of this lesson, in response to the preceding discussion, Andrew was instructed to play <i>Bully</i> in whatever manner he wished.	<i>Bully</i> booklet (See Appendix M: <i>Bully</i> Power Booklet)
Lesson 4	I: News Article Pair and Share This lesson began with students being placed in pairs and asked to read one of three news articles about the banning of the game <i>Bully</i>. Two prompt questions were placed on the whiteboard to facilitate discussion amongst each pair. These were: • What does this article tell us about videogames? • What does this article tell us about power?	News Articles (See Appendix D: News Articles about banning <i>Bully</i>)

³⁶ Building understanding in literacy and teaching

³⁷ Literacy across the school subjects

³⁸ Sharon and Adam were absent for the first two lessons of the intervention.

	The teacher-researcher then led a discussion inviting one member from each pair to share their responses. J: Playing, Writing and Talking about Power in <i>Bully</i> One student was asked to take the controller and play the game for approximately fifteen minutes while other students observed. The class was then asked to open their booklets to a range of questions about the theme of power. Students were required to choose five questions from the list of options and write their answers in the booklets provided. While students completed their answers, one different student continued to play the game. This activity was followed by a sharing activity whereby each student was asked to choose one of their responses to read out to the class. K: Talking about Identity The next activity shifted to questions of identity. Students were instructed to open their <i>Bully</i> booklets, whereupon the teacher read the definition of Gee's Identity Theory. Students were instructed to complete the table on the page, which included prompts relating to real-world, virtual, and projective identities. Student responses were the catalyst for a discussion which linked to the gameplay they had observed thus far.	<i>Bully</i> Booklets
Lesson 5	L: Paired Gameplay and Note-taking For this lesson, all students were given a handout with a table for filling-in. Each pair of students were required to play a game for five minutes in multiplayer mode. At the same time, the remaining six students observed and took notes on their handout about they observed. At the conclusion of this activity, every student had played a game with a partner and had completed the 'Gameplay Table.' The gameplaying and note-taking were the catalyst for discussion about the differences between games, the types of games, language, power, choice and the types of gameplay that took place. The completed handout was collected at the end of the lesson.	Paired Gameplay Table (See Figure 17 and Figure 18)
Lesson 6	M: Playing Digital Stories The lesson began with a brief discussion prompted by two questions placed on the whiteboard: What makes a digital story? How do you make a story digitally? Each student was then assigned a feature of a story, for example, dialogue or visual effects. Whilst one student played a game for up to fifteen minutes, other students were required to take notes about how their assigned element was used to create the story. This was repeated with a second game. The lesson finished with a teacher-led discussion guiding students to share their responses.	Elements in a Digital Story Notes
Lesson 7	N: Free Gameplay The intention of this lesson had been to connect two videogame consoles to allow all students to play at once. Due to equipment failure, this was not possible. An improvised gameplay activity was organised whereby students played <i>Halo 3</i> in pairs. Each time a virtual character died, the controller was passed on to another student. The final part of the lesson was reserved for discussion relating to the paired gameplay, including prompts from the teacher about: the experience, power, texts, prior learning and story.	
Lesson 8	O: Eight-Player Gaming The final lesson in the intervention involved multiplayer gaming. The first gaming experience placed students in one of two teams (4 players on each team) with the two groups competing against each other. Each team sat together and watched their own screen as it was projected onto a white wall. The second gaming experience allowed students to choose what game they wanted to play and with whom. One group, comprised entirely of males, chose to play the first-person shooter game together. The other group, comprised entirely of girls, chose to play a car-racing game. The lesson finished with the students returning to form one large group and each student being asked to share one emotion or impression they had during that lesson. Further discussion followed regarding what studying videogames in a subject-English class might look like.	Photo of room (see Figure 20)

Figure 6: Summary of Intervention Lessons

The intervention activities described above have their genesis in over a century of various models of English and reveal how teachers' ideas and beliefs about the subject are tied to historical antecedents (Patterson, 2000a). On the surface, it appears as if specific activities have been matched to particular models. For example, the Game Trailers and Playing Digital Stories activities resemble work closely related with the Skills model, seeking to support students to understand and apply language and multimodal resources. And, the Story Discussion and Talking about Identity activities bring to mind the Personal Growth model as they seek to make the texts relevant by engaging with the lifeworlds of students. However, the linear and chronological presentation of lessons through the table above masks the messiness of participatory action research and gives the impression of a pre-determined unit plan, rather than cycles of action and reflection which inform all teaching and in this case study, represented iterations of learning and teaching in response to student feedback. Rather than comprehending the intervention as a pre-conceived effort to test the place of videogames within each model, it is more accurate to see the activities as a fusion of subject-English dispositions and traditions which act in an eclectic manner upon teachers within this discipline area (Doecke, 2014; Howie, 2005; Locke, 2015), often without their knowledge or awareness.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to maximise the opportunity to form understandings in response to the research questions, individual interviews, audio-recording of all classroom interactions, and the collection of work-samples were conducted.

Interviews

Both pre-intervention and post-intervention interviews were used to collect data from participants. Approximately two weeks before the intervention, the teacher-researcher met with each participant and conducted pre-intervention semi-structured interviews³⁹. Approximately fifteen minutes in length, these interviews were conducted in an unused classroom at the school, and focussed on reactions and understandings of topics determined in advance (Hopf, 2004), such as videogame experience, the practices associated with these texts, and dispositions towards school and subject-English (see Appendix F: List of pre-intervention Guiding Questions). Post-intervention interviews (see Appendix G: List of post-intervention individualised Questions - Kate) were conducted three weeks after the completion of the intervention and again took place in an unused classroom. These interviews were more individualised in nature. The first series of questions during these interviews related to broad themes and ideas which the researcher had observed through preliminary analysis

³⁹ Henceforth referred to as 'pre-intervention interviews'.

of the data. The second series of questions were targeted to each participant as a result of data related to their participation during the intervention. Work samples and quotes from individual activities acted as the catalyst for the majority of these questions. The aim was to provide the participant with a chance to clarify what they may have meant by something they said or did during the intervention, and also to encourage them to expand on ideas and themes in the data. This method of data collection presents a number of issues.

Closely associated with constructivism and interpretivist sociology (Hopf, 2004), interviews represent constructivist texts. The variety of decisions to be made, including what to transcribe, how much should be transcribed, and whether silences should be included (Hammersley, 2010), demonstrates how interviews are less a means of uncovering reality, and more a way of (co)constructing knowledge within a given social context. This contributes to the difficulty of assigning quality to qualitative interviews (Roulston, 2010). The reflexive interview (Denzin, 2001) operates as a vehicle for producing performance texts about self and society. The context of this study's interviews involved an imbalance whereby the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989) concentrated in the teacher-researcher was an important variable shaping the interview process and the data produced during these interviews. However, within a post-structural epistemological paradigm, all texts are constructions, socially and culturally situated. Thus, the data collected from students is no less significant as a result of their position during the interview process. Furthermore, the structure of the post-intervention interviews, and the use of numerous questions functioning to check the interpretation of data collected during the intervention, member checks (Lather, 1986), described in detail below, opened up opportunities for students to respond to the researcher's initial findings based on data collected.

Observations

Observations made possible by audio and visual recordings created throughout the study represented another method by which the researcher collected data related to the study's questions. Given that the classroom teacher was also the primary researcher, manually note-taking events as they occurred during class-time was not possible. For this reason, several digital audio-recorders were placed on tables in the intervention room during every lesson. On a number of occasions, where the dynamics of space in the intervention room were deemed important, a digital camera was used. The purpose of audio-recorded observations in this study was not to objectively capture the entirety of verbal and non-verbal occurrences, an impossible task according to a poststructuralist research paradigm, but to create moments with which to make the familiar strange (Jones, Homes, Macrae, & Maclure, 2010). In his work in the field of cultural studies, Geertz (1975) has stated that, "it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something" (p. 20).

The suggestion is that utterances, be they a single word, a sentence, or even an extended monologue, have the capacity to provide meaningful data which can then be used to understand a phenomenon.

Work samples

The collection of work samples created by students during the intervention provided insights into the 'doings', 'sayings', and 'thinkings' surrounding classroom activities. Artefacts collected included all work created by students as well as resources which facilitated classroom teaching. These work samples served various research purposes. They provided data on the context within which research participants operated, suggested questions that needed to be asked and situations that needed to be observed, provided supplementary research data, and were a means to verify findings, or corroborate evidence (Bowen, 2009). The interpretation of these documents was difficult as this form of data represented mute evidence. Notes, written work, posters, assignments, policy documents and other materials represent data which cannot talk back in the same manner as research participants, and is often complicated by the removal of such data from the spatial and temporal elements within which they were created (Hodder, 2002). As Denzin (1989) and Hodder (2002) highlight, no visual text evokes the same meanings for all viewers, since meaning does not reside in the text, but in the reading of it. This is a view which has implications for validity and reliability, and highlights the significance of data analysis techniques.

3.4 Data Analysis

A two-fold system of analysis was used throughout this study. Firstly, a thematic analysis was conducted, utilising codes and coding systems, to identify major themes that related to the research questions. During this process, analysis was facilitated through the use of a computer-assisted data analysis tool, NVivo, which is discussed below in terms of its affordances and limitations. Secondly, Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977), and more specifically the concepts of field and habitus, were applied to data. This involved identifying, describing and explaining the practices of research participants, and the fields within which they operated.

Thematic analysis

Coding and coding systems

The first stage of data analysis involved the identification of themes which were then adopted as codes to classify and categorise the data. In order to identify appropriate codes, two approaches were used: theory-driven and data-driven coding (Boyatzis, 1998). Theory-driven coding involved codes derived from prior hypotheses or existing theory. Data-driven coding encouraged codes and

categories to be constructed inductively as a result of reading and reviewing raw data. This approach led to the development of codes, as seen in Figure 7.

Classroom Intervention	Characters	Subject-English	Reading	Miscellaneous	Taste & dispositions
	Choice/control		Writing		Power
	Consoles/hardware		Activities & practices		Affinity groups
	Entertainment & Fun		Future English		Affinity spaces
	Gender		Subject-English		Social spaces
	Genre				Self-awareness
	Interactive & participatory	Projective identity principle	Real-world		
	Intertextuality		Virtual		
	Learning		Projective		
	Multimodality		Identity		
	Multiplayer				
	Single-player				
	Stories				
	Tech Skills				

Figure 7: Data Analysis Codes

Coding as a process facilitated analysis as it helped reduce large amounts of data in preparation for interpretation and evaluation (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Patton, 1980; Strauss, 1987). This process occurred with the help of computer software.

The project utilised the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, QASDAS, NVivo (QSR International, 2010). All data was transcribed, scanned and inputted into NVivo. The digitisation and storage of all forms of data in one digital location improved the portability and accessibility to data, but also enhanced the ability to highlight, code, and label key themes throughout the data, and to easily produce summaries of specific concepts, themes or participant contributions (see Appendix I: Data Analysis Coding Cam and Appendix J: Data Analysis Coding Kate). There are many benefits of this form of data analysis, two of which were applied to this study: audit and log trails, and scoping data (Siccama & Penna, 2008). The former was a way to easily visualise where and when data had been entered and coded. The latter provided the means to conduct searches of data-sets revealing areas in need of further exploration due to the absence of coding or notes.

The benefits of combining thematic analysis with data-analysis software were in the grouping together of important data in preparation for analysis. This helped the researcher generate further questions for investigation, and prompted interpretation to higher levels of abstraction (Strauss, 1987). Involving the act of organising and categorising data, Boyatzis (1998) has described this qualitative data analysis method as a process, rather than a qualitative method, which has various purposes including being used as a way of seeing, a way of making sense of material, and a way of analysing qualitative information. Boyatzis uses three phases to outline the process of thematic

analysis, see a pattern, code it, interpret it. Characterised by iterative, recursive, and holographic processes (Seidel, 1998), this method breaks down data into manageable and meaningful chunks where they can be abstracted from coded segments of text (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 391). This assisted in unravelling the mass of textual data produced during the study into broad themes ready for the interpretation and analysis phase to be conducted with the assistance of an analytical tool.

[Bourdieu's theory of practice as analytical tool](#)

The second stage of data-analysis involved the application of Bourdieu's theory of practice. Data collected during the study, and organised according to common themes, represented examples of practice ready for analysis through Bourdieu's theory. Appropriating Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to explain this practice represented an analytical tool which has been praised for its capacity to link "the humdrum details of everyday life to a more general social analysis of power" (Moi, 1991, p. 1020). The application of this model here involved two steps. The first is associated with the habitus of individuals. It comprised examining the practices exhibited by students in order to determine the schemas of thought, their dispositions, and the ways these informed their actions and comprehensions in the social world. This invariably includes attention to the histories which have contributed to the formation of said dispositions, as "practices produced by the habitus ... are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principle of their production" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). The second step focussed on the space of the subject-English classroom and its role as a field, or rather many fields, structured to make offers and appeals, as well as prohibitions. This field has been unpacked throughout this paper thus far in terms of the four dominant models of subject-English (Cultural Heritage, Skills, Personal Growth, and Cultural Studies.) The space that is the intervention classroom "acts like a language, as a system of expressive possibilities and impossibilities" for action (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 512). Analysis establishes the relationship between the habitus of students (and the teacher-researcher) and the field of classroom where the study took place. It also involves investigating the extent to which these are determined from the inside, through dispositions, which when combined with capital, incite investment, and from the outside, by socially-structured geographic spaces.

Another way to consider this data analysis process is through Bourdieu's formula for practice, (Habitus X Capital) + Field = Practice (1984, p. 101). Broken down into its various elements, it can more easily be understood as an analytic tool used to investigate how:

- Practices are identified by the researcher and taken individually, or grouped together.
- The habitus of the individual/s 'doing' the practice is described.
- The historical contexts that informed the formation of such a habitus are addressed.
(Similarities and differences between participant habitus are discussed.)

- Evidence of forms of capital utilised by the individual are outlined.
- Finally, the dynamics of the field within which the practice was observed are explored.

(Adapted from Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, pp. 80-81)

Whilst the process did not always take the linear form in which it is presented above, these steps were designed to develop meaning from actors in the social world, through “a complex interplay between the past and the present” (Reay, 2004, p. 440), and the social contexts in which their actions occurred. This data analysis technique was not immune to challenges of researcher-subjectivity or bias, and so, in combination with the already-discussed reflexive researcher steps taken, certain validity and reliability procedures were performed.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Establishing the validity of research is dependent first and foremost on how we understand the term ‘validity’, and its place in research. Maxwell (2002) argues that existing categories of validity are based on positivist assumptions, traditionally associated with quantitative research designs. An alternative approach involves reconceptualising validity to explore practices of methodology through anti-foundationalist ideologies (Lather, 1993). Instead of dispensing with validity because of its incompatibility with qualitative research, it is retained in a new form. In order to work towards this goal, three forms of data validity were applied. Triangulation, member checks, and catalytic validity were utilised at different times throughout the study as a way to challenge the ‘truths’ established by the researcher, and to introduce research participants as a force within the systems of power which produce and sustain discourses.

Triangulation

In its simplest form, triangulation refers to the observation of a phenomenon from at least two different points (Flick, 2004). This study utilised the triangulation principle by relying on several collection methods. Pre and post-intervention individual interviews prompted students directly for their experiences and opinions on a range of questions related to the research, with the post-intervention interviews giving participants the chance to clarify or challenge initial findings from the researcher. Audio recordings captured classroom interactions *in-situ* throughout the intervention. Work samples represented a third point of data collection for data analysis that was useful for analysing student participation and capacity. In combination with material presented in the Literature Review Chapter, these methods afforded different angles from which the thesis questions could be confronted. Whilst triangulation was once valued as an effort towards maximising validity (Denzin, 1978), it is now more useful to use it as a strategy to justify and problematise the knowledge gained through specific methods, and the possibilities for uncovering additional knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 5).

Member checks

Member checks are a way to check hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and researcher interpretations. Since the interpretations a researcher makes are a product of data derived from research participants, it is reasonable to check these interpretations with the same individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This is a strategy which Guba and Lincoln (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) argue establishes the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry, whereby participants are asked whether their realities have been represented appropriately, a strategy consistent with naturalistic inquiry. In this study, member checks were utilised during post-intervention interviews. Half of the questions during these interviews were derived from initial findings and observations determined by the researcher about broad themes observed during the study. The other half of the questions reflected initial findings and observations tailored to the individual interviewee (see Appendix G: List of post-intervention individualised Questions - Kate, for a sample of individualised questions relating to Kate's post-intervention interview). This approach invited participants to affirm, challenge, or elaborate on the researcher's initial observations before they became a part of the project's findings, closing the gap between the research and the researched. It sought to empower participants through engaging them more inclusively in the study's process (Lather, 1986).

Catalytic validity

Catalytic validity refers to the extent to which the process of research re-orientates, focuses, and energises participants (Lather, 1986). The least conventional validity method of the three adopted in this study, it seeks to understand the possibilities for human experience and action as a result of the study (Brown & Tandon, 1978; Reason & Rowan, 1981). It draws on Freire's (2000) concept of conscientization to encourage researchers to consider their participants. This form of validity was incorporated into intervention lessons in the form of critical literacy orientated pedagogy (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Misson & Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Australian Association for the Teaching of English., 1996). Throughout most lessons of the intervention activities encouraged development of a critical lens. Participation in the project sought to move beyond the exploitation of students for the sake of the study through the development of a capacity to reflect on their own experiences, both with videogames and more broadly in textual experiences, to encourage understanding of the world in order to take action within it (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lather, 1986, p. 64).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described and justified the various methodological choices made throughout this study and its pursuit of a sociological endeavour aimed at denaturalising one aspect of the social

world. Where possible, efforts were made to minimise the effect of the scholarly gaze⁴⁰ and the tendency of those in this position to introduce themselves into the data they collect, and the findings they produce. The following chapter analyses the data collected throughout the study. It is organised into three parts, each focussed on one aspect of the study's inquiry into pedagogy, intrinsic videogame features, and identity practice.

⁴⁰ The "invisible determinations inherent in the intellectual posture itself" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 34), which the social researcher, through studying, describing and talking about the social world, introduce ourselves into.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

There is always room for a *cognitive struggle* over the meaning of the things of the world (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 13)

“All play means something” (Huizinga, 2004, p. 1)

This chapter dedicates one section to each of the study’s research questions. Organised into three parts (Pedagogical Practice, Videogame Affordances, and Projective Identity Work) it introduces and explores key themes which emerged throughout the data analysis process, providing examples of this data where appropriate. The participatory action research design of this study requires concentrating first on subject-English pedagogies, histories turned into nature (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78), employed throughout the intervention and how these ways of orientating the social space of a classroom impact on possible practice.

4.1 Pedagogical Practice with Videogames

This first section focusses on data analysis directly related to the key research: What are the pedagogical issues associated with working with videogames in subject-English classrooms? It investigates data arising from pedagogical approaches to working with videogames in this context. It is most closely interested in the ‘how’ of teaching and learning with videogames, and draws closely on models of subject-English related to Skills, Personal Growth and Critical Literacy⁴¹. Questions of pedagogy in the context of videogames are questions about how best to teach. The four themes which emerged from this analysis related to: notions of reading multimodal texts, the possession and use of gaming capital, the capacity of critical literacy work to reposition student reading, and the challenge of incorporating play into existing frameworks of subject-English. These themes contribute to research aimed at better understanding teaching and learning through videogame literacies within subject-English classrooms (Beavis, O'Mara, & McNeice, 2012; Gee, 2007d; Salen, 2007; Spires, 2015).

⁴¹ Also known as Cultural Studies.

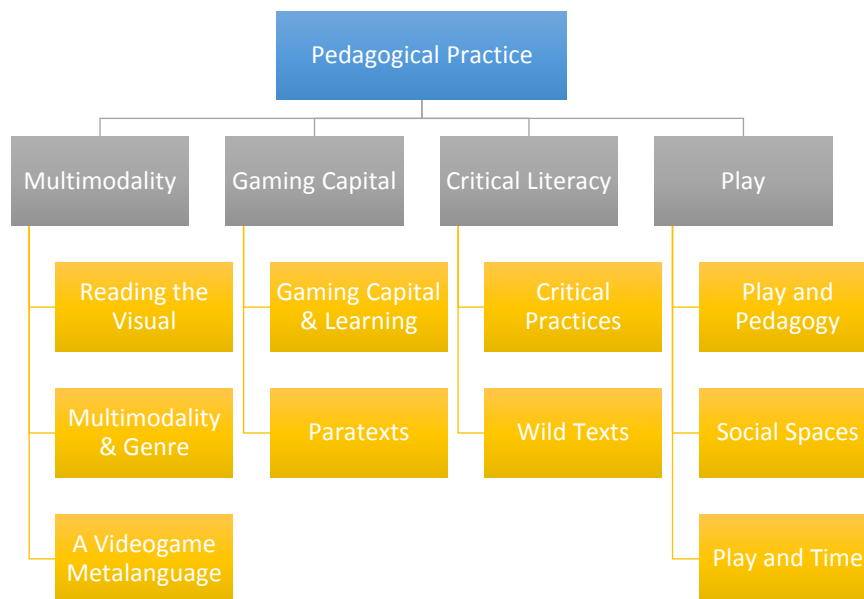


Figure 8: Concept map visualising themes relating to pedagogical practice

Multimodality

Reading the visual

A Skills model approach to subject-English was adopted early in the intervention which produced data related to decoding and multimodality. This approach moved beyond language-based skills and incorporated new ways of conceptualising skills in multimodal and digital texts (Kalantzis et al., 2000; New London Group, 1996)⁴². One issue associated with reading videogames and their associated paratexts during the intervention was the capacity of students to decode and make meaning from multimodal texts, a skill in which students demonstrated they were proficient. During the first lesson of the intervention, students completed the Brainstorming Game Cover activity which involved working in groups of three to deconstruct the front covers of six videogames. Each game cover was printed in colour on A3 paper with space provided for students to write notes. Students were instructed by the teacher-researcher to use each game's cover to hypothesise what they thought the cover revealed about the characters, themes, and stories within each game. Figure 9 and Figure 11 show two game covers analysed by the group of Brad, Cam, and Harley. Figure 10 and Figure 12 are the posters created by Kate, Rachel and Alicia.

⁴² This approach to skills recognises the place of 'viewing' as the fifth macroskill (Macken-Horarik, 2008) which has been included in official statements about reading, writing, speaking and listening since at least the mid 1990s.

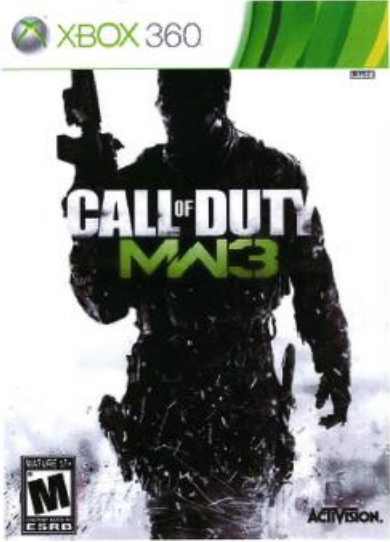
	<u>story</u> The story could be about a guy who is part of special ops goes off to fight in some bad forsaken land to save the world.
<u>Themes</u> *Violence - War - Weapons (Guns) - Justice - Fighting - Duty	<u>Characters</u> special ops officer with a big gun and two hand guns so he's probably a high up officer.

Figure 9: Brad Cam Harley Call of Duty Poster

	<u>Story</u> - war based game - help - help fight, along side ^{trained} soldiers
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theme - Action - violence - war - strategic	characters - the military - some of ^{men} dressed in military uniforms - bad guys ↳ the guy seems kind of anonymous
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Figure 10: Kate, Rachel, Alicia Call of Duty Poster

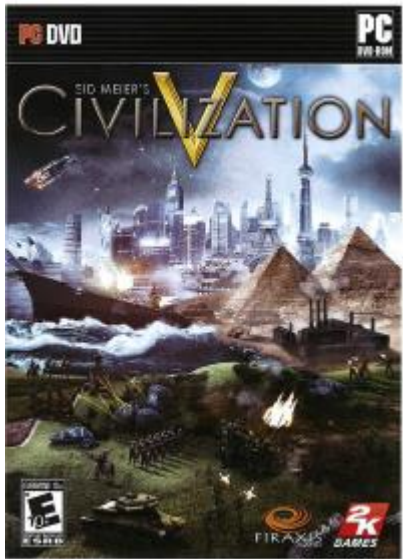
	<u>Story</u> You are to act as a 'god' and ascend your tribal cavemen to becoming civilized, advanced and good citizens, through wars and general powerplay
<u>themes</u> space age - olden age - war - boats - cars - industries - flying - travelling	<u>characters</u> there are lots of them. there are lots of races in ^{which} which you get different units

Figure 11: Brad, Cam, Harley Civilization V Poster

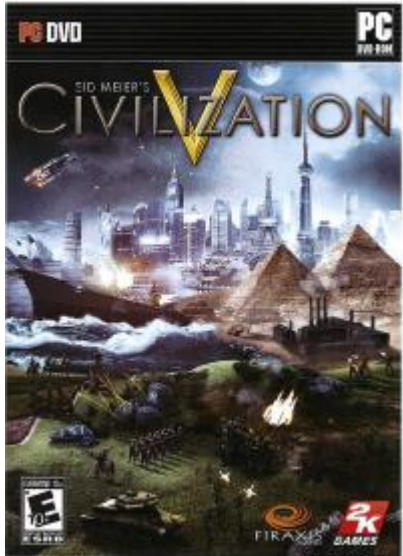
	Story- Building up a civilization Settling somewhere keeping control over things
Theme- strategy conflict	Characters- -all of the rulers -The workers -both that you control and are being controlled by the computer

Figure 12: Kate, Rachel, Alicia *Civilization V* Poster

These four posters revealed that a learning scaffold, in the form of a game-cover, supported by three prompts (themes, characters, story) were sufficient to guide students' reading so that they could identify various visual elements and use these to generate ideas. This preliminary activity was just the first of numerous skill-based activities that moves away from a focus on punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure, which once dominated the Skills model (Watson, 1994, p. 68), and towards pedagogies targeted at skills associated with New Literacies (Unsworth, 2008b).

One way students showed their multimodal reading capacity was through differentiating between visual elements serving different purposes. For example, Figure 9 and Figure 10 refer to the highly popular *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* game, likely to have been played by many of the participants. Figure 9, produced by Brad, Cam and Harley, made a connection between the presence of "guns" and the likely themes of "war" and "violence". Likewise, the presentation of the protagonist in dark shades and with no facial features led Kate, Rachel and Alicia to conclude in Figure 11 that the character "seems kind of anonymous". Similarly, Brad, Cam and Harley used visuals pertaining to Egyptian pyramids and a space shuttle to predict that the "olden age" and the "space age" were likely themes of the *Civilization V* game, whilst the inclusion of a battleship, soldiers, and a tank on the game cover provided visual stimulus leading to Group Two determining that "conflict" and strategy" were themes of the same game. Student notations were evidence of

reading multimodal images, with minimal teacher intervention, in a way that identified and grouped visuals, before abstracting these groupings for association with story elements.

The ability to decode the visuals identified in the posters was also influenced by the prior-knowledge different students brought with them to the reading activity. Across both posters, Group One made reference to fourteen themes, as opposed to Group Two's six. When coupled with the much greater number of content-carrying words recorded on the posters, words which develop the subject-matter and refer to subject-specific nouns and adverbs (Eggins, 2004), it is possible to conclude that Group One, the 'boy' group, produced a more detailed deconstruction of the multimodal texts. One explanation for this was the prior gameplay experience with all students brought with them to this activity. As evidenced in the student-profiles in the Methodology Chapter, the boys in the study had far-more experience playing first-person shooter and war-based games. The choice of texts selected by the teacher-researcher for this activity positioned those with gaming capital related to the games in the poster with the ability to provide more comprehensive readings.

The different level of gaming capital also mattered because it revealed that students in Group One were able to provide a more detailed reading of the texts. For example, Brad, Cam and Harley wrote about the protagonist on the poster in a positive frame, as a member of a "special ops" unit acting to "save the world" by fighting in a "bad forsaken land". By contrast, Kate, Rachel and Alicia, did not attribute any positive characteristics to the soldier in the image, instead noting from that poster that the game included "bad guys". Group One's reading of the visual elements was more detailed and accurate, not necessarily because they were more advanced at reading multimodal texts, but rather because they had more extensive experience with this genre of videogames, which had over time led to the accumulation of gaming capital that was deployed during this reading activity. There are parallels here to research investigating the cultural reserves necessary for achieving excellence in Senior VCE English examinations in Victoria (Teese, 2001). Assessment tasks appear to test the technical capabilities of students but this is inseparably tied to judgements about the whole person, "the mind reflected in the play of form and content" (p. 49), and realised through ways of 'doing' subject-English.

Despite the differences between student responses during this poster-activity, all students could navigate the field of non-digital multimodal literacy work. It is worth noting that the literacy requirements required of students within this activity were not markedly different to that which typifies a standard subject-English classroom and its literacy activities. Its purpose in this case was to position students so as to consider videogames as a text which could be studied in terms of skills, and in a manner that would allow more advanced work in later lessons (though the shift from

reading the word to reading the image began with a focus on ‘static’ images, this would progress to the moving image.) Working with novel front covers or film posters to introduce a unit of study is not an uncommon teaching activity. The possibilities for successful action here were facilitated by the use of group-work, a pedagogical tool which orientated the social space in a particular way that allowed stronger students to support others. The resulting practices from students were a sign that they understood what the field demanded of them, in part a result of their own past experiences during similar activities, and were able to work together so that even when they lacked substantial gaming capital, they could combine their literacy skills with a sense of what they were expected to produce during such an activity, evidence of habitus which had internalised previous experiences with multimodal text-types, so that they could adjust their practice accordingly. The issues for this kind of pedagogic work are therefore related to the knowledge about texts that students bring with them to the classroom, but also the types of reading practice enabled or disabled by teachers as a result of connections made between previous and current approaches to textual meaning-making within the subject-English context.

Multimodality and genre

Following introductory work on visual and linguistic modalities, the application of an existing pedagogic approach to multimodal texts, the New London Group’s Multiliteracies approach (Kalantzis et al., 2000; New London Group, 1996) revealed how students could be supported to develop sophisticated understandings about genre and videogames. The relationship between two data sets was analysed to show how students could progress from identifying semiotic resources for meaning-making, to articulating the way these resources combine to construct genres. The first data set came from the Game Trailers activity, which required students to complete a table identifying features of text, visuals, dialogue and music that they observed in various game trailers, a model adapted from the New London Group’s notion of available designs (1996), and a sample of which can be found in Figure 13 (the full set can be found in Appendix B: Table of Game Introductions.)

	<i>Bully</i>	<i>Fable 2</i>	<i>Forza Motorsport 4</i>	<i>Dungeon Siege 3</i>
<i>Text</i>	Company Highlights start of letters Introducing location	The text comes straight from the start. Introducing the location of starting point.	Logos	History before the game happened to get you to date on what’s been happening.
<i>Visual</i>	Cartoon world Based at a school Lighting	Cartoon world/realist factors to it Smooth edges Lighting	Real life world Lighting Effects to show the wether (sic)	Cartoon world Lighting Colours Smooth edges
<i>Dialogue</i>	Sciatic (sic) wording Harsh words Tone	Cheerful wording	Voice over Proud words The use strong words	Voice over Sad voice Hopeful voice

	Plot		to gain action.	
<i>Music</i>	Cheeky music	Strange music	Sound effects	Sad music

Figure 13: Cam's table of videogame features

The second data set was produced during the subsequent Genre and Story Comprehension Questions activity whereby a series of questions were placed on the board for students to complete. Two of those questions were: How is genre created differently in videogames compared to novels? And, why is genre important in a text? Students were encouraged to use their completed 'Features of videogames' table to help them answer the two questions. Three responses which highlighted the sophisticated comprehension skills activated during this activity are included here:

- Rachel⁴³: In a novel genre is created with text and sometimes images throughout the book or on the cover. In a videogame genre is created by a range of different things, like lighting and colours. If the picture is darker it means that the story will have more darkness in it. The character's attitude (body language) and appearance help as well as it helps determine their personality and therefore their actions. Text and dialogue indicated the story line and the music helps set the scene.
- Kate In novels genre is created partially by the image on the cover of the book but mainly by the type of language that is used. The way things are described and explained, the way the character talks and the names of people, places and things are very important in novels when creating the genre. In videogames, all of these things are used, but there is more than just that. Videogames use the visuals, the animation and the sound to create the genre. If the lighting is dark then most of the time, something is bad. It's just like creating a genre in a movie only you can involve the player much more and text can be used more to help set the scene. The type of animation that is used can help show whether something is going to be action packed and fast, or soft and gentle.
- Harley Genre is created differently in videogames compared to novels because you aren't introduced to the genre in a specific way as you are in a novel, as in a novel you read the blurb and can see the genre by only text. In a videogame you have to use the music, text, visuals, dialog and also interactivity to discover the actual genre of the whole game.

The data showed students negotiating a space between a habitus historically conditioned to think in a particular way about how novels construct genre, and newly acquired dispositions about the role of multimodality during the construction of genre in videogames. Rachel, Kate and Harley all

⁴³ Where meanings are unclear due to student expression, text has been added in brackets. However, at other times, simple grammatical errors made by students are left unedited. Excessive use of the word 'like' has also been removed from students' comments where it does not affect the intended meaning of the utterance.

commented on the primary role played by text in creating genre in novels. Harley's comment, "In a novel you read the blurb and can see the genre by only text," and Kate's remark that genre in novels is created "mainly by the type of language that is used" were evidence of their ability to recognise the dominant semiotic resource of novels and the role this resource played in meaning-making. Two students were also able to relate these understandings to the additional, but less-significant, role played by visuals in some novels, such as through "images throughout the book" (Rachel) or "by the image on the cover of the book" (Kate). It is likely that this ability to differentiate and hierarchise the function of modes within print-based novels was informed by the text deconstruction skills practised during the creation of the 'features of videogames' tables.

Interestingly, students were equally adept at identifying the various modes operating to construct genre in videogames, however, the simultaneous functioning of multiple modes was perceived as a greater affordance when combined within these texts. Kate said that videogames can do what novels do, but they also "use the visuals, the animation and the sound to create the genre." The suggestion of an affordance is further evident in Kate's reference to the way the player can "help set the scene." Rachel referred to a range of visuals, "lighting and colours," and sound, "dialogue indicated the storyline and the music helps set the scene," to answer the question about how genre was created in videogames. For Harley, it was not just about the presence of "music, text, visuals, dialogue" but the use of these interactively by the gamer to realise the genre through gameplay. These observations from the students emphasised not just the presence of these modalities, but the ways that they were activated through experience by the gamer as one explanation for why genre was created differently in videogames.

Understanding why these students positioned videogames as containing affordances for meaning-making not found in novels is found in the predominant role played by visuals and sound in popular culture texts such as television and personal computers/smart phones. The role of visuals and sound in modern technological devices, and their juxtaposition of the ways that novels construct meaning predominantly through printed text, helps explain why students would use language of difference to differentiate between videogames and novels. However, the Game Trailer activity also played a crucial role in scaffolding and legitimising the skills that characterise non-print based ways of creating genre (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This occurred through the very existence of an activity, authorised by the teacher-researcher, which involved studying a component of videogames, and through the value afforded to the discussion following this activity which re-structured the knowledge valued in the subject-English classroom during that lesson. The effect of scaffolding students into developing and utilising a metalanguage to deconstruct videogame trailers highlighted the effect of pedagogy on constructing new schemas of thought.

As well as discussing how various modalities contributed to genre, student notations showed how these modalities could function in other ways. Focussing on data referring solely to ‘text’ in the game trailers, students used their identification of different forms of text-use to articulate a range of purposes. Rachel’s table noted how text in *Fable II* was used to give “directions,” Brad wrote about the text in the same game, describing how it established the genre of the game, “sort of fancy and curly, an older fantasy like [sic],” and Alicia recorded how the “Colours of brown, yellows and black” functioned in *Dungeon Siege* so that “It looks like pages of a book.” These examples captured how students could build on the recognition of a mode within the videogames to explain the function of different uses of text as an element of creating meaning. The table drawn onto the whiteboard prior to the start of this activity provided the initial scaffold to support reading of the game trailers in a particular way, a further example of how a pedagogy of multiliteracies can contribute to complex forms of reading. The completed tables show evidence of synaesthesia, whereby representations in one mode contributed to understandings in other, less favoured and less comfortable ones (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 180). Rather than the overlapping presence of many modes confusing students and rendering the texts ‘unreadable’, the data showed how students identified the complex ways that modalities functioned, a capacity with parallels to the digital literacies valued by Griffin’s twenty-first century skills framework (2011).

Data like that produced by students during the Game Trailer and the Genre and Story Comprehension Questions activities demonstrated how a Skills model of subject-English could be used to develop complex understandings about the constructed nature of texts and make bridges to students’ prior literacy learning. Data from the two activities analysed above showed that pedagogy can be used as a tool to generate new ways of supporting student-thinking about videogames-as-texts. Building on other case-study research showing how digital-game units contribute to transformed student practices (Walsh, 2010), these activities also demonstrated the importance of reflecting on the conditions in which dispositions about text are formed and which are crucial to understanding the types of knowledge students possess about different types of texts.

A metalanguage of videogame study

The game-trailer tables also showed that the lack of a teacher-authorised videogame-specific discourse did not prevent students from adopting a metalanguage for talking about the skills of decoding and abstracting. Game-trailer tables included notes recording student observations of ‘visuals’. The language found in this part of the tables reflected language typically associated with the study of film-as-text and stories. Harley’s “wide-panning camera view” and Alicia’s reference to “panning” were examples of how students applied film conventions to the analysis of videogames. Furthermore, there were extensive references to language representing the discourse of stories,

including: plot, setting, characters, scenery, narrative voice, narrator, storybook, adventure tale, and dialogue. The absence of a distinct discourse with which to discuss these elements of videogames led students to rely on language developed in traditional subject-English classrooms typically associated with novels and print-based stories. This data supports the argument that dispositions formed in one context, in this case, a metalanguage of film-literacy and stories, can be transferred to other contexts, such as the study of non-traditional digital texts. Two observations can be made about the game-trailer table, the purpose of which was to develop student skills in deconstructing the various modal elements in videogame trailers so that this could be further developed during gameplay. Firstly, this table acted as a pedagogic scaffold, forming a bridge across two fields; videogames as they are understood in out-of-school based spaces, and videogames as they are understood in in-school spaces. Secondly, when students were faced with a lack of instruction regarding the language they needed to adopt to complete this activity, they relied upon previous learnings from subject-English teachings with text, a form of textual practice both predictable and important for teachers to consider if they wish to work with these texts in terms of how they are common and how they are different to other traditionally studied subject-English texts.

The learning supported by the teacher-researcher throughout these activities showed how pedagogy could be used to reorientate students to better 'play the game' of subject-English distinction. Bourdieu's metaphor of the game is apt here to explain why the casual vernacular often associated with teenagers' out-of-school interactions was absent from the Game Trailer tables. Participation in 'the game' requires a series of strategies which produce a feel for the game, and a feel for the logic of the game. It requires an understanding of the rule-bound activity which characterises the game. Within the Game Trailer activity students demonstrated their feel for the game through their use of metalanguage. Put another way, students discriminated between the use of casual and everyday language to describe gameplay and a discourse-specific language connected to the study of films and stories. These language choices reflected a practical sense of the game where students employed strategies to direct their practice (Bourdieu, 1990a). A crucial component in the production of these metalinguistic practices was the construction of the field by the teacher-researcher and the connection of this field to other literacy-related subject-English learning activities, print and non-print in nature. Pedagogy was used to make connections across contexts, from videogames as entertainment to videogames as texts for study in a classroom, in order to establish learning opportunities sensitive to the demands of the situation, a key element in Apperley and Beavis' Model for Critical Games Literacy (2013). The learning associated with this kind of classroom textual work produced systems of both "expressive possibilities and impossibilities" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 512) which were also closely tied to intertextual understandings.

Gaming capital

Gaming capital and learning

While these initial activities during the intervention were more interested in the application of a Skills model, a Personal Growth model approach was also utilised as a means to value student experience and encourage learning about self and the world through developing relations to texts and context (Dixon, 1975). For example, the Introduction activity included a teacher-led discussion whereby each of the six participants present were asked to share their prior experiences with videogames, and to describe their favourite game. The intention was for this activity to encourage reflection on prior gaming activity and to create the learning environment as a shared experience. The data showed that students possessed various degrees of gaming capital,⁴⁴ which impacted upon their capacity to respond to learning activities. They said:

- Cam: I've probably spent, yeah probably ten years, maybe a bit less, maybe nine years playing videogames. I've played all sorts of game over the years. I'm into a lot of fantasy [games] like those ones with main stories. [My favorite is] probably a game called *Rune Factory*. It's on the DS.
- Brad: Yeah, I played a lot of videogames. I'm influenced by my step dad who it's a rare thing for him not to visit JB Hi-Fi and bring home a game of some sort. So I, yeah, I played lots and lots of games because he is a step dad he plays lots of, I don't know. He plays lots of shooter games so I play lots of those too. I do enjoy the *Halo* series as well as the *Call of Duty* and things.
- Harley: I played games just a lot. Just every night probably. My favorite is probably *World of Warcraft*.
- Kate: I used to play games more than I do. I used to play *The Sims* all the time. Like, all the time. I don't know, my brother plays a lot of games so I just borrow them. I like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.
- Rachel: I don't really play games. [After prodding from the teacher-researcher, Rachel elaborated on her initial response]
I don't know. They are very fun. Like, some of my friends play them and they really like them. They seem really fun.
- Alicia: Mine is probably just playing with my little brother on the Wii⁴⁵ game mainly and we can play *Mario Kart* a lot but other than that, not much experience with videogames.

The data revealed a contrast between those with extensive exposure to videogames, such as Cam, and those who play rarely, such as Rachel. The references to time spent playing games showed how some students had experienced far more opportunities to develop their gaming capital. This is important because in the context of Bourdieu's formula for understanding practice, (Habitue X Capital) + Field = Practice (1984, p. 101), we can begin to understand the different ways students

⁴⁴ Gaming capital is a form of cultural capital which enables interactions with games, and includes knowledge about games, the gaming industry, and other players (Consalvo, 2007).

⁴⁵ A Microsoft produced gaming console.

respond to learning activities. The amount of field-specific capital a student possessed affected their practice. Harley's claim of playing videogames every night, like Kate's assertion that she had been an avid gamer in the past, combined with other contributions made by these two students throughout the study, were indicative of two teenagers who had accumulated ways of talking and acting with videogames that have become embodied in the form of dispositions of the mind and body (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47) and could be called upon for distinction by a Personal Growth pedagogy that values this type of knowledge and experience.

Despite Bourdieu's emphasis on cultural competences being closely linked to the fields within which they become inculcated (1984, p. 65) data suggested that the subject-English classroom could be constructed in such a way that learning activities could be targeted so as to encourage students to share their experiences with this text-type, enabling the use of gaming capital for distinction. This was evident during dialogue from the Brainstorming Game Cover activity. This activity's interest in the language and learning in the individual student, through shared practice, placed students at the centre of learning by acknowledging their diverse and open-ended starting points and allowing interpretive discussion to develop from them (Dixon, 1975, p. 63). As they deconstructed the game posters, students were recorded saying:

- Cam: Yeah. I haven't played it [*Fable*] much but I've seen my brother play it quite a lot. He's into the series. He's got [game] 1, 2, and 3.
- Harley: *Bully*. Oh, *Bully's* a grouse game. I used to play it all the time.
- Cam: That flaming lady.
- Brad: It's like the lady in *Dragon Age*.
- Cam: Hey we got *Civilization*. That's a good game, that's pretty cool.
- Cam: Have you played that game? It's very weird.
- Brad: I played the *Age of Empires*. That's pretty close.
- Cam: Yeah but this one is turn based, I don't really like it. It is turn based.
- Brad: That's all right there will be like tactics.
- Cam: It's a bit of turn-based and real-time strategy.
- Brad: Did you ever play *Final Fantasy Grim Attack*?
- Cam: No.
- Brad: That's the same thing.

Students are making connections between the demands of the task at hand and knowledge they possessed about other games from the same genre. The "flaming lady" on the cover of *Dungeon Siege 3* is linked to the "lady in *Dragon Age*" by Brad. Similarly, the cover of *Civilization 5* is

associated with *Age of Empires* by Brad, a connection which is then elaborated upon by Cam who described both games as being from the same genre, “turn-based and real time strategy.” The way in which students used their gaming capital was similar to findings from other practice-based research incorporating videogames in subject-English, such as Ostenson’s (2013) unit about story telling which involved a study of archetypal heroes across many genres of stories in collaboration with a study of narrative in videogames, and which found that this pedagogical approach empowered and supported reluctant readers by allowing them to bring more of their culture into the classroom. The result of that study was that students could draw on their knowledge of videogames to participate in deep and engaging conversations about the unique strengths and weaknesses of storytelling in videogames. Likewise, the interaction above between Cam, Harley and Brad was evidence of gaming capital informing textual comprehension as a result of the application of a pedagogy that began with students.

However, the data also revealed that those who lacked extensive deposits of gaming capital could still produce practices of distinction during learning activities by relying on non-gaming forms of cultural capital. A triangulation of three sets of reading-related data (pre-intervention interviews, the Brainstorming Game Cover activity, and student comments during the Introduction activity about their prior-gaming experience) established that Rachel and Alicia were students in possession of less gaming capital than other students in the study. Yet, both showed that they could draw on other legitimised forms of cultural capital related to traditional literacy practice, such as knowledge of genre and story-elements, to participate in intervention activities. This was evident in their Game Trailer deconstruction tables below as students both produced complex readings of the trailers.

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza	Dungeon Siege
Text	Title Company name School name Game company Font Signs	Plot Information Name of town Setting Not much text At the start Intro Directions	Logos Subtle Small	Dialogue of voice over
Visuals	Lighting Scenery Screen shots Flash forwards Style of imagery	Lighting Colour Dark areas and light areas Scenery Fire Overview of the whole area	Snap shots Cars Tyres Race tracks Real footage Sunny weather	Picture Drawings Lighting Dark/light Not a lot of colour
Dialogue	Attitude Tone Sarcastic Basic plot/ story	Old English Plot Characters dreams & wishes Gives an idea of where the story is going- to the castle. Characters relationship	Voice over. Informative Cars and racing Exploring Person form top gears voice Emotive language	Informative History Different people in the area Voice over Serious
Music	Repetitive Bells Soft Quite simple	High pitched Changes sound level throughout choir	Engines Volume level changes.	Low volume Dark music

Figure 14: Rachel's Game Trailer Table

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza	Dungeon siege
text	Title Introduction to game and company Bold Signs School name (wasn't much)	Plot Name of town Setting Not m	Brand of cars logos	Text of voice over About empires and rulers and the town
visuals	Lighting Screen shots Scenery Flash forwards panning	Light and dark grey clouds above town Dark village Girls standing around fire and snow Panning over landscape Lights on in town	Snap shots Of cars Racetracks Footage of racing cars	Looks like pages of a book Colours of brown yellows and black dark
dialogue	Attitude Tone Sarcastic Plot	Plot Old English voices How they Felt	Talking about love of cars and how they sit in our society. Voice over Emotive language	About empires and rulers and the town Voice over Serious (sad and optimistic)
music	Repetitive Little bells Soft Simple	Choir Eerie	Subtle car noises	Minimal Low soft

Figure 15: Alicia's Game Trailer Table

One explanation for the detailed Game Trailer tables produced by Rachel and Alicia despite their level of gaming capital can be found in the non-gaming related cultural capital they possessed. The nature of the game-cover learning activity was dependent on complex forms of literacy practice. These forms of practice have been legitimised over time by subject-English teachers and school curricula. Students who did not have extensive experience with skills and knowledge associated with videogame play could instead rely on literacy dispositions developed in institutionalised settings, which are more representative of the 'high-status' cultural capital. Thus, it is possible to conclude that those students with high levels of cultural capital associated with literacy practice could rely on this to minimise any negative effects as a result of holding less gaming capital.

Juxtaposing two students' cultural capital shows how a Personal Growth pedagogy of subject-English legitimises some forms of culture and not others, and this impact can change as the texts valued by these classrooms change. At the beginning of Lesson Three of the intervention, before the teacher had begun explicit instruction, a conversation began students about various texts they had studied

both inside and outside of school led to a discussion related to Shakespearean literature. Cam, Kate and the teacher-researcher shared insights about Shakespearean theatre:

- Cam: You know I've kind of despised Shakespeare.
- Kate: I love Shakespeare.
- Teacher: Really? You ought to have to seen it done well.
- Kate: I've seen, I've been to modernised versions of Shakespeare. I've seen [many plays from] the Bell Shakespeare Company. I've seen them three times now.
- Teacher: There is a *Romeo and Juliet* coming up in the next Bell [production], in fact it is showing now I think.
- Kate: I just saw *Macbeth* which wasn't actually that great.
- Teacher: I saw that one as well. I think I saw that about a month ago?
- Kate: Yeah. But the guy who played *Macbeth* his posture really bugged me. He was [hunching] the whole time even when he wasn't [acting] insane.
- Teacher: What I like, I think Lady Macbeth stole the show.
- Kate: Yeah. And my mom really didn't like the three witches [who the director] turned into the one witch.
- Teacher: Yeah, that was a little weird.

This contrasts to Brad's response during pre-intervention interviews to the question of why he chose to take part in the study.

- Brad: Umm, well, I play a lot of online games against lots of other people and within my own home, umm, even when I was small, we used to have, you know, competitive games. So, it's kind of a main thing between the, you know, kids in our family and umm, when my mom married my stepdad, there was just basically more people to play with and they were also, you know, into gaming. So, it's just kind of made things easier, the transition joining of our lives.

These conversations are placed here not as reductions of the entirety of the cultural capital of Kate and Brad, but rather because of what they reveal about how two students could be differently prepared to participate in learning given such disparate forms of cultural capital. As a result of their textual experiences in family contexts, knowledge about texts has been embodied by these two students to form their habitus, in other words, "A socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 81). Kate's many positive experiences with Shakespearean theatre had led to the accumulation of capital, and the formation of a habitus, conditioned to perform in learning contexts involving these texts. Given the predominance of the Personal Growth model amongst contemporary classrooms (Patterson, 2008), it is possible to see how learning activities requiring valuing students' textual experiences would position Kate favourably in a regular subject-English classroom, in contrast to Brad. However, the teacher's reorientation of the classroom towards ways

of thinking, talking and 'doing' videogames created a social space that positioned Brad to more successfully actuate his cultural capital. Brad's comment captured the many multiple and meaningful moments he had shared with his stepdad which helped with "the transition joining of our lives." This demonstrates that the accumulation of capital and the formation of positive dispositions towards digital cultural texts can similarly be harnessed to develop a greater understanding of the everyday textual experiences of students (Beavis, 2006).

Focusing on the role played by the teacher-researcher in validating some forms of popular culture throughout the intervention shows the potential dangers inherent in text-selection. While legitimising a wider range of popular texts appears to enfranchise those who engage with these texts frequently, the more dominant contributions from some students during the study revealed that the exercise of choosing texts is highly political and inevitably enfranchising and disenfranchising. Teachers need to be cognisant of, as Bourdieu put it, the head-start afforded to those who begin schooling with legitimate forms of culture, "the embodied cultural capital of the previous generations [which] functions as a sort of advance" (1984, p. 70), to ensure that personal empowerment through personal growth is supported by a range of opportunities to make connections to self and the world.

Paratexts

Dixon says that in English, students share their encounters with life through talk, both monologues and dialogues, bringing new voices into the classroom and adding to the store of shared experience (1975, p. 13). One way to conceive of how this takes place in a classroom is through the notion of paratexts. Paratexts can take material forms, such as other videogames or a website, however, they can also take the form of social encounters which take place in fields that carry with them specific forms of interest, a recognition of the 'things' that count as valuable in these places (Genette, 1997; Genette & Maclean, 1991). Various circumstances, most the product of pedagogies of practice employed by the teacher-researcher, produced a series of social paratexts which controlled the reading and playing of videogames during the intervention. Examples of these paratexts included:

- A male teacher-researcher
- The selection of videogames dominated by male virtual characters
- Learning activities requiring social interaction
- Students sharing their prior gaming experience
- Allowing students to 'opt-in' to intervention gameplay activities
- Male students assisting to set up classroom space before each lesson
- The presence of two highly experienced male gamers in the study

Each of these social encounters acted as paratexts in that they informed possible student responses. Collectively, they combined in such a way to shape the learning and teaching possible. For example, the dominance of male virtual characters gendered the practices associated with videogame play (an idea explored in more depth in section three of this chapter through discussion of projective identity work.) When combined with the way authority in the classroom was concentrated in the teacher, another male, and that the group's expert gamers were also males, the result was an objectified space which imposed itself on all participants in the study, affecting the practices that could be exercised, and the meanings that could be made. Dixon's emphasis on shared experience as a necessary requirement for students in order to build representations of the world with which to connect to their lived experiences is highly dependent on the circumstances of these social paratexts.

Though these examples suggest a limiting effect associated with these paratexts, this need not always be the case. Consalvo (2007) states that the paratexts of videogames shape our experiences of gameplay. When this is done thoughtfully, and with a consciousness of the range of prior experience and dispositions which students may bring with them to any study of videogames as text, then the imposing negative effects of paratexts can be minimised. This kind of pedagogical work is evident in the work of Beavis and Charles who provided multiple opportunities for students to be both resistant and ready to enjoy the game, active in the "creation and representation of themselves in interaction with their peers" (2005, p. 365). Pedagogy aimed at developing critical literacy capacities was observed to be one way to challenge the limiting effect of some material and social paratexts.

Critical literacy

Using critical literacy to explore ideology

Following time spent developing skills and making connections to students lifeworlds, the intervention then shifted to an emphasis on critical literacy model of English teaching with the intention of exploring whether students could exercise practices exemplifying critical readers of texts. A critical literacy approach, similar to critical pedagogy methods (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1983, 1994; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Morgan & Australian Association for the Teaching of English., 1996) engages with popular culture to help students analyse and challenge rigid disciplinary boundaries. As Giroux states, pedagogy is "a performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations" (2004, p. 61), and critical literacy is one form of pedagogy which research has found to represent a strong voice of Australian subject-English practitioners (Gutierrez, 2013; Muspratt, Luke, & Freebody, 1997). After reflecting on the delivery of intervention lessons focussed on skills and personal growth, the PAR

research design afforded a shift in Lesson Four towards testing the extent to which students could be supported in moving from playing videogames passively and for entertainment, to studying videogames actively for empowerment and critical analysis. Luke says that the foundations of Critical Literacy are threefold:

“(1) the expansion of education beyond canonical and literary texts to include works of popular culture; (2) a focus on critical analysis as counter-hegemonic critique that might, in turn, (3) encourage recognition of marginalised communities’ histories and experiences.”(2012, p. 4)

Progress towards the first two of these foundations are explored below.

Two activities from Lesson Four of the intervention⁴⁶ were the catalyst for students to complete several critical comprehension questions. The answers to one of those questions, “How does *Bully* explore power?”, were analysed (copies of all student responses to this question can be found in Appendix E: Bully Comprehension Answers). These responses revealed that a wide-range of critical reading dispositions regarding the role of power in videogames could be elicited through explicit classroom teaching. Adam and Harley’s responses were limited to the way power was evident in the virtual characters within the game, with few connections made to the world outside of the game or the function of the idea of power on the audience. For example, Harley described how “The Principle [sic] has the most power in the game as he controls all the students and proceeds no matter how rebellious the students become”. Harley then summarised the game, rather than exploring themes, when stating, “The game shows Jimmy’s rise to power as he fights with all the different groups.” Adam offered similar comments, although slightly more abstracted when stating, “*Bully* shows the social hierarchy that exists *in* a school” (emphasis added). It is reasonable to infer that his use of ‘in’ demonstrated he could see how power existed in schools more broadly, and was not limited to the school in the game. This was similarly evident in his use of the indefinite article ‘a’, as opposed to the definite ‘the’.

Kate and Rachel produced more complex critical readings. The former discussed the relationship between people and power in schools when stating, “*Bully* shows the different people who can hold power over us and what gives them the power (big, strong, small)”, while the latter wrote about the forms which power can take in social contexts, stating “Power is shown through authority.” Despite the engaging gameplay unfolding on the screen in front of Rachel and Kate whilst they wrote these answers, they could separate the entertainment factor from the learning activity, and think and write critically about the characters, story and themes they observed. This is evidence that these two

⁴⁶ The two lessons were the News Article Pair and Share activity, whereby paired and classroom discussion utilised news articles about the banning of the game *Bully* to talk about videogame study, and the Playing, Writing and Talking about Power in *Bully* activity, which involved students taking turns individually to play a game while the rest of the class answered questions about power and text.

students understood the discourse of the critical subject-English classroom and the types of sophisticated responses that would be expected in such a space.

The language in students' written responses also displayed how they could use critical discourse developed in an earlier oral activity, to inform their responses during a latter written activity. As a reminder, Lesson Four began with the News Article Pair and Share activity, whereby students began by working in pairs to discuss a news article about the banning of the videogame *Bully*, and then sharing their summaries with the class. This was followed by a discussion facilitated by the classroom teacher. This was followed by the Playing, Writing and Talking about Power in Bully activity, which required students to choose questions from their booklets and produce written responses. Student responses reflected the extent to which they could absorb the language used during one talking and listening activity, and apply it to a different reading and writing activity. Examples of the language used in students' written responses included: 'social hierarchy' and 'controlled' (Adam), 'choices' (Brad), 'responsibility for actions' (Sharon), and 'depending on the situation' and 'authority' (Rachel). Likewise, the use of active verbs from students displayed their awareness of the purposefulness of the text. Students wrote:

- *Bully* shows... (Adam)
- The game allows... (Brad)
- The game gives you... (Harley)
- By illustrating... (Sharon)
- Lets you decide... (Kate)
- *Bully* explores... (Rachel)

This is a sign that students could move beyond thinking of this game purely in terms of its entertainment value and had begun to conceptualise the game critically in terms of purpose and function. Like other studies that move beyond working with videogames solely for engagement (Beavis & O'Mara, 2010), this approach to texts can be utilised with videogames to challenge students to think and work differently.

The development of new ways to understand texts

Despite the brief nature of the intervention and the limited time which could be spent focussed on critical literacy, students' understanding demonstrated new ways of thinking and talking about popular culture texts, which they could articulate well-after the study had concluded. The activities discussed above, as well as others (such as the Talking about Identity activity, which prompted students to identify and discuss the features of themselves which they brought with them to textual practice, and the Paired Gameplay and Note-taking activity, which required note-taking and discussion about issues of language and power which were observed during gameplay within the

classroom) produced new understandings about the distinct similarities and differences between the ways reading occurred in print and videogames texts. Misson's (2006) belief that one goal of critical literacy should be to open up texts so that they can be seen in new ways was explored in the context of the retention of new understandings about videogames-as-text. All of the analysis below relates to questions posed to students during post-intervention interviews, which ensued three weeks after the intervention lessons had taken place, about the type of reading that occurred during the study. Several students identified similarities between the type of reading done with print-based texts and the type of reading done with videogames. Adam's contribution was one example of this as he responded to the prompt about the type of reading with videogames that occurred by saying "it's interpreting a text and kind of analysing it and stuff, so yeah, it's a type of reading." Adam described a connection between the "interpreting" and "analysing" that was done with videogames and the way these activities took place in a conventional classroom. In this instance, his perception of reading was closely tied to how it was practised in subject-English classrooms. Kate similarly compared the reading of videogames with the way she understood reading with print-based texts referencing the way reading conducted during the videogame introduction activity was the same type of reading taking place when people tried to understand the "prologue to a story in a book ... it's like pulling a book apart." These two examples show students who can critically reflect on the similar reading practices found when engaging with both videogames and books.

The data also showed evidence of students who could critically reflect on distinctive features of videogames. Rachel explained how reading videogames was different because every time a game was played "you can kind of create a different outcome of how you want it to go." Unlike reading a book, where it is "all set out for you," Rachel incorporated the idea of the 'interactive' into her understanding of reading to conclude that reading videogames can lead to multiple outcomes. Both Harley and Sharon described reading videogames and movies as easier than reading books because the former allowed for absorption to occur more easily, or as Sharon said "subconsciously," as opposed to books which require a focus on the reading of "massive description." For Harley, reading visuals was easier because when working with print-based texts he found it harder to "picture it in my head ... [it] gets sort of lost and stuff." The suggestion was that reading multimodal and visual texts required less effort. Student perceptions reflect a critical awareness of the constructedness of texts and the role played by various elements which contribute to the meanings gamers take from videogames.

There were also student responses which complicated the idea of reading. The importance of the context of reading was highlighted by two students to answer to the teacher-researcher's question about the type of reading that took place during the study. Sharon elaborated on her earlier answer,

stating, “it depends on what game you’re doing and what book you’re reading,” suggesting that the form that reading takes was dependent on features of the text and features of the situation which come together to shape what the reader will do. Brad’s comprehensive response, inserted here in full, stated:

I think it really depends on the person. So, I enjoy music so when I’m playing a game or, you know, watching a movie or doing something that has audio, that is generally influencing my emotions more than what’s actually happening on the screen. So, I’m more of an audio-tuned person whereas somebody who’s probably artistic or something might pay attention to the small little details like the shading on a certain tree or the lighting could indicate, you know, the type of story or the background.

Brad described the way different people carry with them different preferences which affect their reading. His self-identification as “more of an audio-tuned person” as opposed to somebody “who’s probably artistic [and] might pay attention to the small little details like the shading on a certain tree or the lighting” demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the role played by individual dispositions in affecting the reading process and what readers will make of a given textual experience. Sharon and Brad’s responses which are sensitive to what the reader/viewer brings with them to texts that influences what the text will become for them. The language these two students use is remarkable similar to that which was found in the subject-English standards for another Australian state, Tasmania, which states that critical literacy includes “emphasising multiple readings of text” (Tasmanian Department of Education, n.d, p. 1)

The range of views evident in student responses, despite all students completing the same classroom activities, highlighted the mediating role played by the habitus students brought with them. One would expect the habitus to have a similar impact on subject-English more generally. This evidence proved that students could be supported to develop what Misson argued should be a goal of all critically-orientated literacy educators, a “capacity for understanding more deeply” (2006, p. 18).

The wildness of videogames

The focus on pedagogies throughout this section of analysis has been predominantly on classroom activities dictated by explicit instruction. Following earlier intervention activities showing evidence that students could be guided into producing critical responses to videogames-as-text, the teacher-researcher decided to utilise the final lesson of the intervention, and the Eight-Player Gaming activity, to investigate how students would respond to playing videogames when no explicit learning and teaching activities had been established. The interest was in how students would use language

to navigate this classroom practice and whether their previously identified critical awareness would be activated. What was revealed was that as the teacher withdrew from providing explicit instruction regarding the goals of gameplay, students' critical capacity waivered. During this activity, which involved two teams of four students playing against each other, the language used lacked any semblance of critical capacity. An excerpt typical of student-talk during this activity is included here:

Kate: I just killed myself. What am I pressing to---
[inaudible]
Kate: What does this say? I don't know how to shoot it.
Cam: Oh, Adam [is] in the racer again.
Kate: Ah, got it! No, [this is] bad. That's where I wasn't supposed to go.
Cam: No, get out!
Brad Abandon ship!
FS 1⁴⁷: Who's [inaudible]
Harley: That's me.
FS 1: Oh sweet!
[inaudible]
FS 1: I'll just stay here.
Adam: Someone stole my kill.
Harley: Ha ha. It was me. I killed you.

Given that students were given no explicit instructions regarding any specific learning goals during this activity, it was not reasonable to expect that talk would take on the same critical or discourse-specific metalanguage which had dominated previous lessons. Nonetheless, it was surprising how quickly students left behind one type of classroom-based practice, and embraced the wildness (Beavis, 2013b) of videogames the moment the teacher-researcher relaxed expectations. Apperley & Beavis' (2011) findings from action-based videogame research resonates here. They found that some gaming does provide opportunities for reflection, but that educators need to recognise and support reflective moments in order to maximise the learning potential of critical elements of gameplay. However, the juxtaposition between the talk used in the Eight-Player Gaming session above and that used during explicit teacher-led critical literacy activities could not be more marked. This raises the question, why did students operate uncritically during this group gaming session?

The importance of explicit and intentional pedagogy when using videogames during classroom practice can be understood by applying Rosenblatt's (1988) transactional theory to the different ways students responded to videogame play. Transactional theory suggests that processes of reading concern the writer's stance which can fall into different parts of the efferent/aesthetic

⁴⁷ Female student one

continuum. The efferent stance refers to what can be carried away or extracted after the reading event. The aesthetic stance focuses on the experiential aspects of the reading, including perceptions of thoughts, feelings and intuitions. When teachers establish a learning activity with clearly defined reading and writing objectives, students are more likely to be operating on the efferent end of the continuum, looking to extract from the text content and ideas that will produce distinction, see Figure 16.



Figure 16: Rosenblatt's Transaction Theory and Critical Literacy Gaming

In contrast, when students play a game in groups with little instruction and no set goals, they operate towards the aesthetic end of the reading continuum, making sense of the text and using talk in response to 'a feel' of the game, but still with the goal of distinction, just a different kind of distinction, i.e. winning the game or helping a team-mate. The uncritical student talk above was perfectly matched to the dynamics of the situation in which student textual practice occurred. While critics of the study of videogames in subject-English might point to the type of talk in the student exchange above as proof that there is little educational value in videogames, as has Donnelly (1998), analysis highlights how crucial it is for teachers to consider how they establish the context of learning environments associated with videogame play and study.

Play

Play and pedagogy

The notion of play sits with some difficulty within the Skills, Personal Growth and Critical Literacy models which dominated intervention activities. The role of play has been central in efforts to define videogame literacies (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Salen, 2007), and there was some data to show that play could be leveraged to support textual understanding. To explore this relationship, data from

tables created by students during the Paired Gameplay and Note-taking activity were analysed. Two of these tables can be seen in Figure 17 and Figure 18. They were produced as a result of an intervention activity which involved extensive scaffolding from the teacher-researcher and showed how students could observe play and abstract features of this play into a conceptual framework. This framework included aspects of various existing models of subject-English and was supplied to students for this activity.

	What happened?	How is language used by the gameplayers to communicate with each other? Provide examples	What power does the gameplayer have over the action?	What kind of story is developing?
Bully 2 player Mini Games	they played to Mini games	asking questions on how to shoot and what you have to do	they control all the where and when the characters walk and shoot	moving around in the classroom.
2 Player Dungeon Siege III	we tested the controls and worked out how to use the character	We talked about where to go using directions	you control the whole character apart from going on the battle	they are running from an army of pirates.
Car racing with Forza Motorsport 4	we raced around a course	was there was no any talking	we could control the whole car with where to go and even changing the gears.	a race between two drivers.
Superheroes and villains in Ultimate Alliance	they running around a path looked out fighting bad guys	were not talking much but when they do it's about what new things they found about their characters	they can choose what character to be and what fighting moves they use.	The story is about ^{superheroes} fighting evil in a fighting planet travelling

Figure 17: Harley's observations of paired gameplay

	What happened?	How is language used by the gameplayers to communicate with each other? Provide examples	What power does the gameplayer have over the action?	What kind of story is developing?
Bully 2 player Mini Games	The players played a series of mini- games. moving around in class.	Asking each other questions. helping each other.	Controlling their weapons, characters movement, actions.	The two players play mini-games. against each other winning points & trophies. moving around in class.
2 Player Dungeon Siege III	They moved around different scenes, defeating their enemies, making allies.	To help each other work together as a team	Moving fighting.	The two players make allies and defeat enemies, whilst exploring.
Car racing with Forza Motorsport 4	They raced each other on a race course.	not really talking	steering, gears	Car racing. not really a story just races.
Superheroes and villains in Ultimate Alliance	went around the area, defeating the bad guys.	not a lot. Just asking where we were going	moving fighting	two super hero's fighting their enemies.

Figure 18: Rachel's observation of paired gameplay

Harley's responses showed a capacity to dissect the role of talk during gameplay. Observing how language was used by the gameplayer, Harley said that players were "asking questions" but that sometimes "there wasn't any talk." He also identified different levels of agency experienced by the game player, including during the playing of *Ultimate Alliance 2* where the gameplayer "can choose what character to be" and when playing *Bully* where "they control all the where and when the characters walk (sic) and shoot." The provision of the table assisted Rachel to differentiate between what play looked like across different games. For example, Rachel listed how talk during the playing of *Dungeon Siege III* was used "to help each other," as opposed to talk during the playing of *Forza Motorsport 4* where students were "not really talking." Furthermore, Rachel applied her understanding of what constitutes a story to determine that play during *Ultimate Alliance* helped develop a story about "two super heroes fighting their enemies" which was different to the way play with *Forza Motorsport 4* was "not really a story, just races." This kind of classroom practice demonstrated that a feature of videogames as ubiquitous as play can be co-opted to develop new meanings about text. The tables, examples of student-constructed abstractions of play, showed how the often-cited fear over the 'newness' of New Literacies (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008a) can be merged with existing frameworks of literacy to help students understand the textual practices which typify their social world.

However, the problem with play is that it can be easily orientated to successfully navigating goals of game-story, rather than purposeful subject-English goals. This became evident through comparing data which could be categorised as either 'playing to learn' or 'learning to play'. Arnseth (2006), interrogating the distinction between playing to learn and learning to play, has argued that when 'playing to learn' the emphasis is on learning some content or skill which should be the end result of game playing. As such, knowledge and skills are treated as effects or outcomes (the tables created by Harley and Rachel in Figure 17 and Figure 18 were examples of playing to learn.) Conversely, 'learning to play' puts the emphasis on the activity of playing. Following the Eight-Player Gaming activity, the teacher-researcher asked each student to share one piece of feedback about the session. Two types of student comment related to activity associated with learning to play have been collated and presented in Figure 19.

<u>References to interactions between human players</u>	<u>References to successful or unsuccessful play</u>
It was a lot more social than before (Cam) Everyone was always killing everyone (Kate) It was getting like, annoying...because they are so good (Harley) I thought it was heaps more interactive, like way more social (Adam)	I didn't really know what I was doing (Kate) I am not very good at it... I think you have to be good at it to enjoy it (Sharon) It was fun though a little bit frustrating at times... I couldn't navigate properly. (Alicia) You could see that people improved over the

I thought it was good when you like came and could help each other in the game rather than being by yourself (Rachel)	half an hour (Cam)
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Figure 19: Table of evidence of 'learning to play'

Both sides of the table suggest that teachers need to carefully consider how they establish learning-environments which support play. On the left, students report positive and negative effects of social and multiplayer gameplay on how they learnt to play the game, with the range captured by the support Rachel felt she received from her team mates who could "help each other in the game," and on the opposite end of the spectrum, Harley reporting on an obstacle to learning to play as a result of some players' greater gaming ability, "It was getting like, annoying...because they are so good." Similarly, student comments relating to successful or unsuccessful play demonstrated that some students found learning to play challenging, "I didn't really know what I was doing" (Kate), while others observed a noticeable improvement in the quality of play after a period of time, "You could see that people improved over the half an hour" (Cam). Learning environments which incorporate gameplay need to be carefully planned so that play as an activity which can support text comprehension is realised, as evident in Figure 29 and Figure 30, but also recognising that time will need to be allocated so that 'learning to play' is supported. The risk here is that students who lack basic gaming skills will be more likely to focus their attention on learning to play, and minimising the benefits which can arise from playing to learn.

Play, in the same sense as reading or viewing, is a form of habitus in that it "is constituted in practice and is always orientated towards practical functions" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 52). However, consistent with Bourdieu's economic logic of dispositions, the interest which determines student's unconscious practice of play is generated by the field, and whilst this interest is historically constituted, as the demands of social space changes, so do the possibilities for practice. Again, this is evident in the data above. The 'feel for the game' that guides all practice was active as students used play differently during the Paired Gameplay and Note-taking and the Eight-Player Gaming activity. This feel changed as the structures forming the field of these two activities changed, resulting in practices of play differently orientated, and reminding us that what students 'do' with play in subject-English classrooms, will to a large extent be determined by what teachers 'do' to establish the conditions for play, be it the activity of playing, or learning some content or skill through play. There is a tension between what games can offer, in terms of textual and cultural understanding, and school-literacy practices.

Social spaces affecting play

Another approach was also adopted at the end of the study which removed explicit instruction and instead involved freeplay as the pedagogy of choice. Cognisant of a focus throughout the preceding

lessons on textual understanding which valorised the personal experiences of students (Personal Growth model), the multimodality of videogames (Skills model), and questions to raise awareness of the ideologies and presumptions associated with the study's videogames (Critical Literacy model), the intention of this final activity was to test the extent to which students would activate the learnings from earlier in the intervention without the prompting from the teacher-researcher. What became evident was that the withdrawal of the teacher-researcher's dominant role reorientated the social space such that the subject-English orientated cultural capital which had been developed over the preceding lessons of the intervention was not chosen for activation by students. This lends credence to Bourdieu's claim that "a capital does not exist and function but in relation to a field" (1989, p. 39).

Analysing data from the Eight-Player Gaming session requires analysing changes to the social space, and the historical factors which determined the possible forms of interactions in such a space. The term social space is used as a geographic metaphor to explain how people are arranged in society (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 16). As the characteristics of social spaces change, so do the capacities of different actors to participate. This was particularly evident throughout the study through the behaviour and comments of Brad. As an avid gamer, Brad had acquired a habitus featuring gaming dispositions produced and reproduced in spaces that featured social play. As a result, the significant change to the subject-English classroom for the final lesson of the intervention, the Eight-Player Gaming session, altered the forms of capital which could be utilised, leading Brad to participate in distinctive ways. For example, in setting-up the game for this activity Brad was the most vocal person in the room, even more so than the teacher-researcher, giving instructions to other individuals new to the game, such as "Now press the one above shoot to change colours", and instructions to the whole group including "Hey guys this level is juggernaut meaning there is one guy who is super strong. You've gotta take him down." After several games, Brad took the initiative and assisted Adam to find new maps to set-up a new game, "Oh hang on, Adam, do you want more maps?" Finally, Brad was also highly active helping his fellow team-mates navigate in-game activity with advice like "Stay away from vehicles" and "Cam, [do it] now". Despite the deficit discourse used by Brad and his standard classroom teacher to describe his literacy performance and participation in the traditional subject-English classroom, the intervention's use of videogames transformed the social space within which Brad participated, validating particular social practices and cultural knowledge not typically valued in subject-English.

Understanding why Brad might struggle in a subject-English classroom dominated by print-based practice, but excel when videogame practice becomes the main activity is achieved by considering social spaces are objective spaces, where histories of relations determine what agents can do within

such spaces (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 245). Social spaces therefore organise individuals according to those who have the requisite capital and those who do not. This captures the struggle for distinction which dominates social life. Brad's position within the social space of the intervention classroom increased dramatically when the conditions of that space changed. This occurred as the teacher-researcher withdrew the emphasis on learning activities linked to textual study in the tradition of subject-English models of text. The result was new forms of cultural and social capital deemed legitimate. Thus, whilst Brad's possession of these forms of capital was not dependent on their validation in the intervention, the transformed social space recognised these forms as legitimate, resulting in increased symbolic capital.

To understand why Brad's habitus, the product of history, has positioning him thus, it is necessary to look the functioning of social spaces from outside of the study. Brad's response to the question of his prior experiences with games, analysed earlier in this chapter in terms of the videogame identities it evoked, revealed a relationship between multiplayer gaming and authentic social interactions. As a reminder, Brad's response was:

"I've played a lot of videogames. I'm influenced by my stepdad who it's a rare thing for him not to visit JB Hi-Fi and bring home a game of some sort. So I, yeah, I played lots and lots of games because he is a stepdad [and] he plays...lots of shooter games so I play lots of those [games] too."

This example from outside of the classroom is useful for helping understand how technologies impact upon the arrangement of people in social spaces. Brad's description of playing videogames with his stepdad, along with the intrinsic practices of videogames (interactivity, collaboration, narrative-centred learning, and affinity groups) which will be explored in detail in the next section of this Chapter, provides an insight into the effect textual practices of gameplay had on the possibilities of action in the real-world. Common interests and practices between Brad and his step-coalesced to create a social space which, according to Brad, "just kind of made things easier; the transition [and] joining of our lives." The positive discourse often adopted by Brad when talking about videogame play was the product of the internalisation of experiences like that described with his stepdad above, but which were connected to specific social spaces. These internalised experiences were convertible into meaningful practice only when the field of play contained the features of social space that gave meaning to these dispositions. This was the case in the Eight-Player Gaming activity as the absence of direct instruction created an absence of subject-English discourse, and a space of 'position takings' (Bourdieu, 1996b, p. 14) for all students to inhabit according to their own habitus.

The same forces which enabled multiplayer videogame play to construct a social space typified by a field of opportunity for Brad, represented a field of struggles for others. Notwithstanding Rachel's positive reflections on the benefits of playing with a team during the Eight-Player Gaming session, "You didn't have to rely on yourself, and other people could help you understand what you have to do", researcher-observations presented a different picture of Rachel's practice in response to a classroom space focussed on videogame play and study. Figure 20 below from the aforementioned lesson shows Rachel and Alicia sitting close to each other and further away from the projector, when compared to Brad and Cam, who appeared comfortable being somewhat isolated but closer to the screen. While it appears as if all four students in the image are working together or sharing a space, it would be incorrect to presume that geographic proximity equates to social closeness, or as Bourdieu (1984) has argued in relation to cultural differences between members of the same class-group, geographical closeness can confuse the complexity associated with social distance (p. 124).



Figure 20: Team one during the final lesson of the intervention.

Social spaces are not ideologically neutral. The transformation of the classroom from one requiring investment matched to the teacher-led learning activities, to something else, produced a new set of forces in relation to the transformed field. The four students depicted in Figure 20 brought with them to this space gendered and videogame identities (analysed in depth in the third section of this chapter) that informed their practice, from where to sit, to how to use talk. Brad and Cam's extensive experience playing the game which dominated this social activity produced a social distance between them and the less-experienced Rachel and Alicia. At a literal level, there was lack of conversation between the 'girls' and the 'boys', with only the occasional utterance directed towards Rachel from Brad for assistance. At the same time, the two boys engaged with each other frequently with an open, familiar tone, a sign of a stronger connection between them during this

activity and of a greater confidence during videogame play. Perhaps in response to this tone, Rachel also offered little in the way of questions or commentary to other team-mates. This image captured hierarchies of power activated through encounters between habitus and field; the former represented through dispositions around gaming practice and the latter represented by the classroom space absent of explicit instructions beyond the support for freeplay. As a result of these hierarchies, the social space was open to some, and closed to others.

It is not surprising that other practice-based studies have concluded that the introduction of gaming practices into non-gaming environments can lead to substantial increases in social activity as a result of multiplayer gaming (Cuddon, 2012), given the technological affordances of such text. However, as the analysis above demonstrates, the realisation of a technological phenomenon such as videogames cannot escape all of the struggles over the game of culture that are tied-up in the histories of people and places, and the practices produced as a result of the dialectical relationship between habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1977).

Play and time

Pedagogy exists in classrooms in terms of social space, but it also exists in terms of time. Data from the study revealed that temporal limitations associated with studying videogames in classroom contexts limits the type of possible play, and presented a challenge for the teacher-researcher. Whilst observational data showed that play had the capacity to improve student-engagement, much like other such practice-based studies (Beavis, 1999a; Byrne, 2012; Glover-Adams, 2009; Ostenson, 2013), the limited time that could be dedicated to playing videogames within the study impacted upon learning and teaching. Several students commented during post-intervention interviews about the importance of extended periods of play. These comments included:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Rachel: | Like when you first get a game of course you don't understand what you have to do, but...after a while, you'll figure it out. |
| Kate: | Maybe a bit more game play is needed to actually really get into the story and see what was happening. |
| Cam: | The characters have their own profiles and personalities which you'll slowly pick up the more time you're playing it. |
| Cam: | You can only gain that skill by experience. So, you have to play it all. You're going to have to play it a while, and probably practically play with friends so you can trade [with] each other, [for example] secrets [about playing]. So, you can help each other learn the controls. |
| Harley: | With the <i>World of Warcraft</i> you can play it for like hours and hours and...you can never get bored because it's always something different. |

A clear theme to emerge from these comments was that extended periods of gameplay facilitated the development of the functional skills necessary to successfully navigate and enjoy videogames, “you can only gain that skill by experience” (Cam), and that this type of play was best conducted socially because “you can help each other learn the controls.” Making specific reference to the way time impacted on play during the intervention, Kate said that more time dedicated to play would help students “really get into the story and see what was happening”, a sentiment shared by Cam who said that knowledge about the profiles and personalities of characters will be better developed “the more time you’re playing it.” The importance of increased engagement through extended periods of play, which Kate, Cam and Harley referred to, has been described by numerous commentators as vital if the benefits of transformational play (Barab et al., 2010) and active learning (Gee, 2007d) are to be realised.

These sentiments reveal one consequence of employing subject-English pedagogies, developed with predominantly print-based texts in mind, to digital texts with different affordances (a theme to be expanded upon in the next section.)

Student responses and teacher-researcher observations suggested that features of schooling associated with the length of classrooms lessons and the timetabling of school-based learning provide structural limitations as to the type of play which can occur, which has consequences for subsequent learning activities. Assumptions around the decoding skills of students and the need for extended periods of play so that students can become familiar with all aspects of the game being studied require greater attention.

Conclusion

In many respects, the Skills, Personal Growth, and Critical Literacy models provide rich pedagogic resources for supporting developing knowledge and skills through videogame play and study. However, issues around the role of play, the basic videogame-related decoding skills of students, and the possibilities for Cultural Heritage models, need more focus. In response to the question of pedagogical issues associated with working with videogames in subject-English classrooms, the data showed that issues relating to pedagogical practice are multifaceted and complicated by the ‘newness’ associated with bringing these texts into subject-English classrooms for play and study. In some areas, the data supported the continued work of research coming from fields of critical literacy and multimodality, while other data suggested that the implications of gaming capital and play on the pedagogical approaches employed when studying and playing these texts is still in its infancy.

Understanding the intrinsic practices of videogames is crucial to the future of these texts in literacy and subject-English contexts.

4.2 Videogame Affordances and Practices

This second section of analysis addressed data related to the research question: What are the intrinsic practices of videogames which will impact on their study in subject-English classrooms? To be characterised as intrinsic, the four practices explored below, namely interactivity, collaboration, narrative-centred learning and affinity groups, are essential components of videogame play. Given the emphasis throughout this thesis on contexts (the field) as a key variable informing the practices which can be produced by any individual, it was important to explore and concentrate on these four ways of engaging with text as they were realised during the intervention. While it needs to be recognised that much of the data analysed in this section is tied to the pedagogies which created the circumstances to produce such practices, the intention is to shift the focus of analysis to the textual practices themselves so that closer study can investigate the implications of these features of videogames-as-text for classroom study. The four practices evident in Figure 21 below are representative of videogame literacies and this analysis highlights the similarities and differences between these practices and those associated with traditional subject-English text.



Figure 21: Concept map visualising themes relating to videogame affordances and practices

Interactivity

Videogame play enables new types of interaction between user and text not evident in texts traditionally studied in subject-English. Collaborative activity between the students and the game designers to co-construct meaning during gameplay represented a form of figurative interactivity, typified by a partnership between the reader and the text in the production of meaning. Data

collected in the Writing and Playing Bully activity, where one student played the game while the rest of the class wrote down what they saw happening on the screen, demonstrated practices across Ryan's (2001) Figurative-Literal interactivity spectrum⁴⁸. This activity involved two types of videogame practice resulting in different interactions between user and text. The first form of textual practice to be analysed here is represented by students making sense of what they saw on the television screen, itself an image projected from the videogame console. During this activity, Brad used the controller to direct the virtual character around the gameworld, completing several introductory game activities and familiarising himself with the virtual setting. The other students were directed to watch the screen and make notes in their workbooks describing what they saw unfolding. All students were involved in 'reading' the images, sounds, colour and events depicted on the screen, a form of figurative interactivity similar to meaning-making during film-viewing, or as it occurs when a reader engages with a novel and constructs meaning from the words on the page.

The second form of textual practice analysed, intrinsic to the playing of videogame, was more literal in nature and refers specifically to Brad's actions controlling the virtual character. As the two screenshots⁴⁹ in Figure 22 capture, gameplay allowed Brad to perform two types of activity. The screenshot on the left shows how Brad could roam around the gameworld, a fictional boarding school called Bullworth Academy, and the town in which it was situated. The screenshot on the right depicts how Brad could approach and respond to other virtual characters, choosing to complete quests and challenges. Both of these types of textual practice involved literal interactivity, where the text must undergo physical changes during the reading/making process. It is worth noting that this is a process distinctive from the reading or viewing taking place when engaging with novels or films. The game provided, and required, Brad to take control of a textual mechanism, the virtual character, which was accessible through a handheld controller and allowed

⁴⁸ Figurative interactivity refers to a collaboration between the reader and the text to construct meaning, whereas, literal interactivity refers to the reader using tools to change the visible signs of the text and the manner in which it unfolds (Ryan, 2001).

⁴⁹ These are not actual screenshots of Brad's gameplay but capture almost identically what Brad and the other students would have seen on the screen during the lesson.



Figure 22: Two screenshots of gameplay from *Bully*

his decisions to form the ‘text’ of the text (Ryan, 2001, p. 17). While all students figuratively interacted with the text, only Brad literally interacted, evidenced by the virtual world incorporating and responding to each and every command he issued. Physical changes in the text were realised through the changing visual landscape, a response to Brad’s decisions about where to go, and also through dialogue with other non-person characters, NPCs⁵⁰, a response to Brad’s decisions regarding whom to engage with. Textual study in subject-English has often been characterised by attempts to uncover and understand the work and the author’s intended message through attention to the text (Thomson, 2004a). This approach to textual understanding would be insufficient for dealing with videogame literacies which pose the complex challenge of unpacking game action to distinguish meanings and intentions of the enmeshed relationship between game designer and game player.

Interactivity can also be used to understand how game-design will impact on gamer agency. Using the same data analysed above, it is possible to apply Grodal’s (2000) typology of interactivity⁵¹ to demonstrate how different levels of user input affected the resulting textual practice. For example, the students who watched Brad play *Bully* were passively interactive, in the sense that they were witness to the virtual space or action, as evidenced by their viewing of gameplay like a film. In contrast, Brad’s level of interactivity transitioned to active interactivity as a result of his direct engagement with the avatar. Brad was active as he used the virtual character to explore the spaces and setting around Bullworth Academy, walking and running through the school grounds and directing the vision of the avatar to learn more about the virtual space, but retaining a large degree of control over the developing text. As Brad commanded his avatar to communicate with other NPCs the level of interactivity increased to become centrally interactive. Due to engagement with NPCs, the evolving text was only partially under Brad’s control with other processes and agencies

⁵⁰ Non-player characters controlled by the computer.

⁵¹ Grodal’s (2000) three-tiered model extends from passive at one end (being witness to spaces or actions, such as film), active in the middle (the exploration of spaces and processes though self-control, such as walking), and centrally interactive at the greatest level of user input (when we are confronted with other processes and agencies that we are not entirely under our control).

produced by the game taking effect. Within this form of interaction, Brad was required to ‘cope’ with antagonistic virtual forces, a product of his actions in the gameworld (Grodal, 2000, p. 203). Figure 23 displays the graph used in the Literature Review to visualise Ryan (2001) and Grodal’s (2000) work on interactivity, with the addition of markers which visualise the levels of interactivity exercised by Brad and other students during this activity.

This data revealed that gameplay in this context created particular types of interactivity responsive to the context and the possibilities of the text. These possibilities share similarities with many of the digital texts which dominate the everyday textual practices of young people. While subject-English has historically dealt with static print-based texts, Ryan and Grodal’s theories highlight conceptual and textual frameworks more appropriate for the study of contemporary digital texts.

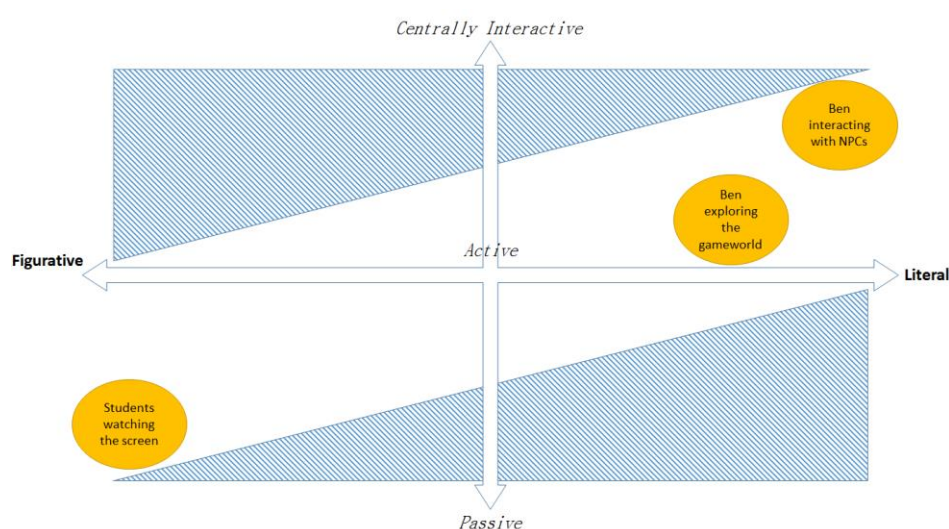


Figure 23: Interactivity Graph with student positions

Students expressed beliefs about the possibilities of videogame practice as a result of drawing comparisons between the affordances of print-based texts and videogames. The following remarks from students were in response to a question posed to all participants during post-intervention interviews about how much power and control the game had on the gamer, and vice versa. Four illuminating answers were:

- Kate: Well, you can make your own choices, but then you can’t do exactly what you want because there’s always things in the game that push you to do what it wants.
- Rachel: It was never the same thing. When you read a book it doesn’t change the next time you read it, unlike when you’re playing a game, it can be different every time...because you get to choose, like in videogames, you get to choose more how it goes, not completely, but there’s more options for you to kind of take control. So, you can kind of create a different outcome of how you want it to go, but when you read a book, it’s all set out for you.

- Cam: The only difference is the class can actually have a chance to interact and sometimes have a choice to do what they want. Whereas, if you're reading the book, it's always one straight line...You don't always have to stick with the old-fashioned movies and the books that are famous. You can do, you can choose other things. So, it gives the class [a chance] to actually interact, to actually choose the path they want to do instead of sticking to one boring-old same thing.
- Harley: With the *World of Warcraft*⁵² you can play it for hours and hours... and you can never get bored because it's always something different. But with *Call of Duty* or something like that, it's the same, just fighting and stuff but it's just repetitive.

The comments from students included an emphasis on the limitations of books and films in comparison to videogames. This rhetoric was centred on two perceived deficiencies. The first was the linearity of books, captured by Cam, "it's always one straight line", and Rachel, "when you read books, it's all set out for you". The suggestion being made here is that the structure of these text-types has a clear sense of start and finish and that a more meaningful textual experience could be achieved if a less restrictive approach was adopted. The second perceived deficiency related to the fixedness of books and was evidenced by Rachel, who said "when you read a book it doesn't change the next time you read it", and Cam, who suggested there were alternatives to "sticking to one boring, old same thing." These comments were critical of the perceived static nature of printed text. Both students lamented the way these texts were rigid in their form, retaining the same content over time. Rather than thinking of these texts in terms of stories which changed and developed with each subsequent reading, their juxtaposition to the interactivity immediately apparent in the videogames under investigation results in an attitude towards printed texts which did not consider them interactive at all.

Explaining why students were critical of a perceived lack of interactivity in print-based texts requires reflecting on the broader textual environment which many of today's young people inhabit. This is a world typified by time spent engaged with digital forms of technology, especially the internet. More recently the proliferation of smart phones and tablets, as well as particular experiences of reading in their social worlds, has produced a habitus predisposed to thinking in some ways about texts, and not others. Students have come to expect certain practices of texts. Various reports have demonstrated the prevalence of digital devices in the lives of young people with trends such as: eighty-six percent of Americans aged 18-29 own a smartphone (Anderson, 2015, p. 7), half of this age group own a tablet (p. 10), and fifty-six percent own a game console, (p. 13). In Australia, ninety-eight percent of Australian homes with children had a device for playing videogames, and typical

⁵² An online role-playing game.

gameplay is one hour daily (Brand et al., 2014, p. 6). These statistics reflect a textual world occupied by young people which is characterised by practices that are fluid, mobile, changeable, active, and continuous. Those raised with such practices are likely to have developed dispositions, of both action and thought, which act as a present-past, which Bourdieu (1990b) argued tends to “perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices” (p. 54), resulting in some students possessing a perception of print-based texts as lacking interactivity. Understanding these dispositions is important to the research question guiding this section of analysis. If there are intrinsic features of videogame practice which are similar to features of other contemporary popular culture text, then it is likely that bringing them into subject-English classrooms will trigger more favourable attitudes from students.

‘Choice’ as an intrinsic feature of videogame practice produced contested discourses in terms of the possibilities it offers. Numerous students spoke about choice in videogames in a positive light. Cam said that through videogames the class “have a choice to do what they want...to actually choose the path they want”, and Rachel also spoke favourably about videogames because “you get to choose more how it goes...there’s more options for you to kind of take control.” In combination with Harley’s comment that “it’s always something different”, these students described a perceived affordance associated with choice which produces interactions that result in outcomes distinctive with each iteration of gameplay. While contemporary approaches to studying novels in subject-English emphasise the deconstructive pedagogies that reveal new understandings as a result of guided instruction and reading (Gold, 2004), challenging the illusion of a reality constructed by the author, this is a practice different to that produced through gameplay, whereby new iterations of the actual text are afforded by the design of the game. Interactivity, whereby every action affects the overall system, is what Salen and Zimmerman (2005, p. 70) state typifies meaningful play. The way games incorporate the player’s choices into the unfolding action is an essential feature of this text.

However, the data also revealed that not all games were perceived to allow choice in the same way. Comments from Harley and Kate captured the interactive limitations of videogames. Harley compared two games, *World of Warcraft* and *Call of Duty*, to make the point that not all games are designed so that different inputs and outcomes are possible. With some videogames “you can never get bored because it’s always something different” (Harley). These games encourage literal/centrally interactive practices that lead to different outcomes each time the game is played. On the other hand, Harley also spoke about games that lacked interactivity due to their repetitive nature. This is evident in his critical evaluation of *Call of Duty*, perhaps the most popular videogame of the past decade, where “it’s the same, just fighting and stuff but it’s just repetitive.” Kate similarly critiqued

the limitations of choice during gameplay, stating “you can’t do exactly what you want because there’s always things in the game that push you to do what it wants.” Kate was referring to the way videogames are designed to allow some choices, but also to deny others. Her use of the word ‘push’ is interesting in that unlike the tone of those students above who focussed on the opportunities presented by videogame play, she was able to identify the structured and coordinated nature of these texts and the way they can also function to reduce choice, as much as to allow it. As Holmes (2007) has argued, interactivity is often treated as a ‘given’ of new media, when in fact, this is not always the case. Comments like those from Harley and Kate here captured the importance of treating each game individually, recognising how their constructedness supports some form of textual practice, and at the same time, limiting others. At the same time, contrasting views about this feature of videogames makes the significance of the factors forming the field within which these practices were realised fundamental. Teachers will ultimately be faced with pedagogical choices that either incorporate this crucial component of videogames-as-text, or ignore the challenge and resort to more traditional approaches to textual study.

Collaboration

The technologies associated with videogames encourage the cooperative enactment of text through talk, informal learning, and master and apprentice relationships. Multi-player gameplay, made possible through the use of a videogame console that allowed up to four controllers to be plugged in to the same machine at the same time, was one form of practice which produced extensive talk worthy of analysis. The Paired-Gameplay and Note-taking activity involved two students playing approximately five minutes of a game together while the rest of the class wrote observational notes. Harley and Adam were recorded talking as they played *Dungeon Siege III* together for five minutes, a game which involved adopting avatars of medieval warriors, armed with swords and axes, and roaming a mythical land. Throughout their gameplay the data revealed that both students used questions to make sense of their experience and to support each other’s progress. The following is a short sample of some of the sixteen questions in total used by both students during their gameplay:

Harley:	Do we have to watch this bit?
Adam:	Is it? how do I? Like that?
Harley:	Are you in?
Adam:	How did you that?
Harley:	How do you jump?
Harley:	No you're not going the right way. Oh, what does that do?
Adam:	How did you? That thing before?
Adam:	Oh wait, there is something down here. How can you get over there?
Harley:	Does this make any sense to you where we are going?

All questions related to action occurring on the screen. They were context-specific questions targeted at immediate short-term goals. Harley's and Adam's talk was pragmatic, rarely extending beyond the use of questions to attain the necessary information to proceed in the game. Categorised according to Bloom's revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002), most of these questions were located within the 'remembering' and 'applying' phases. Questions aimed at deeper thinking, such as analysis or explanation, were absent during student talk at this time, suggesting that gameplay connected to this text did not require these types of talk. The pedagogy utilised at this time was also a factor impacting the production of talk as learning and teaching was focussed on the other students in the class who were recording observation notes. The ways in which different games promote particular forms of collaborative talk in order to progress through the game is something teachers will need to consider when deciding on the role that videogames-as-text might have in their classrooms.

Despite the lack of talk used for complex understanding, the many questions used by Adam and Harley in the above example were nonetheless representative of informal learning⁵³ achieved collaboratively through multiplayer gameplay. Without the assistance of the teacher-researcher or a clearly defined curriculum, these two students set-about playing and learning through experience (Dewey, 1938). Embodied in simultaneous gameplay through their avatars, working together increased their commitment to play and made their ongoing talk context-specific and mutually beneficial. Even though the talk was not connected to subject-specific disciplinary-learning, it demonstrated how gameplay can occur in a manner whereby talk does not interfere with textual practice, but rather can enrich it. Collaborative talk *during* textual practice enhanced student navigation of the text. Multiplayer gaming established the conditions for students to support each other's learning, without interrupting their engagement with text.

Another feature of the informal learning relating to collaborative play was the revelation of master and apprentice practices. During the same lesson described above, Sharon and Cam played *Bully* for five minutes, completing short arcade-style mini games. The games were detached from the main *Bully* narrative and involved the players competing against each other to either consume the correct types of foods, as per the screenshot on the left in Figure 24, or act as a squirrel shooting nuts as they appear on the screen, as per the screenshot on the right.

⁵³ Informal learning is not typically classroom based or highly structured with control tending to rest in the hands of the learner (Marsick & Watkins, 2001)

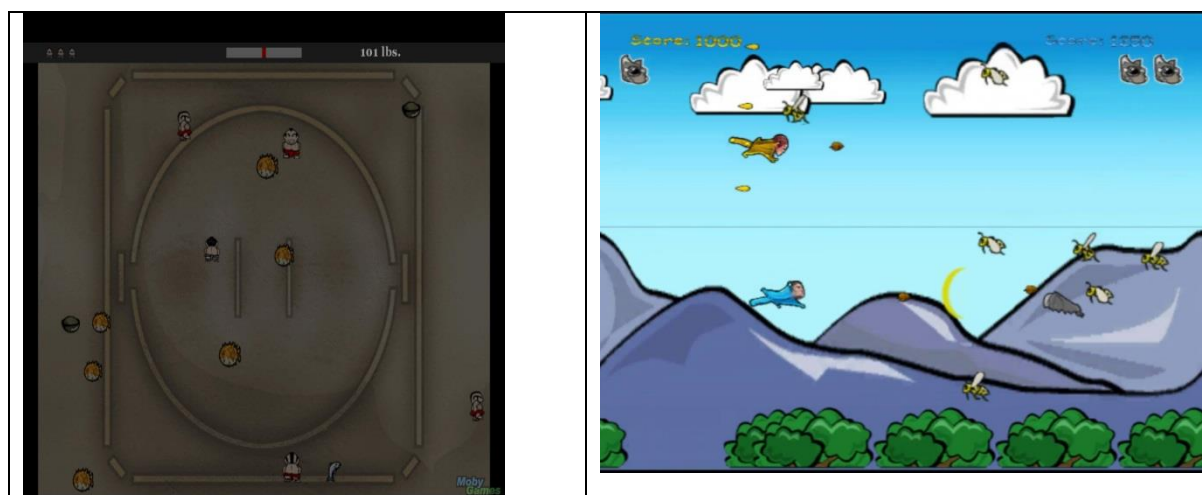


Figure 24: Screenshots of *Bully* Mini Games

Whilst the games demanded different levels of interaction to those encountered in the Adam/Harley example, what was most interesting here were the interruptions during gameplay from another student, Brad. As the transcriptions of talk during this gameplay revealed, Brad took it upon himself on numerous occasions to contribute to Sharon and Cam's gaming by making comments that helped both students complete the tasks. For example:

Brad: You both ate a blow fish. Don't eat the blow fish.
 Cam: What am I meant to be eating then?
 Brad: The things that look healthy, rice.

Also:

Sharon: How do you shoot that one [a nut on the screen]?
 Cam: That one? What is it? Shoot is one of them [the buttons] I think. I don't know which it is.
 Brad: Press any button [on the controller] apart from 'x'.

And:

Cam: I think I'm [the] yellow [squirrel].
 Brad: Are you?
 Cam: Yeah I think so.
 Brad: I thought you were blue.

Brad's talk supported the other players by informing them which objects they should 'eat' and 'not eat', and which buttons to press on the controller in order to control gameplay. Sharon's pronouncement just prior to this activity beginning that "I'm not very good at this" served as an invitation for Brad to use talk to support Sharon and Cam's textual practice. As he became aware that the others needed support in their gaming practice, Brad intervened providing explicit-information-on-demand without interrupting the game. Though the data analysed above represents examples of surface level understanding, with more targeted scaffolding, it is possible to envisage collaborative practice as a means to develop deeper level comprehension.

This data is evidence of Brad assuming the role of ‘Master’, to Sharon and Cam’s roles as ‘apprentices’. Taking on master and apprentice roles were one way through which collaborative and informal learning took place (Gee, 2004a, p. 70). It is a form of learning typified by joint action between more advanced peers and learners who apprentice themselves. This analysis has parallels with the findings of other classroom-based studies, such as that conducted by Simpson and Clem (2008) who used commercially available videogames to test the efficacy of game-anchored learning and concluded that students quickly established the ‘experts’ in the group who helped to create a collaborative learning environment. Jenkins et al’s (2006) focus on participatory cultures also found that practices within these social environments support collaboration and informal mentorship so that the most experienced can support novices. However, despite the collaborative learning affordances possible when young people play videogames together, the study found that other factors provided obstacles to taking on master and apprentice positions.

The social and cultural capital necessary for participants to adopt a lusory attitude (Suits, 2007)⁵⁴ necessary to participate in collaborative gameplay was not equally accessible. Taking on a lusory attitude was a pre-requisite for the benefits of collaborative informal learning to take place. Teacher-researcher observations found that Sharon and Alicia were reticent to partake in many of the play opportunities presented throughout the intervention. In almost every lesson of the intervention these two students opted-out of taking-up a controller, instead allowing other students to control virtual avatars and the subsequent unravelling of action on the screen. Even when taking up the controller was unavoidable, such as in the Eight-Player Gaming activity, these students were highly critical of their own gaming and offered few constructive collaborative contributions.

Alicia	Sharon
Can someone else play? I don’t even know how to play (Lesson 7)	I don’t know how to do it (Lesson 4, after being handed the control to free-play during the last few minutes of the lesson)
What? What? (Lesson 7, after a suggestion from Brad about how to reload her avatar’s weapon)	I’m not very good at this (Lesson 5, before beginning paired-gameplay)
It was fun though a little bit frustrating at times, you know, I think my problem was I didn’t aim the screen right or something I couldn’t navigate properly. I think that was about it but it felt a bit like organised chaos (Lesson 8)	Whoops! Was that me? Sorry (Lesson 8)
	Can I shoot into the air? (Lesson 8)
	I suppose because I’m not very good at it. I don’t know. I think you have to be good at it to enjoy it (Lesson 8)

Figure 25: Comparison of Alicia and Sharon’s perceived gaming capital

⁵⁴ A lusory attitude captures the stance necessary to play the game, whereby players must knowingly accept the rules associated with the game so that activity is made possible (Suits, 2007).

As is evident in Figure 25: Comparison of Alicia and Sharon's perceived gaming capital, these students expressed limited cultural capital, that is gaming capital, and minimal social capital, due to weaker social relations with other students in the study. When this was combined with the gendered nature of the gameplay spaces, this made it more challenging for Sharon and Alicia to fully adopt the lusory attitude that could produce collaborative gameplay activity. Comments such as "I don't even know how to play" (Alicia), and "I'm not very good at this" (Sharon), are examples of an inadequate 'lusory means', the methods, needed to achieve a 'pre-lusory' goal, an objective of gameplay. Suits (2005) argued that to play a game requires a goal that attempts to achieve "a specific state of affairs" (p. 54). Suits (2007) calls this the 'pre-lusory' goal of the game because it can be described before, and independent of, any game that it becomes a part of (p. 10). To achieve this goal, an appropriate 'lusory-means' must be employed by a player. The language used by Sharon and Alicia reflected two students who lacked gaming capital. Knowledge and skills needed to control virtual avatars represented the lusory means, or gaming capital, needed to participate successfully in collaborative play. Understanding why these two students could not invest the necessary gaming capital to partake in collaborative classroom gameplay, even if they possessed the requisite skills and knowledge, requires a closer look at the history turned into habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78) which acted as invisible relationships of power to limit Sharon and Alicia's practice.

Social and cultural motivations of students, a product of complex relations to the past, made it impossible for some students to achieve distinction during collaborative gameplay. Videogames like those engaged with by participants throughout this study have been designed to enable many forms of collaborative practice, from two-player gameplay, multiplayer-mode, online play, networked play, and many more. However, as Salen (2008b) states in her ecology of gaming, any game is the product of "the individual, social, and cultural motivations of any player, which combine to affect what is experienced. No two players experience the same game" (p. 10). Sharon and Alicia's limited collaborative practice, or under-developed lusory means, were examples of a mismatch between dispositions possessed and dispositions required. As disparities between student participation in gameplaying revealed, inhabiting the formal system of the gameworld was an individual experience pre-loaded with symbolic violence, where videogames as sites of social and cultural practice were constructed as spaces for meaningful play by some, or spaces for symbolic domination by others.

At the same time, the interventionist nature of the context within which these students were expected to collaborate, imbued with a variety of pedagogical influences, created a classroom environment deceptive in nature. It was unlikely that any of the participants would have studied videogames in a classroom setting before. This would have increased the challenge students faced disciplining themselves to produce the dispositions (practices) rewarded in such an environment. As

Bourdieu (1999) states, individuals who move into a new space “must fulfil the conditions that that space tacitly requires of its occupants” (p. 128). For Sharon and Alicia, self-doubt regarding their own capacities, as well as the hierarchised nature of the social space within which the intervention took place, organised according to a wide-range of social realities that required “position takings” (Bourdieu, 1996b, p. 14), left them unable to perform in the literal game on the tv screen, but also in the metaphorical game of culture. These hierarchies, internalised by the participants, but also imposed by the study’s social space, forced themselves onto students and their potential for collaborative practice. While textual affordances created opportunities for constructive talk and informal learning, evidence of students who could not participate in such cooperative and collective textual practice reveals that dynamics beyond the games must be considered when highlighting features of videogames that are distinct from other texts.

Narrative centred learning

Another intrinsic feature of videogames requiring attention relates to how they support the realisation of narrative. Gerrig’s (1993) work explicating the common elements at the core of experiences of narratives offers guidance here, in terms of the means by which the ‘experiencers’ of narrative worlds come to know these worlds. Gerrig uses the metaphor of the traveller to characterise experiences of narrative. He says:

“Someone (“the traveller”) is transported by some means of transportation as a result of performing certain actions. The traveller goes some distance from his or her world of origin which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible. The traveller returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey” (pp. 10-11).

Two elements of this metaphor can be extracted to reveal features of videogames that will impact on their introduction into classrooms. These are:

1. Travellers avail themselves of some form of transportation.
2. The traveller performs the narrative.

The first of these elements refers to the means which facilitate the journey and is important when considering how students interpret modalities used to realise narratives in videogames.

The materialisation of videogame-related narratives during the intervention occurred in ways that prompt a reconceptualization of this textual feature’s place in subject-English. This was evident in the multiple modalities which students referred to when deconstructing games. During the Game Trailers activity students were required to complete a table that captured how visuals, dialogue, music and texts functioned to create the story unfolding on the screen. Four different videogames

were analysed by the class as individual students took turns using the controller to play each game's introductory scenes. Figure 26 shows the collated student responses⁵⁵ to the role played by visuals to create the stories of one of the four games, *Fable II*.

Alicia	Brad	Cam
Light and dark grey clouds above town Dark village Girls standing around fire and snow Panning over landscape Lights on in town	Following the bird's path, you can see the area of the world. Kind of like an open world games from the looks of things. Very dark area, with small sections of sunlight	Cartoon world/realist factors to it Smooth edges Lighting
Kate	Rachel	Harley
Darkish, Sets mood of different places Smooth-edged looking Animation	Lighting Colour Dark areas and light areas Scenery Fire Overview of the whole area	Bird travelling a long distance, hinting at an adventure tale Cartoony fantasy

Figure 26: The role played by visuals to create the story of *Fable II*

All six students described the role played by light and dark imagery to create the setting. Kate moved beyond simply identifying the feature, explaining the function of light and dark motifs in stating, it “sets the mood of different places”. Several students also used the visual representations to position observed gameplay within particular genres of narrative, including Harley's comment that the presence of a bird was “hinting at an adventure tale” and Brad's comment that the bird's flight path allowed the gamer to “See the area of the world”, and then classifying the setting by linking it to a particular genre of videogame “kind of like an open-world game.” These comments captured alternative modes, beyond the printed-word, by which gameplay created stories and worlds seemingly of another place and time that appear real, and encourage exploration in order to further unravel the narrative (Mott et al., 1999). The presence of multiple modes of meaning-making provided elements beyond the modality of print with which students could develop a sense of the game's unravelling story

However, while different modalities were used in videogames to create the narrative, the effect was the same as that achieved in print-based texts, essentially, they transport readers to another place and time that seems real. Descriptions of the setting of *Fable II* by students reflect a sense of spatial immersion achieved through visuals which allow for the construction of highly realistic settings. In print-based narratives, language is used to achieve a similar purpose, through adjectives, metaphors, and other literary devices. Data in Figure 26 above showed how visual affordances achieve the same

⁵⁵ Two students, Adam and Sharon, were absent when this activity was completed.

purpose. Figure 27 depicts two screenshots from the introduction to *Fable II* which correlate with the descriptions students recorded about how visuals contributed to the construction of the story during this gameplay.



Figure 27: Two screenshots from the introduction to *Fable II*

The data supports Gerrig's (1993) principles of cognitive processes associated with narrative comprehension, which detail how narrative can develop more or less the same through language or visuals. The temptation for the English teacher might be to dedicate little attention to these processes due to the illusion that the narrative is more easily accessible when experienced through visuals and sound. However, as with Watson's (2004) reminder that accepting a view of reading which features a dialogue between the words on the page and the person reading them does not negate the role of the teacher to deepen and refine students initial responses, a pedagogy of videogames must make space to challenge and develop student interpretations of the means by which they form narratives through gameplay.

The second feature of Gerrig's metaphor which can be used to understand the relationship between narrative-centred learning and videogames relates to the performance of narrative. Gerrig argues that readers⁵⁶ perform narratives, and during this process they use their experiences of the world to bridge the gaps in the text (1993, p. 17). Students were required to navigate (perform) a diversity of narrative structures throughout the intervention. Analysing the way students spoke about the stories they encountered raises questions about how subject-English can address the 'performance' aspect of these texts.

⁵⁶ Gerrig's reference to those experiencing narratives as 'readers' is a consequence of his prevalence for most of his examples to relate to the printed page. As he states, "I hope that much of what say would remain true regardless of how the experiencer is prompted to construct a narrative world (for example, as a listener, as a viewer, and so on)" (1993, p. 7).

Some videogames are designed to contain conventional narratives which require familiar performances. Videogames studied during the intervention which followed linear trajectories with common narrative elements were easily identified and understood by students in terms of story. Following the Writing and Playing Bully activity, during which students took turns playing the game individually while other completed activities in their booklets, the teacher-researcher initiated a discussion about the story which students had observed during gameplay. Students made comments referencing the plot, “A kid going to school and going through the troubles of school” (Harley), characters, “All the characters have their own personalities and stuff” (Kate), “He [Jimmy] also had a soft side to him” (Cam), and setting “This [the opening scene] kind of established the environment...and introduces you to all the other different things that are happening in the school” (Adam). The linear nature of *Bully* resulted in play being used to perform the narrative in such ways that the protagonists, the gameworld, and the quests that required completion, or the plot, were introduced in a similar manner to the way an author might utilise their opening chapter to orientate their audience. Comprehension of the narrative through its performance was facilitated by the likeness between the performances required during playing *Bully* and performances required during reading a more traditional novel. In this sense, narrative understanding during gameplay depended on knowledge and understanding about stories which students brought with them to gameplay. In contrast, students mostly rejected the premise that the play associated with immersion in the *Forza Motorsport 4* gameworld represented a story.

Other videogames contain unconventional narratives requiring readers to bridge the ‘gaps’ in the text in different ways. A comment said by Kate during the intervention about playing *Forza Motorsport 4*, ‘there is no story here, one player is winning and one person is losing, but there’s no story’, was put to students during post-intervention interviews, who were then asked if they agreed with the statement. Responses included:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Adam: | Yeah. It’s not really [a story]. I mean the game didn’t present any kind of story. So, I guess there’s no intention for it to be, to have a story line. |
| Brad: | I would say it’s not a story as such because it doesn’t have a problem like all those other games, I can see, I can generally think of the problem that needs to be solved... I can think of an identifiable hero or protagonist but I can’t think of one for <i>Forza</i> just because you don’t know who’s driving because it’s unnamed or there’s not a character that you can relate to. It’s not based on famous racers or anything and there’s not really a problem that needs to be solved. |
| Kate: | Pretty much. It’s not really a story line. I mean unless it’s just like the race...[but] it doesn’t have characters. It has the cars and you’re the character, like the person playing is the character. |

Rachel: It would probably have to be more of a story if you had to actually go somewhere with it instead of just doing [the racing] When we played it, it was just one race and then we were all finished. It's like if you had to complete something and then go and do something else, it'd make it more like real life, like what actual racing people do.

Students identified the absence of expected story elements as one reason why there was no story in this game. The lack of a complication, "it doesn't have a problem like those other games" (Brad), the removal of characters, "it doesn't have characters" (Kate) and "There's not a character that you can relate to" (Brad), and an unclear storyline, "if you had to complete something and then go and do something else, it'd make it more like real life" (Rachel), or "the game didn't present any kind of story" (Adam), combine with the effect of presenting a textual experience without the clearly identifiable components of narrative students expected. However, comments from other students revealed that rather than an absence of narrative, *Forza Motorsport* involved a different form of narrative, masked by textual structures that were messy, did not follow the expected print-based narrative structure, and the relationship between the game and the performance of the game.

Two students made comments which made reference to the importance of the gamer in realising the narrative. When Cam was asked the same question as that posed to students in the analysis above, about the absence of a story in the car-racing game *Forza Motorsport*, he commented:

Cam: That's the story. It's all there. Even with that little experience, there is still a story to it because you [have] still got to go on a track, so say you go through a mountain, there's one bit of a story and if you crash, there's a problem. So, if you lose, there's a big problem. Then there's a sad ending...but when you win, there's a happy ending. And, there's a start, middle, [and] finish because they start the race, and there's a middle, because there's your journey, and there's a finish. There is a story to it.

Cam's sentiments are revealing in that they shift from notions of the protagonist as being a virtual character inside the game, to include the gamer as the player whose experience winning or losing is the central element in the story. Furthermore, the play Cam speaks of is an example of transformational play, described by Barab, Gresalfi and Ingram-Goble (2010) as "taking on the role of a protagonist who employs conceptual understandings to transform a problem-based fictional context and transform the player as well" (p. 525). Cam could identify the basic elements of a story, a 'beginning, middle and finish' that combined to create a story within a gameworld that provided the means for a player to take on the role of a protagonist who could respond to problems in the fictional setting. Whereas Kate, Brad, Rachel and Adam struggled to identify common elements of story and described a textual experience lacking in linearity, Cam was able to make explicit links

between gameplay events and expected story elements to challenge the notion that there was something missing from this textual experience.

Sharon's contribution to the question of story in *Forza Motorsport* encouraged a line of thinking emphasising the socially-mediated nature of narratives in videogames. Sharon said, "I don't know, maybe the story could be in the room when you're playing the game and people are like talking about it." Insights like Sharon's complicate how videogames construct narratives, as well as how young people are scaffolded into identifying and discussing narratives. While the majority of her classmates identified narrative in terms of static elements incorporated by the author/game designer into a text and received by an audience, Sharon pointed to narrative as a textual feature co-constructed with other people and as a process which occurred as much in the real-world as in the virtual world. This presented another example of how videogame practices can occur differently to print-based text, neither better or worse, sometimes offering similar pleasures and frustrations, and at other times providing different ones (Gee, 2007d, p. 81). It is also a way of thinking about texts likely to become more important as access to internet and technological devices increases and more of the world's inhabitant choose to live parts of their lives virtually.

Affinity groups

Unlike interactivity, collaboration and narrative centred learning, affinity groups are not an intrinsic feature of videogames. However the aforementioned textual practices contributed to establish affinity groups as a powerful affordance of videogame practice, impacting on all of the participants in the study, and challenging arguments suggesting that videogames and digital technologies are anti-social (Donnelly, 1998) and undermine human bonds (Bauman, 2011). Harnessing the ways videogames bring people together to feel a sense of belonging within affinity groups⁵⁷ has implications for what teachers do with these texts in their classrooms. For the sake of discriminating between the types of affinity groups observed during the study, three categories of this social phenomenon have been identified: momentary, extended, and extensive affinity groups. A momentary affinity group, lasting for a short period of time from minutes to several hours, was evident in the talk associated with the Brainstorming Game Cover activity from Lesson One in the intervention. As students worked in groups of three to deconstruct the various game posters, they also talked about their gaming experience. A dialogue between Brad and Cam began after the former's reference to a turn-based videogame, *Civilization*. This became the catalyst for each student to take turns describing their experiences with other videogames from the same genre, an

⁵⁷ Affinity groups refer to people who share common endeavours, ways of thinking and acting (Gee, 2007d, p. 27). People within these groups can recognise each other as 'insiders', identifiable to each other because of the common features they possess. Affinity groups are important because they represent ways for people not only to feel a sense of belonging to a group, but also to improve the performance of all in that group.

example being Cam's question to Brad, "Have you played that game [*Civilization*]? It's very weird". To which Brad responded, "I played the *Age of Empires*. That's pretty close." A similar exchange took place between the teacher, who was circulating the room during this activity, and Kate.

Kate:	Have you heard about <i>Age of Empires</i> ?
Teacher:	I'm not a big fan of <i>Age of Empires</i> ...I thought it looked too simple.
Kate:	It was older.
Teacher:	They stopped at number three didn't they?
Kate:	I don't know. I used to play <i>Roller Coaster Tycoon</i> and [inaudible] all the time.
Teacher:	There's a theme here with the type of games you've been playing.
Kate:	My mum started playing <i>Roller Coaster Tycoon</i> , it's a little weird.

Both of these conversations involved a form of insider knowledge. On these occasions the knowledge was associated with one genre of videogames, turn-based games, which related to one of the game-covers the students were deconstructing. Not only did student insider knowledge of turn-based games enhance their ability to complete the set activity, but it provided the impetus for a closer bond to be momentarily formed around the shared knowledge each member of the group possessed and shared. Brad and Cam, and the teacher and Kate, recognised each other as having shared common experiences playing this genre of game, resulting in a momentary connection being formed. The validation of these experiences created a brief sense of belonging which facilitated participation in the intervention activity.

The effect of more extended forms of affinity group was to invert traditional adult-as-expert and student-as-novice roles. An extended form of affinity group, stretching beyond a single moment, was evident in the social practices associated with setting-up the technical equipment for each lesson in the intervention. Many discussions took place during these times as the gaming console and the relevant technology in the room was usually arranged prior to lessons commencing. Brad and Cam were at the centre of these discussions and on occasion even brought friends with them to contribute to the setting-up of the room. One such discussion took place during the set-up of the Eight-player Gaming activity, the last lesson in the intervention. Talk during this discussion was of a highly specialised discourse, including references to "HDMI cable", "synced", "system link", "*Halo*", "Xbox" and "controllers." This represented a metalanguage not typically associated with subject-English classrooms, but an essential part of gaming practice, and recognisable to the 'insiders', Brad, Cam and the teacher-research. Also worth noting was the way that all members of the group setting up the equipment were active in this process, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Teacher:	Alright, controllers?
----------	-----------------------

Brad: There's all four over there and then there's the ones over here.

Cam: These four for this Xbox, those four for that Xbox. And those have been synced there.

Teacher: Ah, you've already synced them. Nice one.

Cam: And I'll set the other one up.

Teacher: Now Brad, you're are the pro with the system link. I have never...

Brad: System link?

Teacher: Connecting the two Xboxes together.

Brad: Cam?

Cam: Yeah, I can do it.

Referred to elsewhere as cross-functional teams (Gee, 2005a), success in these contexts depends on individuals with different specialisations coming together to achieve a common purpose, an activity which Gee says is common in modern workplaces, but less so in today's schools. In this case, and over the duration of the study, Brad and Cam as technical Xbox specialists inverted the traditional adult-as-expert and student-as-novice roles which typified most classroom learning, and through their actions, formed a group of three with the teacher-researcher that worked together. Recognising the textual expertise of students and planning for student-centred learning has the capacity to address issues around engagement and belonging that have been connected to the educational experience of many Australian students (Gallup, 2015).

This affinity group was of the extended variety because it required an extended commitment of self beyond the momentary. At the beginning of every lesson in the intervention, Brad and Cam, of their own volition, arrived early to assist with the set-up. During these times the audio-recorder was rarely in operation to capture the casual conversations which occurred. Nonetheless, these continual and repeated moments were essential in bonding the two students and the teacher-researcher into an affinity group. Discussion about which games to play, trouble-shooting technological hurdles, and the set-up of cables and equipment, all occurred within a context where power was distributed, and as a result an environment of learning and community developed (Gee, 2012a; Gee & Hayes, 2010). Contrary to Bauman's (2012) claim that connecting and disconnecting with digital technology undermines human actors, the data revealed that the social activity which takes place around technology-use provided opportunities for new bonds to be formed due to the dispositions which students brought with them and the feelings of belonging produced by reciprocated acts of doing and being. The activity was collaborative and representative of informal learning. It also resonates with recommendations from the Boys Literacy and Schooling report (Alloway et al., 2002) which suggests classrooms must "accommodate a broader repertoire of engaging and negotiating cultural

knowledges and meanings” (2002, p. 9), which include the ‘real’ and everyday, popular culture materials, and electronic technologies, in order to expand the repertoires for relating by positioning boys as active learners.

Data also suggested that videogame-related affinity groups of an extensive nature were tied to gaming practices amongst participants which produced authentic feelings of inclusion and belonging. In these cases, social videogame practices performed outside of the study and over long periods of times, functioned to bring people together in meaningful ways. Two examples of student experiences demonstrate this point. Firstly, during his pre-Intervention interview, Adam was asked about what kind of gamer he was. He responded:

Adam: I rarely play a game by myself at home but [I will play more often] if I’m at a friend’s house or things like that...If I do play a game, it is sometimes on my own but if I play when I go to a friend’s house or something I [might] play *Civilization* with Harley, he is in this [study]...If he comes over or something then we play online.

I mean we’ll play sitting right next to each other and we can talk about [the game]. We [are] always making an allegiance (sic) and talk[ing] about what we are going to do and stuff but if I’m playing on my own I’ll just kind of make my own decisions and think about it myself.

Adam expressed sentiments about playing games with Harley that show how an affinity group was created as a result of the two students coming together to play *Civilization*. Practices which involved being in the same space, “sitting right next to each other”, working as a team, “making an allegiance”, and communicating as they played, “talk about what we are going to do”, represented forms of gaming practice which when repeated over time contributed to the formation of an extensive affinity group. Adam’s initial response to the question, “I rarely play a game by myself at home”, exhibited a preference for the types of social activity inherent in multiplayer gameplay, and a feature of affinity groups. This preference was similar to that which Brand et al’s (2014, p. 6) study of gaming practice in Australia found was the main reason why younger Australians played videogames, namely, ‘social interaction’, and reflects the types of communities of practice which are so often articulated as a key foundation for learning (Lave, 1991, 1996).

A second example of how gaming practice can contribute to extensive affinity groups was evident in Cam’s description of gaming. When asked in his post-intervention interview about multiplayer games and why he had described *Minecraft* as a game he enjoyed, Cam responded with:

It’s the appeal of, because you can just build whatever you want. If you want to build a massive tower or other things, you can do anything you want. It gives you more of a choice and if you want to build a massive castle, you can build a massive castle.

That can occur on your own, but as I've said before it's a lot more enjoyable when you've got 10 to 15 players playing in the same world. You're building things together.

Cam's view was similar to Adam's in that it valued the way bonds formed during social gaming. Not only were goals more achievable due to members of the group "building things together", but the effect of membership of the affinity group made play "a lot more enjoyable". As Gee (2005b) has stated in his critique of communities of practice, this form of practice does not necessarily guarantee belonging, but as Cam said, the game provides the technological tools for "10 to 15 players [to be] playing in the same world," and then rewards practices characterised by common ways of thinking and acting through the improved performance of the group. At a time when there are calls for institutionalised education to rethink the knowledge and skills to be developed through schooling, with an emphasis on problem solving, decision making, learning to learn, communication, and collaboration (Griffin, 2011) and the development of skills in areas such as social interaction, cross-disciplinary thinking and the use of the digital media (Australian Education Council, 2008), the analysis of affinity groups above parallels that of Bowman and his work using Pac-Man to critique modern schooling. In this case, analysis prompts us to reconsider whether traditional subject-English teaching has the capacity to develop the capacities required of learners in new times.

Conclusion

This section of analysis has focussed on data which answers the question of intrinsic features of videogame practice that will impact on the study of these texts in subject-English classrooms. It reveals that the design of videogames, and their associated realisation through play, enabled various forms of textual and social practice, perceived by students as different from non-videogame texts. The extent to which these practices represented affordances was closely linked to the resources individuals brought with them to videogame play and the context within which videogame play took place. The capacity for these features to encourage or inhibit projective identity work in the context of English teaching is the focus of the next section of analysis.

4.3 Projective Identity Work

The third and final section of this chapter addresses the question: Is there evidence to support the capacity of subject-English to do projective identity work with videogames? One of the often-cited affordances attributed to videogames is that they facilitate good learning, and that this learning is a product of a negotiation of identities. This idea is captured most succinctly by Gee's (2007d) Identity Principle, which states:

Learning involves taking on and playing with identities in such a way that the learner has real choices (in developing the virtual identity) and ample opportunity to mediate on the relationship between new identities and old ones. There is a tripartite play of identities as learners relate, and reflect on, their multiple real-world identities, a virtual identity, and a projective identity (p. 64).

Yet, there is little evidence of classroom-based case-study research to test the validity of such a proposition. Furthermore, those lauding the benefits of projective identity work have not articulated where in the school curriculum such learning should occur. But first, there is a need to digress and return briefly to arguably the dominant model of subject-English pedagogy in Australia the Personal Growth model (Patterson, 2000b; Wyatt-Smith, 2000), to explain how projective identity work *fits* within this paradigm of teaching and learning.

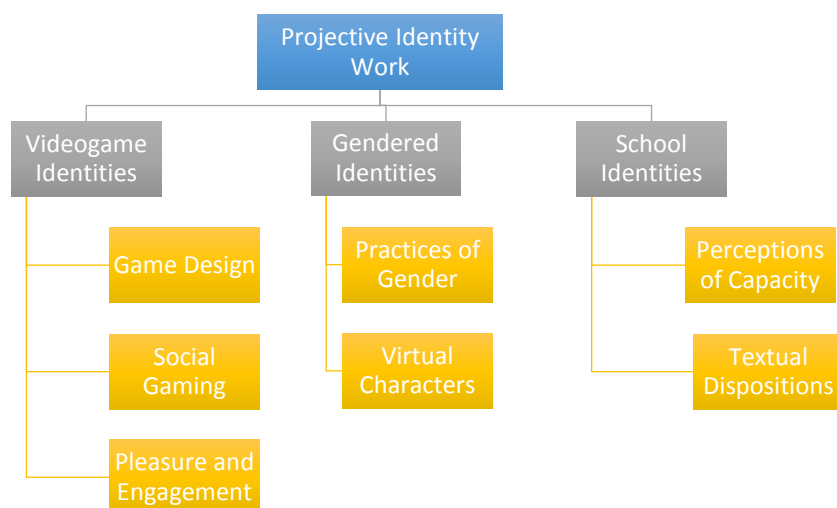


Figure 28: Concept map visualising themes relating to projective identity work

Three of the most significant contributors to a Personal Growth model of subject-English, John Dixon, James Britton and James Moffett, have written about the relationship between language, learning and text in ways that share strong parallels to the Gee's theory.

Consider Dixon on the English classroom:

[It] is a place for pupils to meet to share experiences, to talk about people and situations in the world, gathering new experiences into new wholes and enjoying the satisfaction and power that this gives. But in doing so each individual take what he can from the shared store of experience and builds in into a world of his own (Dixon, 1975, pp. 6-7).

And Britton on the relationship between language and experience:

“we construct a representation of the world as we experience it, and from this representation, this cumulative record of our own past, we generate expectations concerning the future” (Britton, 1970, p. 12).

Finally, Moffett on the three things which construct an effective student-centred language program:

1. Individualization: arranges for each learner to select and sequence activities and materials
2. Interaction: arranges for students to centre on and teach each other
3. Integration: interweaving and integrating language from school and home to organise and synthesise knowledge structure in the mind (Moffett & Wagner, 1976, p. 26).

Three common themes emerge from these contributions which link Gee’s project with that of the Personal Growth school’s theorists. Firstly, play and experience is identified as important activity for learning. Secondly, there is an emphasis on the way we navigate our way through space, socially, and textually. Thirdly, these first two themes contribute to processes which shape how things outside in the world come to be known in the mind of the individual. Both Gee’s identity principle and personal growth are interested in the processes by which individual bring together the world (in the form of texts such as videogames) and understandings in the minds of individuals. For Dixon, Britton, and Moffett, these processes are the pedagogies enacted upon students. What this final section of analysis reveals is that processes of pedagogy and processes of projecting, as important as they are in making sense of the world, are secondary to what the individual brings with them to learning, in terms of real-world identities (the habitus). This section explores three such identities, videogame, gendered and school identities, and the extent to which they impacted on projective identity work.

Videogame identities

Data collected during the study revealed evidence of projecting through virtual characters. Analysis of student examples of projecting inside the study, and reflections on projecting from outside of the study, were examined. This projecting was shaped by the videogame identities (habitus) students possessed and the impact of three factors on students' ability to turn these dispositions into practice, namely: game design, social gaming, and pleasure.

Game design

Interactivity and Design

Data demonstrated how the design of some videogames encouraged projective work through the recruitment of videogame identities and their interplay with virtual characters. This was apparent in three sets of data. The first example refers to student talk during the Talking about Identity activity. After discussion around the banning of the videogame *Bully*, and an activity involving playing and writing about action within the game, students responded to a question from the teacher-researcher regarding how the game *Bully* explored power.

- Cam: You have a choice.
- Adam: It's interactive.
- Teacher: What does that mean, interactive?
- Adam: Like, you make decisions that change the game. I don't know how to describe it.
- Kate: It's animated.
- Teacher: But there are rich descriptions in novels as well?
- Kate: [It is] where you can actually see the face and the people.
- Cam: [You can] use a visual part of the brain
- Teacher: But you can build a picture through words as well?
- Adam: You are in control of what actually happens. The novel is a set story.
- Brad: There's like a timeline in the novel. So, you don't have to follow necessarily the story. [There are] things that probably would be mentioned but if it was in a book you could probably have it mentioned in the main story.

Cam's reference to "choice" in relation to videogames invited a discussion about this element of videogame play. Adam used this opening to make three different utterances which emphasised the way a gamer has control over the unfolding events in a videogame. Beginning with their "interactive" nature, he went on to add that the decisions a player makes "changes the game", and then concluded by iterating that the gamer has "control over what actually happens", unlike a novel which has a "set story". Brad developed the ideas raised by Adam by similarly comparing the way a

story unfolded in novels differently to gameplay. This discussion captured the way students-as-gameplayers, through their input, felt a sense of agency and control over the trajectory of a given story. In a similar manner to Salen and Zimmerman's (2004) notion of transformative play, which captures the way the free movement of play alters the more rigid structures in which it takes shape, not just occupying the interstices of the systems, but transforming the space as a whole (p. 305), these student comments highlight the important role played by game-design in providing opportunities for projecting which were valued by students but which existed within certain parameters.

Projective work

A detailed example of one student's experience inhabiting a virtual character and projecting their own values and desires through this character was evident in Brad's extensive description of the game *Mass Effect*. All students were asked during their post-intervention interviews about how one game used during the study, *Dungeon Siege III*, incorporated text on the screen to tell the story. Brad's response began by addressing the question, but quickly shifted to an example of his out-of-school gaming practice, the depth of detail he recounted suggesting he had invested some effort in that practice. Brad said:

Brad: I think it, [*Dungeon Siege III*], should've given you a choice. I think that it's probably a hard thing to implement into a game, but I believe it's a personal choice. And, if you've given the player a choice to choose what kind of experience he wants out of the game, or she wants, then I think that would make the enjoyment better. So, the *Mass Effect* series which was one that I've enjoyed and I continued to enjoy it until the third one, there was not a choice. It's good. It's good. Yeah. In the first one, it's mainly choices, word choices, and they've got either a paragon or a renegade system. So, if you make good choices, obviously you'll become a paragon and they'll unlock more when you talk to people. People will generally say small talk or they might be like, "Oh, it's, you know, the hero of this place, you know, he or she is really good." Whereas, if you do the renegade people are more going to be like, you know, runaway, "He's scary". But in the first one, it was mainly a story. There's lots of text, lots of talking and that's the main focus. Even though there is a combat system, it was pretty badly made, but it was a story that's the main focus.

Interviewer: And so, you were still willing and happy to go through that story or text?

Brad: The first time I got halfway and got annoyed because the game mechanics is frustrating. There's, it doesn't let me save in combat and you could get halfway across [a scene] and then died and then you have to restart the entire thing because there were just enemies everywhere, so you can't save unless you get to the lucky spot. The thing on the third one that was the most impressive, that made me play through the first one even though it's really frustrating, was at the start of the game it gave you three options. It said option one was play a story, option two was play combat, and option three was both.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brad: So, that was the old experience. That was the one that I was used to. So, I obviously chose the other one because I want what I was used to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Brad: But if you were new, you had three options and so you can choose if you want to do mainly fighting or mainly story.

Interviewer: Okay. And that links into something you were saying at one point about novels. You said that novels are a bit like a timeline. It's almost like it just goes through the timeline. Whereas games, you can change what you want to change, so you don't have to follow the main story. Do you think that gives them an advantage or a disadvantage, one more than the other?

Brad: An advantage. Even if I go back to [the] *Mass Effect* example, there's a main one that you got to focus on, so a main story. But if you want to you can do a whole bunch of side things that can generally impact what the end result is. So, if you've got a choice to go to a planet and save some civilians over the main story which is to go to a planet and try to go and assassinate their leader, you can go and save the civilians and then when you get to the end of the game, again, because it's a choice based game, you've got, you know, the five choices and there's five different endings. So, depending on what the choices you made in the game, you can choose what ending you want.

Brad's recount is an example *par excellence* of the interplay of real-world, virtual and projective identities (Gee, 2004b). Firstly, there is the virtual identity, captured here by the "hero of this place" capable of "combat" and who can "save some civilians" or assassinate their leader", and whose name is Commander Shepard. Secondly, there were the real-world identities Brad brought with him to his play of *Mass Effect*. One of these identities was Brad's gaming identity, typified by performances like choosing the third gameplay option, incorporating both story and combat because "I want what I was used to". This comment referred to a type of gameplay Brad preferred, and importantly, demonstrated an awareness of this preference. Furthermore, Brad's decision to engage with this game represented another aspect of his gaming identity, discriminating between genres of gameplay to select one that connected with his gaming identity. Lastly, Brad made many references to the interplay between the virtual and real-world identities resulting in projective work. Brad's claim that "if you make good choices, obviously you'll become a paragon", showed how through projecting a real-world player gains a surrogate (Gee, 2008, p. 258) . Brad's valorisation of the way *Mass Effect* valued the gamer "depending on the choices you made in the game, you can choose what ending you want" is an example of how virtual worlds are designed to invite real-world players to form certain sorts of goals of their own (p. 259). Through Brad's account of occupying Commander Shepard we see how projective identity work can incorporate and develop a person's videogame identities.

What is at stake through Brad's relationship with Commander Shepard is a projective identity in both senses of the word 'project'. As Gee (2007d, p. 50) argued, this form of projective identity work is both a project, meaning to project one's values and desires onto the virtual character, and a way of seeing Commander Shepard as a project in the making, a character for Brad to infuse with a certain trajectory. To begin with the former, projecting his values onto Master Shepard is evident when Brad described how he could choose to play the combat or the story. This is an example of Brad's gaming identity, which is imbued with certain dispositions regarding what he wants from his gaming experience, matching the game's design to allow him to exercise his desires within the gameworld. Regarding the latter, the project of making the virtual character, Brad talked about how he could connect with Commander Shepard to "do a whole bunch of side things", the result of which is that the virtual character can be directed down different pathways in order to reach the game's finale. These examples of projective work were only possible because of the match-making in operation, whereby Brad's 'taste' for the game and its associated practices represented the coming together of things and people. Brad's habitus, specifically, dispositions relating to his gaming identities, matched with the conditions governing the functioning of the field of gaming practice associated with *Mass Effect*, the result being a form of distinction which positively orientated Brad to this form of textual practice.

The accumulation of prior-experiences with gameworlds produces videogame identities that form the principles of future production with videogame practice. The structures incorporated into videogames become incorporated structures that form strategies with which to project onto, and through, virtual characters. Student references to the 'choices' many videogames offer represent an illusion. The ability of students to realise the full benefits of the projective affordances of videogame design were dependent on prior experiences of gameplay which were, and always are, constrained by contexts that affect the habitus in some ways and not others. Brad's experiences with *Mass Effect* was an example of the power of a habitus, historically conditioned to be positively orientated towards videogame practice, which when coupled with the possibilities of game design, resulted in a "practical sense and strategy" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 61-62) that led to action and practice which was projective in nature.

There were correlations between what Brad's account revealed about the accumulation and activation of practices emanating from videogame identities and the literature. As Bradford (2010) has demonstrated, projecting onto virtual characters cannot escape the "intertextual traces and allusion" (p. 60) attached to a virtual character and the gameworld within which that character exists. Similarly, Beavis and Charles' (2005) study of teenagers playing *The Sims Deluxe* as part of an English curriculum unit reported on the way gameplay in the classroom had a tendency to reflect

real-world behaviours and dispositions which were realised through game design. As much as students in the study, and others advocating in favour of videogame play, might emphasise the element of 'choice' in videogames, the data showed that any affordance produced as result of game design, where players become authors not only of text, but of themselves (Turkle, 1995, p. 12), was dependent on their videogame identities, amongst other identities, which students brought with them to the intervention.

Projecting both ways

There was also evidence of students recognising projection working in the opposite direction, from the videogame onto the gamer. Questioning during post-intervention interviews addressed this possibility. In response to a question about the extent of influence a gamer had over a game or character, Kate responded:

"You can make your own choices, but you can't do exactly what you want because there's always things in the game that push you to do what it wants, like you can't just go off and start blowing things up because that's not what the game is about. So, that's, it's got like that power over you, making you do something, something that's based around the story line that it has because ultimately I suppose that everything would lead into some sort of story line."

Kate's two-part explanation of the relationship between gamer and game described a symbiotic relationship between a person's videogame identity and the influence of the virtual character and the gameworld. The first part of the explanation is evident in Kate's mention of the way a game will provide choices that "push" a human player to do what "it", the game, wants. A player has choices, but only within certain limits set firmly by the game's design. The second part related to the power of videogames over gamers. This "power over you" is derived from what Kate described as the storyline that a player must follow. Projecting in this example is operating in the opposite direction to that described in the previous example. The videogame, through the virtual character, the storyline and the gameworld, projects onto the human characters, bridging the space between the game's virtual identities and the human player's gaming identity. The player must inhabit the identity the game offers if they want to play the game (Gee, 2005a). Given the prevalence of videogames which focus gameplay on violent and combat-based gameplay, this feature of projecting will need to be explicitly addressed in classrooms if community concerns over the possible negative effects of such themes are to be availed. While analysis earlier in this chapter highlighted the capacity of critical literacy pedagogies to address such concerns revealed that this approach is an appropriate one for asking questions about how texts position us, there is room for more work in this area.

Social gaming

Gaming with siblings

The capacity for inhabiting the goals of a virtual character in the virtual world in order to connect old and new identities (Gee, 2008, p. 28) was also informed by videogame identities associated with dispositions of social gameplay which came in two forms, gameplay with family, and gameplay with friends. Beginning with the former, Kate shared stories of a gaming identity influenced by her relationship with her brother. Several examples demonstrated this connection. The context of the first example was a classroom discussion about the use of skulls as a weapon during the playing of *Halo 3*, which led Kate to share her thoughts on 'scary' videogames. She said:

Kate: I discovered I'm not good with scary videogames.

Teacher: How did you discover that?

Kate: Well, alright. Every now and then, my brother wanted me to play *Call of Duty Zombies*. And, I don't like it cos things just come out at me.

The second example was Kate's response to an activity set for homework by the teacher-researcher which required students to play a game with another person and audio-record their interactions. Kate shared:

Kate: I will have to beg my brother, I mean, he likes videogames. He [just] won't want to play with me.

The final example came from Kate's response to an introductory exercise in the first lesson of the intervention when students were asked about their experience with videogames. Kate said:

Kate: I used to play games more than I do. I used to play *The Sims* all the time. Like, all the time. I don't know, my brother plays a lot of games so I just borrow them. I like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

Kate's videogame identity has been shaped by experiences she has had gaming with and without her brother. An example of her brother seeking her out to play together, "[he] wanted me to play *Call of Duty Zombies*" can be compared to her comment regarding seeking out her brother to complete the homework activity, "I will have to like beg my brother". The relationship appears reciprocal as both siblings, at different times, pursue each other in order to engage with videogames. The data also showed how elements of Kate's videogame identity were tied to her brother's videogame identity as she described borrowing from his collection of videogames so that she could play. The very fact that her brother was an active-gamer legitimised Kate's gaming practices and this was a means to share experiences in the real-world with her brother, and as a result, also legitimised videogame play as an act worthy of an extended commitment of self (Gee, 2005a, p. 34).

Gaming with parents

Another example of how familial gaming impacted upon projecting during the intervention came from data related to Brad's gaming practices with his stepdad. On several occasions Brad volunteered personal anecdotes about gaming with his stepdad and family which help understand why Brad described himself as "a gamer, probably a competitive gamer", and why introducing videogames into mainstream classrooms will impact students differently. During his pre-intervention interview, Brad was asked why he chose to take part in the study. He responded:

When my mum married my stepdad, there was just basically more people to play with and they were also, you know, into gaming. So, it just kind of made things easier, the transition, [the] joining of our lives...It's always been, you know, social. We all just go down to the Games Room and we'll set up a game and we'll be, you know, talking to each other, [and] you're egging each other on, trying to trick each other into things. It's really cool.

Subsequent to this, a discussion during the first lesson of the intervention involved each student sharing a couple of sentences with the class regarding their experience with gaming. Brad offered:

Yeah I [have] played a lot of videogames. I'm influenced by my step dad who it's a rare thing for him not to visit JB Hi-Fi⁵⁸ and bring home a game of some sort. So I, yeah, I played lots and lots of games because he is a step dad he plays lots of, I don't know. He plays lots of shooter games so I play lots of those too... I do enjoy the *Halo* [game] series as well as the *Call of Duty* [game] and things.

Brad's responses demonstrated how his videogame identities are related to experiences of gaming with family. Gaming was an activity perceived by Brad as easing his transition into his new family, and facilitated new connections between him and his new step-father. Brad's comments described gaming as a catalyst for the positive and meaningful integration of two families which were brought together by his mother's remarriage. In this context, gaming occurred in a highly social context, evident in the way family members arranged themselves in the same space, and in manner so as to interact with each other. The importance of social gaming to Brad and his family was such that a room in the house was assigned the title of "The Games Room". Furthermore, the acceptance attributed to this form of cultural practice was highlighted by Brad's stepdad's own videogame identity, captured by references to his frequent purchases of new games. Brad's experiences of social gaming with his family were a sign of a real-world identity orientated to see gaming as a social activity where engagement with virtual characters and worlds was a worthwhile investment of self.

While the investment of cultural capital at the level of family orientates Brad to be able to inhabit identities offered by virtual characters throughout the study, this is not what a standard subject-English class requires of Brad. In order for Brad to gain high scholastic yield from educational action, he is dependent on cultural capital previously invested by the family (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 48). He

⁵⁸ An Australian electronics store which sells videogames.

requires possession of the type of cultural capital that can be invested in a curriculum that is populated by literary texts that do not resemble videogames.

Gaming with friends

Videogame identities were also informed by social gameplay between friends *outside* of the study which data showed contributed to forms of social gameplay *inside* the study. During pre-intervention interviews both Adam and Harley shared account of playing videogames together, often travelling to each other's houses to play the game, *Civilization*. Adam shared:

If I do play a game it is sometimes on my own but if I play when I go to a friend's house or something, but like I play *Civilization* with Harley, he is in this [study]... If he comes over or something then we can play online... I guess it's more sociable if you are playing with someone else. I mean we'll play sitting right next to each other and we can talk about, like, we always making an allegiance and talk about what we're going to do and stuff.

Similarly, at the end of Harley's interview, and following the teacher-researcher sharing that he too played *Civilization*, Harley revealed: "Yeah, Adam got it [the game] and he gave it to me." These examples show evidence of a form of social capital being activated and reinforced between these two students which was directly tied to their gaming practice. Each time Adam and Harley met to play videogames together, material exchanges, for example Adam sharing the game with Harley, and symbolic exchanges, talking and collaborating through gameplay, produced interactions which contributed to the formation of a durable network, or a sense of solidarity (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51). These moments, themselves opportunities for projecting, supported the development of their videogame identities, and increased the likelihood that they would be able to recruit these identities for use in contexts involving social gaming.

Data from intervention lessons involving gameplay showed Adam and Harley could call upon their videogame identities to support their classroom-based projective videogame practice. An example was evident in a photo of the arrangement of students from the Eight-Player Gaming activity, see Figure 29, where students were given the opportunity to arrange themselves into teams of four students before playing a 4 player versus 4 player game of *Halo 3*. As can be seen, Adam and Harley chose to play on the same team, and to position themselves next to each other.



Figure 29: Adam and Harley positioning during Eight-Player Gaming activity

Furthermore, during the Paired Gameplay and Note-taking activity, when students chose a partner to play a ten-minute sequence of a game while the rest of the class completed a gameplay table, Adam and Harley combined together. When Adam was asked during his post-intervention interview about how important talk was during multiplayer gaming, he said:

Well, I don't know. Harley and I were playing *Dungeon Siege* and we had to kind of work together to find the way and [we] had to work together to work out the puzzles and everything like that and kind of discuss the story line like what was going on, if he picked up something that I didn't.

Geographic closeness evident in the photo above, and the social closeness attributable to Adam's comments regarding working together to solve the problems while playing *Dungeon Siege*, show how these two students have transported videogame-related dispositions formed outside of the study into classroom-based intervention activities. These socially constructed dispositions resulted in two students positively predisposed to engaging in projective work, and committed to the new virtual world which they inhabited together (Gee, 2005a, p. 34). This was evidence of students negotiating video identities socially and calling upon the histories of the relations between them to navigate this activity.

Engaging videogame identities for meaningful projecting work was closely tied to forms of social capital which characterised past conditions of social gameplay and which had become embodied. Those students who had accumulated videogame-related social capital, where social capital refers to durable networks of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or membership of a

group (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 51) , were more able to fully take on and play with identities in a way that enabled projecting. The data showed a relationship between the investment of self in social gaming outside of the study between family members and friends which produced social relationships, a form of social capital, and which contributed to a habitus conditioned for social gaming in school-based contexts. To explain this in terms of Bourdieu's (1990a) reference to a 'feel for the game', the social moves learned by the study's participants outside of the study were appropriated and enacted through social relations within the study. This 'feel' for acting a particular way when playing and studying videogames during the study was an example of the social game, embodied during prior experience and turned into a "second nature" during the study (p. 63). As with online communities, which represent spaces of multifaceted affiliation and disaffiliation tied to gamer identities (Steinkuehler, 2006a), student capacity to engage in projective work within the classroom space was dependent on the videogame identities they brought with them.

Pleasure

The play of pleasure

The final factor affecting how videogames could be relied upon to project onto, and through, a virtual character, was the effect produced by pleasure. Described by Salen and Zimmerman as 'the play of pleasure' (2004), or by Gee (2007b) as the 'emotional charge' which well-designed games provide to problem solving and thinking, experiences of pleasure associated with game playing proved to be powerful catalysts for the activation of videogame identities that resulted in projecting. Students shared various examples of the pleasure they experienced playing videogames outside of the study for extended periods of time. As well as Brad's earlier comments above about the playing of *Mass Effect*, Kate revealed during her post-intervention interview the emotions she attached to playing *Sims*. She said:

Kate: I was obsessed with the *Sims* for a while. I was on it for hours on end.

Teacher: Why do you think some games might appeal to you or why *Sims* might attract you more than other games?

Kate: I liked *Sims* because you get to make the people. You get to make, like, what they're wearing and then you can make them do what you want and you can just kill off the people, and it's fun.

Kate also described the fear she experienced playing an online game called *Slender*.

And then I played *Slender* which is like, I think it is called, it is like 'Slender Man', just like some internet thing... You are walking through the dark forest. You got your torch and your torch can run out of batteries. You have to turn it off. You can't keep it on the whole time. And, you can only sprint for a certain amount of time and you

can't look at this guy. And, it's got creepy noises. And, then suddenly they appear in front of you...and it is quite creepy.

Harley also spoke about the pleasure he experienced when gaming, explaining why he played *World of Warcraft*.

I like that because it's so long like you can do pretty much anything. It's like, it's actually a different world pretty much because it's a whole planet almost and it's always changing and stuff, like always kind of a new add-ons and patches and stuff, so you can, there's always something to do. You can never finish it.

And, in response to a pre-intervention question about the games he played, he said:

Harley: Yeah, this [points to copy of *Forza Motorsport IV*] and *Grand Theft Auto* and things I had. When there's a big map so you can explore more stuff than just story line.

Teacher: And why do you think that they're more attractive to you? Those kinds of game, why do they appeal?

Harley: Umm. I'm not too sure. I like the game that lasts for a long time instead of just being over real quick.

These four anecdotes show how the pleasure from videogames can be internalised. Kate's 'obsession' with *Sims* is similar to the enjoyment Harley received from games which explored "a different world", one which was always changing and where "there's always something to do. You can never finish it". The emotions elicited by playing these games is what Gee (2007b, p. 35) argues is a product of attachment to virtual avatars which facilitate thinking and learning. The data also revealed how these emotions can coalesce and result in a state of 'flow', as is evident in both Kate and Harley's comments. Flow, a term which describes a state of engagement characterised by happiness, feelings of achievement and accomplishment and a sense of self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), was evident in Kate's description of suspense when playing *Slender*. For Harley, the desire to be in a state of flow when gaming is at the core of his gaming identity. Both comments from Harley mentioned the enjoyment that came from spending many hours engaged in gameplay where "you can never finish it", or that "lasts for a long time instead of just being over real quick". Participant experiences of play as pleasure, where a game player's emotions undergo a range of sensations, from manipulation and coercion, teaching and seduction, and frustration (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 330), facilitated their willingness to commit themselves to the virtual characters they embraced. It transformed the videogame identities that were produced and informed the way they could rely on these identities when engaging with virtual characters in school-based settings.

The absence of pleasure

Conversely, students who shared fewer experiences of prior pleasure with gameplay tended to exhibit videogame identities less positively-orientated towards embracing the identities of virtual

characters and committing themselves to their various goals in gameworlds. This, in turn, affected their projective capacity. Two students who lacked gaming capital and expressed minimal pleasure or engagement with videogames outside and inside of the intervention were Alicia and Rachel. As previously mentioned in the participant profiles, the extent of Alicia's gaming experience was "playing with my little brother on the Wii...but other than that, not much experience with videogames." Rachel's experience, after some prodding from the teacher-researcher, was "I don't really play games...I don't know. They are very fun. Like, some of my friends play them and they really like them. They seem really fun." Despite Rachel's characterisation of videogames as "fun" she presented no examples or elaboration as to why they were fun or in what contexts. This suggests she may possess the desire for such an identity, due to feelings of pressure emanating from her friends engagement and affiliation with videogames. Furthermore, when coupled with observations from the teacher-researcher regarding the lack of participation from these two students during opportunities of gameplay within the study, there were few expressions of positive emotion, pleasure or happiness. This was one factor impacting the strength of their videogame identities and when combined with their limited gaming capital, resulted in less of an investment in projective identity work.

The difference between those students who derived great pleasure from gaming and those who did not demonstrated how videogame identities were tied to experiences of emotion in the social world and impacted on projecting during intervention activities. The result of these experiences is the formation of habitus, and its associated schemas of thought and action, as a result of exposure to past social structures (Bourdieu, 1989). Responses from those students who phrased their prior gaming experience in terms of positive emotional responses, support the idea that inhabiting the identities of virtual characters can elicit powerful emotions (Gee, 2005a; Squire, 2003) and contribute to the formation of videogame identities that see gaming contexts as sites of possibilities, and therefore, worthy of investment and a willingness to "play the game" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 42), both literally, in terms of controlling one's avatar, and metaphorically, in terms of the game of culture. Given the important role emotion plays in thinking and learning (Gee, 2007b), games that do not provoke an emotional charge, and likewise, those students who have not internalised gaming experiences in ways that positively inform their videogame identities, were not be able to see the act of projecting onto virtual characters as meaningfully as others. In the context of the research questions interest in the learning and teaching through projecting, teachers cannot presume all young people share an affinity with videogames. Treating all students as digital natives (Prensky, 2001), with the requisite habitus to feel a sense of ownership and connection to the virtual

characters in videogames is as fraught with risk as the presumptions made by those who presume that a teacher's childhood connection to a literary character will be shared by their students.

Gendered identities

In considering data demonstrating the projective capacity of videogames, it is difficult to ignore what Bourdieu has called "the antagonistic principles of male and female identity" (2001, p. 27). These identities produced a series of attitudes from the part of students which regards to the role of gender in gameplay. Analysis of data shows how two factors in particular, practices of gender and the characteristics of virtual characters who populated the games studied, combined to impact the level of projective identity work possible.

Practices of gender

Boys (and girls) as gamers

A discourse of gaming as a gendered activity was revealed in response to post-intervention individual interviews about the differences between the way girls and boys approached the study. Five responses, across different interviews, referring to the relationship between gender and gaming included:

Adam I think it's just because [of] the way things naturally are. I mean, girls aren't as naturally interested in violence and we've just got a different taste in [it]. Well, most girls anyway.

Cam The girls had less experience playing and it seemed to be, sorry, it seemed to be a trait that girls don't play as much [sic] games...The girls' brains are being hard-wired differently to us and they have different agendas to go by. So, they think of shopping than [sic] we think of gaming...They seem to not enjoy the gun games as much as the boys did probably because the boys have more of a killing instinct as such, whereas the girls don't. The boys have more of a thirst for blood.

Kate Sometimes girls are less competitive [and] just run around and blow things up...[Boys] take it more seriously and actually do what they're supposed to do...It probably is individuals and I think it's partly the girls and guys thing, but then you do have girls who are really competitive and like games and things. It depends on the person, but I think girls and guys have a bit of a, just general difference.

Sharon You can't really generalise boys and girls because I'm sure lots of girls do the same thing as well and some boys don't like videogames

Brad I don't agree with stereotyping that the girls and only the girls don't enjoy it as much whereas all boys will. You'll find that lots of boys will not have enjoyed the game thing.

A range of ideas is raised by these responses. One idea found in the responses of Adam and Cam was that males have a predisposition for violence which translates to gaming with violent videogames.

Adam's reference to girls as "not naturally interested in violence" and Cam's belief that "boys have more of a killer instinct" were used by the students to explain boys' preference for gaming, and which evokes the problem of 'natural attitudes', that is, a division between the sexes which appears natural or self-evident, thereby legitimising the aspects which characterise the division (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9). Their comments supported the argument that the sex of a gamer affects their ability to play games and participate. Kate's answer also reinforced this notion, albeit with a qualification. She stated, "it's partly the girls and guys thing." However, like Adam and Cam, she generalised particular behaviours believed to be typical of each gender, stating "sometimes girls are less competitive", and, boys "take it more seriously."

In contrast, Sharon and Brad refused to accept one's status as a girl or boy as a means of explaining why some people might enjoy or dislike studying or playing videogames. Sharon cautioned against using stereotypes when talking about how much girls or boys like gaming, disagreeing with the common stereotype of boys as gamers when stating, "I'm sure lots of girls do the same thing as well and some boys don't like videogames." Brad's response was almost exactly the same as Sharon's in terms of his rejection of gendered stereotypes. Despite his own extensive history playing videogames with other males, he declared "You'll find that lots of boys will not have enjoyed the game thing." Although both students possessed vastly different histories and emotional connections to videogame play, they shared the idea that being a girl or boy was not a suitable means to explain any difference in the way girls or boys engaged with videogames.

Self-monitoring and Segregation

Observational data also revealed how gendered dispositions led students to organise themselves in particular ways in the study's classroom space, as well as self-disciplining their behaviour both in favour of and against participation during gameplay. There were numerous occasions when the teacher-researcher offered the controller/s to the class asking who would like to play whilst the rest of the group completed note-taking activities. On every occasion male participants were first to indicate their interest in taking up the offer. Female students were reluctant to take control of the virtual character during these times often commenting before gameplay about their perceptions of their own and 'boys' gameplay; "Can someone else play? I don't even know how to play" (Alicia), "I don't know how to do it" (Sharon), and "They play a lot more videogames than us" (Kate). These examples show female students regulating their behavior to fit within acceptable norms. The construction of their own gaming capacity as a deficit is in the context of a field which views boys as more capable because of their more extensive experience with videogames. The result was that

gendered dispositions activated to guide behavior which further served to reinforce the divide between girls and boys as gamers.

Student perceptions of their own capacities were also evident in the ways bodies were arranged in the physical space of the classroom. Two episodes of students segregating themselves through their arrangement in social space, in the first and last lessons of the intervention, further established the gendered nature of the field of research represented by the classroom, which impacted on the extended commitment of self necessary to engage in projecting. The first example occurred during the first activity of the intervention, the Introduction Activity, when students were asked to form two small groups in order to define the term 'videogame' and then deconstruct several videogame covers. The three boys in the room moved themselves around a single table and this led the three girls in the room to do the same around another table. Discussion during these activities included comments from female participants minimising their own capacity in relation to the other male group. This was evident when Rachel, after looking over at the work being completed by the male group said "They're too good at this", to which Kate replied, "They play a lot more videogames than us." Female students then disparaged their own gaming experience by utilising a highly sarcastic tone to describe their own gameplay experience: "I mean, my experience is *Sims*" (Kate), and "My experience is *Mario Kart*" (Alicia). The references to 'they' were references to the male students, and were typical of the way each group became known by the gender of its participations, including through references from the teacher-researcher who said "All right. Let's hear what the two groups have to say. Let's start. I hate that there is a girl team and a boy team but let's start with the girls." Subsequent teacher-talk continued to use gender to label each group. Language which separated the students according to gender into two categories contributed to hierarchical ways of organising the capacities of each group. This influence on student expectations is important in light of Hattie's (Hattie, 2009; Hattie, 2011) work synthesising over 50,000 studies related to achievement in school-aged students found that student expectations had one of the highest effect sizes on student learning.

The second example of segregation also provided evidence of students practising their gender in the classroom. In the final lesson of the intervention, students were given agency during the Eight-Player Gaming activity. After an organised game-playing activity, the teacher-researcher allowed students to choose their own game for play, and arrange themselves as they wished, for the remaining twenty minutes of the lesson. At the time, there were two Xboxes in the room, each projecting onto a different wall, and four controllers plugged in to each. As three of the male students combined with Kate to continue playing the first-person shooter game *Halo* together, competing against each other and all at once, Sharon, Alicia and Rachel sat themselves around the other console and were

helped by Brad to set up the car-racing game *Forza Motorsport 4* so that they could play in pairs, with Brad watching on and at the same time also commenting on gameplay on the other screen. As the diagram below depicts, Brad and Kate's arrangement did not conform to the gendered norms dictating other students' placement during this activity.

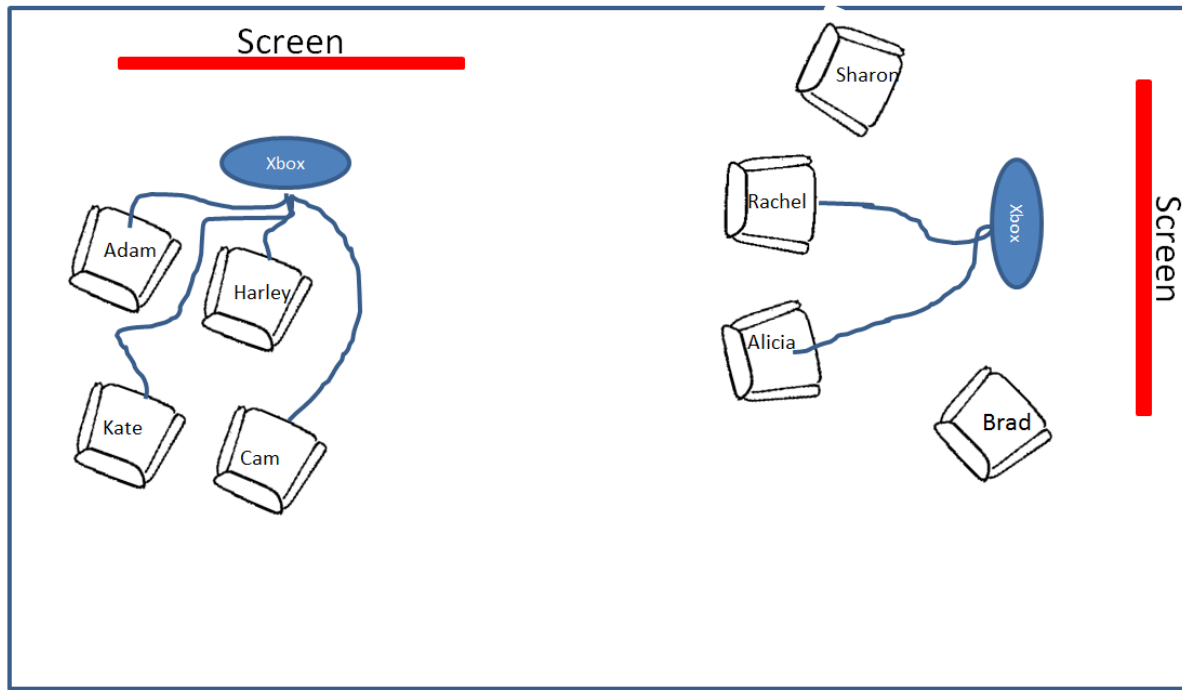


Figure 30: Diagram of spatial arrangement during eight-player gaming

This spatial arrangement, in combination with the comments from students already discussed showed a symbolic violence in effect, where participants felt the need to respect collective rhythms that differentiated according to gendered notions of masculinity and femininity, including the gendered nature of the videogames selected for study. Symbolic violence, a “gentle violence imperceptible and invisible even to its victims” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 1), was evident both in the responses from students who constructed girls’ gaming capital as inferior to boys, and in the way students arranged their bodies in the classroom space. These practices reflected a need to respect the social order, and the weight brought to bear on student practices in light of the socially-constructed oppositional relationship between femininity and masculinity, girl and boy. Student practice showed evidence of being doubly-structured according to gender. Firstly, the conditioning of ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ as distinct identities had the effect of shaping the way students arranged their bodies. Secondly, as already discussed, the data established videogame play as a field had been conceived by this group of young people as a predominantly male domain. This demonstrates how student-thinking was influenced by structures of domination that differentiate according to sex. The

result of these conditionings led students to develop a 'natural' attitude based on presumptions about the social world.

The presence of data showing students conditioned to the extent that gendered identities influenced their gameplay participation and performance, and subsequently, their capacity for meaningful projective work, contrasted with research regarding gender and the gaming population. Recent studies show the entire gaming population is divided almost equally between women and men, 48% to 52% respectively, and that women aged 18 and older represent a significantly larger proportion of the game-playing population, 36%, compared to boys 18 and younger, 17% (Entertainment Software Association, 2014). Yet, comments like those discussed earlier from Adam and Cam regarding gaming as a male domain captured a different reality. Their comments were a product of the field of gaming as they have experienced it. Every field represents a struggle for control and definition of acceptable knowledge and action within that field. This data showed how the way that the field of gaming was constructed by some agents opened and closed opportunities for agency.

However, isolated moments of student practice which challenged gender stereotypes showed it was possible for gendered identities to exist outside of the dominant paradigm. Whilst most data showed evidence of the girls-boys binary, in fact a multiplicity of dispositions were revealed by the data with some occasions where individuals relied on real-world identities shaped by factors broader than gender alone. Brad's move to help the girls' group set-up their game, Kate remaining with the boys to play a first-person shooter game, and comments like those from Sharon, who said "You can't really generalise boys and girls," showed how there is always room for cognitive struggles over the meaning of the world and over participation in that world (Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 199). Kate's decision to continue with the group of boys was also significant in its rejection of the "double-bind" women face in relation to access to power (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 67), that is if they behave like men, they risk losing the qualities of 'femininity, and if they behave like women, they can appear incapable of attaining the positions of power and privilege dominated by men.

Accepting that schemas of thought are reproduced through learning processes (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 104), the isolated moments of flight away from dominant discourses was a sign that it is possible for histories of experience in the social world to produce habitus inclined to neutralise schemas of domination. As with Beavis' and Charles (2005) work using a videogame as part of an English curriculum unit, and which revealed how gendered identities were formed and challenged through play and study, pedagogical decisions can be used to counter forces of gender and empower students to make commitments to inhabit the goals of virtual characters, connecting old identities

and new identities. While gendered identities exercised a powerful force on students' projective capacity, explicit pedagogy, such as the critical literacy questioning involved in the News Article Pair and Share activity or the Playing, Writing and Talking about Power in Bully activity, connecting questions of power in texts with the choices of gameplayers, shows how teacher can foster the 'cognitive struggle' necessary to enhance opportunities for players to gain the learning benefit of projective identity work, as it has been envisaged by Gee (2007c, 2007d). Far more research is needed to determine if these gains can be long-lasting, or whether practices that resist dominant gender roles are isolated in the classroom and only as a response to targeted teaching.

Virtual characters

Male virtual characters

The gameworlds and stories through which projective identity work was differently possible depended also on virtual characters. Remembering Gee's claim that "There is a tripartite play of identities as learners relate, and reflect on, their multiple real-world identities, a virtual identity, and a projective identity (2007d, p. 64), investigating the virtual characters which students engaged with most during the intervention and analysis of student responses to these characters demonstrated how virtual characters as representational media act as sites of possibility and limitation.

The depiction of two virtual characters utilised during the study revealed the way these characters are designed to be read and realised in some ways and not others. Master Chief, the protagonist from *Halo 3*, depicted in Figure 31, is a male soldier. He is portrayed as strong, masculine, confident, and within the game environment of the *Halo 3* world, actively leads other soldiers. As the visual demonstrates, Master Chief's capabilities are best captured by the gun he carries and the muscular stature which can be utilised for hand-to-hand combat. While cinematic clips incorporated into the game show Master Chief talking with other virtual characters, within the gameworld controlled by the human player, violent behaviour is the only option open to Master Chief in his dealings with other virtual or human characters in order to progress the game. Jimmy Hopkins is the virtual character at the centre of the story in the videogame *Bully*. Depicted as a male teenager, Jimmy is typically seen in a dishevelled school uniform and more likely to be carrying a scowl than a smile. Cinematic scenes tend to portray Jimmy as a rebellious, angry and aggressive young teen who rejects authority, and chooses not to 'fit-in' at Bullworth Academy, yet possesses extensive 'street-smarts.' Unlike Master Chief, Jimmy's on-screen activity can take a range of forms and is not necessarily limited to violence towards others, even if this is an identity-trait promoted by the story-line.

The design and visual representation of these two virtual characters reflect notions of masculinity which favour action, aggression, and violence at the expense of other traits. They represent vessels for human players to project through which involved limited types of acceptable behaviour. Characters like Master Chief and Jimmy Hopkins are common amongst videogames marketed towards male audiences. They provide a means for men and boys to assert their masculinity in a way that helps them achieve their essence and traps them (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 50). The essence of masculinity, socially and historically constructed, is one which in modern society necessitates an investment in the games of violence, be they sport, war, or in this case, simulated violence. The long labor of socialization has produced a sense of 'manliness' differentiated from the opposite sex and which must be validated by other men through actual, or in this case, virtual violence (p. 52). Taking on highly masculine virtual characters allows for a man to be all that he "ought-to-be" (p. 49). Herein lies the trap. The schemas of sexual differentiation captured by the depiction of these virtual male characters, and their limited game-based activities, are themselves the product of historical structuring. Through taking on and playing with the identities inherent in these characters, these schemas are reproduced, reinforcing structures of domination and trapping males into particular ways of thinking and being.



Master Chief (*Halo 3*)



Character choices (*Dungeon Siege 3*)



Jimmy Hopkins (*Bully*)



The 'Hero' (*Fable II*)



Figure 31: Virtual characters used during the study

Other Virtual characters

In contrast, another videogame used in the intervention, *Fable II*, portrayed gender differently. This game allows the gamer to choose to adopt a 'girl' or 'boy' hero with which to navigate the game's story. As the depiction in Figure 31 shows, the visuals used to create each of these virtual characters offer both change and continuity in terms the representation of gender. Both the boy and the girl are dressed in the same, arguably gender-neutral, clothing, with the dresses, skirts and overt-sexualisation, often attributed to female gaming-characters (Beasley & Collins Standley, 2002), mostly omitted. Though facial features and hair-style are similar across both avatars, colour is used to distinguish the gender of each, with blue for the boy and pink for the girl used. Where *Fable II* differs most from the previously analysed virtual characters is in terms of the capabilities of the protagonists, as the virtual character need not act violently for the story to progress, and in fact, can be projected upon by the gamer to perform non-violent and diplomatic actions that lead other NPCs in the game to respond accordingly. As the descriptions above show, some virtual characters used in the study adhered to common videogame character portrayals, which Miller and Summer's (2007) research analysing the visualisation of videogame characters in US Gaming Magazines has shown tends to portray males as heroes and main characters, who use more weapons than female characters and are more muscular and powerful. Their findings with regards to female characters, that they tend to be supplementary characters, more attractive, sexy, and innocent and who wear more revealing clothing, was also true in some cases, as seen in the female characters from *Dungeon Siege 3* and *Ultimate Alliance 2*, but not in others, such as the 'girl' in *Fable II*. If the full potential of learning that has been associated with projective work is to be realised, then students will need to feel like they can inhabit the virtual characters brought into classrooms for play and study. This makes issues of text-selection as important as decisions about the critical literacy pedagogies.

Opening up space for developing understandings about the representations of virtual characters is facilitated by authentic opportunities to connect with virtual characters.

Projecting through virtual characters

Another form of data related to gendered identities was evident in student comments *about* virtual characters, and how they would project through these characters. Following several lessons of activities focussed on the videogame *Bully*, students completed the Talking and Writing about Identity activity which included responding through writing to prompts found in their *Bully* Activity Booklets. The table asked them to take notes on real-world, virtual, and projective identities as they related to the *Bully* gameplay and study. Written data regarding the virtual and projective identities active at this time comprised the following:

Rachel

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	• troubled • Boy • Student • broken family (family problems) • doesn't trust many people • doesn't like being controlled / told what to do. • rude • hero & villain / Bully & victim
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	- I don't like to hurt people, so when given the option I wouldn't fight someone. I would stay out of the bully's way. - I prefer to help people, so in the game when given the choice I would use Jimmy's power for good. protect the innocent from the Bully's at Bullworth academy.

Kate

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	• boy • student • angry • violent • Bully & victim • trouble maker • rebellious • left out • rude • lonely • family problems • rejected • independent • hero & villain
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	• I would make him get into trouble because that's something I don't do. • I would try to go with the story • I would try not to get caught and challenge authority.

Sharon

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	- guy - student - tough - doesn't enjoy life. - loved by family - owns pajamas. - smart - likes to cause trouble, but not at peoples cost. - rebellious. - independent
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	* in decisions between whether to fight, help or do nothing, his character follows your motives, whether? * I would avoid tough people and make friends with loads of people?

Harley

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	• Angry • boy • student • bully • hero • villain • independent • sad • rude • smart • victim • smartalec • rude
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	- my upper projects through the game so instead of being polite like i make him a bully and - aggravated - I'd explore in the whole game instead of just the main story line

Cam

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	- x boy - x student - x rebel - x violent - x bully - x is disliked - x rejected - x rude
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	x this game is about choices, in most games usually go bad because i can let out a bit of my wild side. x In this game I would try and do a mixture of both good and bad things

Brad

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	A boy, student, tough (Acting?), influenced by justice, evil, good, powerfull, open, un-afraid, independant, split family, talented, Jack-of-all-trades.
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	In most games, I play as an evil character; opposite of who I am. I would choose to do most of the evil options; unless, I want a certain outcome I would use Jimmy as an alternate me; someone to do and say thing I wouldn't.

Adam

<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Rebellious</td><td>Student</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rude</td><td>Intelligent</td></tr> <tr> <td>Tough</td><td>Troublesome</td></tr> <tr> <td>Boy</td><td>Independant</td></tr> </table>	Rebellious	Student	Rude	Intelligent	Tough	Troublesome	Boy	Independant
Rebellious	Student								
Rude	Intelligent								
Tough	Troublesome								
Boy	Independant								
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy	• Protect people • I would play through the missions in the game. • I would steer away from fights								

Firstly, all students constructed the virtual character, Jimmy Hopkins, in a complex manner. They used language which identified some of the more troubled elements of the virtual character, including: "rebellious" (Adam), "rude" (Rachel), "trouble maker" (Kate), "doesn't enjoy life or smile" (Sharon), "sad" (Harley), "violent" (Cam), and "evil" (Brad). However, they were also empathetic and sensitive to elements of the story which had contributed to Jimmy's identity, such as: "broken family" (Rachel), "lonely" (Kate), "unloved by family" (Sharon), "victim" (Harley), "rejected" (Cam), "influenced by justice" (Brad), and "independent" (Adam). All students were able to look beyond the virtual character's gender and identify characteristics of the game's protagonist which had been included by the game's designers as a way to complicate Jimmy Hopkins.

In terms of projecting through Jimmy Hopkins, student comments were divided between those who saw the protagonist as a way to be violent in a simulated setting and those who would avoid such behaviour. The following table collated the positions of different students:

<u>Those who would be violent</u>	<u>Those who would avoid violence</u>
Kate <i>I would make him get into trouble because that's something I don't do</i> Harley <i>My anger would project through the game so instead of being polite, make him a bully and aggravated</i> Cam <i>In most games I usually go bad because I can let out a bit of my wild side.</i> Brad <i>In most games I play as an evil character; opposite of who I am. I would choose to do most of the evil options; unless I want a certain outcome</i>	Rachel <i>I prefer to help people, so in the game when given the choice I would use Jimmy's power for good. Protect the innocent from the bullies at Bullworth Academy.</i> Sharon <i>I would avoid the tough people and make friends with loads of people</i> Adam <i>Protect people. I would steer away from fights</i>

Female and male students reflected on their past and current dispositions when deciding what they would do in possession of the virtual character. Comments like: “that’s something I don’t do” (Kate), “In most game I usually...” (Cam), and “I prefer to...” (Rachel), showed how students relied on their real-world experiences to answer this question. This example of mediation between real-world dispositions and virtual-character capabilities showed the limitations and possibilities associated with projective identity work. In this data set, gender did not appear as a factor affecting the interface between students and Jimmy Hopkins, with female and male participants expressing views both in favour and against the use of the virtual character for aggressive purposes. This suggests other dispositions were also at play in shaping the projective identity.

The dispositions analysed above are the historical by-products of the accumulation of practices associated with female and male textual characters which has been established by a wide-range of research detailing the gendered nature of texts and textual practice. Freebody and Baker’s (1987) study of 163 readers used in the first two years of schooling in New South Wales, exploring how particular images of children were constructed through language, showed how characters in these texts were more likely to position boys as active subjects of the verbs: *answer*, *hurt*, *shout* and *work*, and girls as the passive objects of the verbs: *hold on to* and *kiss*, representing patterns of portrayal of boys as ‘active’ and girls ‘passive’ (1987, p. 62). The way traditional fairy tales portray the hero as

active and male, and the victim as passive and female (Golden, 1994), as well as marketing strategies target dolls and dollhouses to girls, and action heroes and adventure toys to boys (Klugman, 1999, p. 170) show patterns of representations that construct the social world in a particular way, and which make student practices which challenge expected gender-norms all the more significant. More recently, research focussed on how popular Disney princess films portrayed feminine and masculine characteristics (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011) found that all of the films analysed relied on traditional and stereotypical representations of gender.

Expecting young people to be able to meaningfully and purposefully connect with a virtual character, to the extent that the real-world player gains a surrogate (Gee, 2008, p. 258), with which to feel a sense of agency and control, must involve consideration of the cognitive dissonance that may result when historical constructions of a gendered self are expected to mesh with virtual characters that carry their own histories. Including videogames in subject-English risks repeating the mistakes of past and present subject-English practitioners who expect students to be able to adopt story characters in a manner such that they become one's own character in the making. These expectations have their origins in Cultural Heritage models of subject-English which saw the subject as a means to civilise the reader through the values of characters and the themes of stories which students were expected to take as a given and appropriate as their own.

School identities

Students brought with them a range of dispositions towards school and subject-English which combined to form their school identities. In an effort to understand the relationship between school identities and projective identity work, analysis focussed on two themes which emerged as factors affecting projecting. These were; student perceptions of their subject-English capacities, both before and after the intervention, and students' textual dispositions.

Perception of capacity

Pre-intervention perceptions of capacity

The first set of data analysed related to student responses to a pre-intervention interview question asked of each student and showed how some students possessed a habitus positively disposed towards subject-English. These students tended to focus on the practices they could accomplish, rather than their deficits. Examples of positively-conditioned students included Kate, who, after saying she was probably towards the top-end of her class, and being prompted to elaborate on why she considered herself a good student said:

Especially when it comes to certain things. Like creative writing and those things... I've always been good at writing. I always find it a lot more fun and interesting than other people do. I get excited about it.

Adam expressed similar sentiments, saying:

Yeah, [I am] probably just a good reader and, yeah, good. I get good marks and everything most of the time. So, I'd say I'm alright but sometimes I don't really put all the effort in it that I could. I mean I enjoy it but only [when] I'm studying something that's good, like, *Animal Farm* was good, but I'm not really looking forward to *Romeo and Juliet* because it is not really my type of thing.

Cam and Brad offered more tempered replies to the question of their capacity, as captured by Cam's exclamation that:

I'm an okay English student. I'm good at some things but bad at others, and it's kind of not my most enjoyable class at the moment.

And Brad's response:

I'm probably on the average majority just because I don't generally take part very often. I usually end up, well, basically [I] sit in, you know, the back and I'm listening but I'm not really, you know, if she asks a question, I'll usually leave it to somebody else even if nobody knows the answer and I do. I generally just wait it out, because generally I'm not taking part as often as I probably could or should.

Finally, Harley presented views which focussed on deficit, rather than capacity, when he stated:

Nah, I'm not the best at English. I find it, I find it pretty difficult...I'm not really interested in reading 'em [novels], like when we are going a book or anything, [or] when we did *Animal Farm*, I had to get the audiobook...Nah, I don't really read much at all.

Students tended to focus on particular practices they associated with success in subject-English in order to explain their perception of their capacity. Kate's focus on "creative writing", Adam's reference to "good marks", and Harley's emphasis on "reading" show how students have internalised experiences relating to these practices and when prompted to reflect on the kind of subject-English student they represent, they retrieved these internalisations.

Students who recalled pleasurable experiences in subject-English demonstrated a 'taste' for the subject which encouraged a well-matched relationship between their habitus and the field of school-based literacy. This was seen in Kate's comments regarding her preference for creative writing, which causes her to "get excited about it." Adam, similarly, described enjoying subject-English, tying this positive disposition to his recent enjoyment studying the text *Animal Farm*. However, Adam's disclaimer on this disposition is noteworthy. This statement about the upcoming text for study in his traditional subject-English class, "I'm not really looking forward to *Romeo and Juliet* because it is not really my type of thing" is a sign of a habitus variably matched to the field. As the field changes, in

this instance from the study of *Animal Farm* to the study of *Romeo and Juliet*, so does Adam's disposition. The shift in Adam's tone regarding his capabilities captured the way habitus orientates practices. It is likely that his participation and performance in the upcoming Shakespeare study will not be characterised by the positive language he used to describe textual practices he has been more favourably conditioned to view confidently. The different perceptions expressed demonstrated the complexity of school identities which differently prepare students for engagement with text. When these perceptions are challenged through experiences of play and study with videogames, the transformative capacity of projective play becomes evident.

Post-intervention perceptions of capacity

Dispositions towards subject-English found in post-intervention interviews showed the effect of new pedagogies of practice internalised by the study's participants. When asked about their overall impressions of the classroom activities, positive responses from across the different interviews included:

Rachel: Well, it was better than normal English because I don't really like English. So, it was a different way to kind of study a different type of thing instead of just books and movies... it was, it was fun because it was different every time like it was never the same thing.

Sharon: It was a lot of fun. It was a bit different to what we usually do, which is good and I looked forward to it during the week.

Harley: I liked it a lot more than the English lessons of just doing the normal stuff, just to make it more interactive and fun.

Cam: I enjoyed it a lot. It showed that there's a different side of English.

Brad: I enjoyed it. I went back to my usual English classroom with a new view on things, I think. I usually didn't participate in English as willingly or openly as I do, whereas now I could relate to what was being said with experiences that were in the study.

Adam: It gave me different ways of thinking about things that I was doing in class like English class work and stuff like that.

The emphasis on fun and enjoyment in the data highlighted a positive attitude students formed in response to intervention lessons. All students made comparisons to their conventional subject-English classes, demonstrating the effect students' existing constructions of subject-English had on their responses to the question. They distinguished between the experiences across the two learning environments, captured by the frequent use of the word 'different', and overt comments describing greater enjoyment and fun during the intervention, demonstrating the appeal of novelty. This showed students renegotiating the way they thought about subject-English and the way this informed their school identities, as evidenced by language such as: "a different way to kind of study"

(Rachel), “a bit different to what we usually do” (Sharon), “a different side of English” (Cam), “a new view on things” (Brad), and “a different way of thinking” (Adam). This data shows an additional benefit to working with non-traditional digital texts in subject-English contexts. As well as the capacity to enhance learning through projective work, one result of the intervention was to reorient student perceptions of the possibilities of this kind of textual work.

Brad’s comments indicate a significant shift in his school-based identities generated as a result of intervention activities which valued and validated his videogame identities through encouraging them to be activated to negotiate activity with virtual characters. Drawing comparisons between his past participation in subject-English classes and his experiences during the intervention, Brad’s reflections reveal a change in the way he now sees opportunities for investing himself into learning activities in ways previously closed to him. This was most evident in comments capturing his willingness to participate in subject-English. The sense of agency and control made possible through the focus on a text at the centre of Brad’s real-world identities, and valued through videogame literacies, opened up ways of thinking, being, and doing for Brad that led to new constructions of his perception of subject-English.

Harley presented a similar example of a repositioning of his perception of his subject-English capacity as a result of playing and studying videogames. When Harley was asked if he thought the intervention had, or would, impact his performance in traditional subject-English classes, he answered by describing how intervention work on themes in texts, such as power, assisted him in writing a thematic essay for his traditional subject-English class. He said:

Yeah, because we wrote the power essay when we got back and I used some of our talking about the storyline of different books and stuff and movies in the essay. So, it helped a lot because usually I can’t get past the intro[duction].

After being asked about his performance on the essay, Harley responded, “I can’t remember what I got...It was 80 per cent or 75 I think.” Irrespective of the possibility that the intervention potentially improved Harley’s performance on traditional subject-English assessment, Harley’s comments showed evidence of reflective practice and an expectation that textual work in one context, the intervention, could improve summative performance in another context, his normal subject-English class. This is a positive outcome given the crucial role played by student expectations and achievement (Hattie, 2009). Harley made links between the learning in the intervention and learning in his other class, showing how his school identities had been reorientated in a manner similar to Brad.

Deficit discourses which were evident in pre-intervention interviews were not evident in post-intervention interviews. Comments from Brad, Harley and Cam which reflected a negative perception of their subject-English capabilities before the intervention were a product of their habitus, structuring their practice, including their behaviour and thinking. One explanation for this is evident in research focussed on boys' literacy. The need for boys to conform to socially constructed gender roles constrains their ability to engage with literacy practices that, through their portrayal as feminised acts, challenge their masculinity (Martino, 2000, 2001). These school-endorsed versions of how children think, act, and talk covertly reflect cultures of schooling which "define and delimit" (Martino, 2001, p. 74) what childhood is, as well as the language which children are socialised into using to talk about and experience the world. Often, the result of this socialisation is that many boys are left with limited notions of what a man 'does', and this can impact upon those whose practice of literacy in out-of-school contexts are not recognised or legitimised by schools.

However, as the texts and pedagogies of practice which formed the basis of the intervention changed, and the new forms that are closely aligned with the textual lifeworlds of Brad, Harley and Cam became the focus of study, so too did their habitus. The internalisation of new experiences in the social world reorientated the way these students constructed subject-English, to the extent that Brad and Cam spoke of new forms of participation and improved performance in their traditional subject-English classroom. Comber and Kamler's (2004) work disrupting teacher deficit discourses through re-designing new pedagogical repertoires that reconnect with children's lifeworlds, demonstrates how the habitus, as much as it is a product of past conditionings, can also be reconstituted through new "learning processes" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 104). As Bourdieu further states, a historical labour of construction produces the habitus but this "can consequently be modified by a transformation of its historical conditions of production" (p. 54). The shift in student perceptions about their own abilities, as well as definitions about subject-English, is proof of the effect which restructuring fields can have on practice and dispositions.

Textual dispositions

Student experiences with non-print based texts suggested that possession of a habitus pre-conditioned to be positively orientated towards textual practice is an important precursor to negotiating new and old identities through virtual characters. Kate and Brad recounted experiences with texts that orientated them to be able to project onto fictional story-based characters in particular ways as a result of prior experience. In response to a comment from Cam proclaiming that he despised Shakespeare, Kate shared some of her experiences seeing Shakespearean theatre with her mother, saying:

I've been to lots of modernized versions of Shakespeare, Bell Shakespeare Company. I've seen them three times...I just saw *Macbeth* which wasn't actually that great...But the guy who played Macbeth his posture really bugged me. He was like [that] the whole time even when he wasn't insane...My mum really didn't like the three witches being turned into the one witch.

Kate's experiences at the theatre were shared with family members and framed positively. These experiences were repeated over time, "I've seen lots of modernized versions", and done so with others, including her mum. Kate's description, whilst not related to videogame characters has some similarities to the way Gee talks about projective work between virtual and real-world identities. She described a commitment of self (Gee, 2005a, p. 34), and shared the difficulty connecting with and taking on the mental states of the characters (Gee, 2008, p. 258). Nonetheless, she expressed a textual disposition that contributed to her school identities in ways that would be beneficial to the study of Shakespeare in the classroom, suggesting a link between Kate's home and school literary practices.

In contrast, when Brad was asked about an avatar, seen in Figure 32, which was attached to an email he sent the teacher-researcher, his explanation described a history of engaging with anime⁵⁹ and anime avatars that revealed a different set of dispositions to those expressed by shared by Kate.

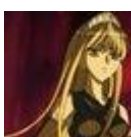


Figure 32: Avatar from Brad's email account

The discussion between the teacher-researcher and Brad took the following form:

Interviewer: When you replied to, I think it was an e-mail you sent me, you had an avatar of a woman.

Brad: Yeah.

Interviewer: And a female avatar. Explain.

Brad: Well, when I was young, a long time ago. Well, I used to watch a lot of, well I still do, I watched a lot of anime and I enjoyed watching it because my, it was another thing that I had in common with my step family. They watched anime and when I first, you know, began to meet them, that was one of the things that we, you know, had in common. That was one of the things that I could relate to them. And so, they gave me, you know, series and episodes and things so I could, you know, find out what kind of genre [they liked] and I found one which was, I think that was the first one I'd ever watched, which was *Princess Resurrection*, I think it was, which is about basically a guy gets

⁵⁹ Anime is a style of Japanese film and television animation which often involves media presented across many textual platforms.

killed and resurrected and then he's basically a slave and it's got, you know, monsters and battles and everything, you know, [everything] a teenager or a kid would like. So, I basically got a whole bunch of pictures from that and I used them, and I even had USBs with different faces on it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Brad: And that's why I had that face because every time I see that, I remember that series and the first, that was the first one I ever watched, so that's kind of a symbol of my new family, my new life. So, I still got my old USB which has the werewolf picture on that and the reason she's my G-mail picture was because that's like the, she's a princess. She's the main focus and my G-mail is generally my main focus. It's what I use.

Brad's explanation for the appropriation of anime avatars made strong connections between various identities. It captured the way textual practices were implicated in multiple identities and the fluid nature of these identities. It showed how a textual practice as simple as appropriating an avatar from an anime film could represent a form of complex projective identity work. Firstly, watching anime was both a solitary and a family practice for Brad. As a result, it became a shared textual practice, and meaningful for this reason. Secondly, features of the text were enjoyable enough to justify Brad's adoption of visuals as avatars to represent his property. This occurred electronically, in the form of his G-mail email account, and materially, in the form of his "old USB". In particular, the symbolic meaning attached to the image of the princess were so appealing that Brad wanted to be associated with this character outside of his anime-watching practice. The princess, and the "whole bunch of pictures" from the anime series, were figurative representations which Brad utilised to project with. Whilst Brad could not project his values and desires *onto* the virtual character, his use of the avatars from anime was a sign of projecting *through* virtual characters. As Gee has articulated in his work on projective identities, "the stress is on the interface between- the interactions between- the real-world person and the virtual character" (2004b, p. 50).

Textual practices condition 'tastes'. This acquired habitus helps to differentiate and appreciate. As a result of experiences in the social world textual tastes act as a match-maker, bringing together "things and people that go together" (p. 241). Brad's taste for visual representations of anime characters was an acquired disposition produced during prior encounters with this text which had become embodied at the deepest levels of his habitus. In the same way, Kate's taste for Shakespeare, was understandable when the 'taste' is placed within the context of cultural fields of production, and their associated conditioning effects, in which Kate had been exposed to this textual practice. What these two accounts reveal are the implications of students' 'tastes' on their capacity to engage in the interplay necessary for projective work to occur. A student whose real-world

dispositions are not positively orientated towards videogame will be less likely to produce the action necessary to allow real-world and virtual world interplay to occur.

Conclusion

In response to the question of factors which impact on the projective capacity of videogames when studied in subject-English classrooms, the real-world identities students brought with them to such activity affected the level of projecting possible. Gendered, videogame, and school-related identities are all produced by the internalisation of historical experiences, and as a result, the students in the study were differently able to engage in the practice necessary to produce projective identities. However, those students who were orientated in such ways showed that moments of projecting were authentic and powerful and moved beyond superficial entertainment effects to produce feelings of belonging, power and control. There is the possibility for deep learning and teaching to be associated with such textual practice in the classroom, although whether this learning goes beyond the surface will be highly dependent on the ways that videogames are used in the classroom, and the types of videogames selected for use.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the data collected throughout the study. This analysis has been organised in response to the study's three major lines of inquiry, namely: What are the pedagogical implications of working with these texts in subject-English classrooms? What are the textual practices associated with videogame play? And, Is there evidence to support the capacity of subject-English to do projective identity work?? The use of Bourdieu's theory of practice as an analytical tool assisted in the interrogation of practices, drawing attention to the dialectical relationship between habitus and field, and the potential for reorientating student dispositions through new textual experiences and pedagogical challenges. The next chapter presents the study's findings in the form of a Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English, synthesising the data analysis in order to suggest where teachers go from here and what challenges they are likely to face.

Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusion

The wish to preserve the past rather than the hope of creating the future dominates the minds of those who control the teaching of the young (Russell, 1992, p. 389)

In this final chapter, themes which emerged from the data analysis have been synthesised to reconceptualise the dominant paradigms of subject-English in response to videogames. To facilitate this process, a Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English has been developed which acts as a heuristic in response to the study's three research questions; what are the pedagogical implications of working with these texts in subject-English classrooms? What are the intrinsic practices of videogames which will impact on the study of these texts in subject-English classrooms? How does the projective identity capacity of videogames, both inside and outside of subject-English, affect learning and teaching with these texts? The Framework organises the study's findings in terms of their relationship to the dominant approaches to subject-English. The outcome is a perspective on the study of these texts within the subject which does not hold rigidly to any single paradigm, but rather draws on multiple theories to gain complementary insights. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for students and teachers.

Looking back to see forward

In 1988, Australian educationalist Garth Boomer delivered the opening address at Edtech-88, The Conference of the Australian Society for Educational Technology. In his lecture, Boomer informed the audience that his role at the conference was to play the part of a “receptive but judiciously sceptical teacher” (1999, p. 62). This scepticism was tied to the argument that technology for education was capable of both great good and vast damage. Boomer cautioned for eternal vigilance, so that the advantages often attributed to technology were in fact experienced by students. Since Boomer's address, the technologies available for inclusion in classrooms, as well as educators advocating their value, have expanded exponentially. The framework outlined below demonstrates that it is not so much the invention of new technologies that is difficult, but as Boomer told his audience, the hardest part is adapting and matching technologies to the real and complex contexts of education (p. 64). This is especially true for subject areas such as English, which are framed by distinct and often contradictory imperatives that are manifest in learning and teaching.

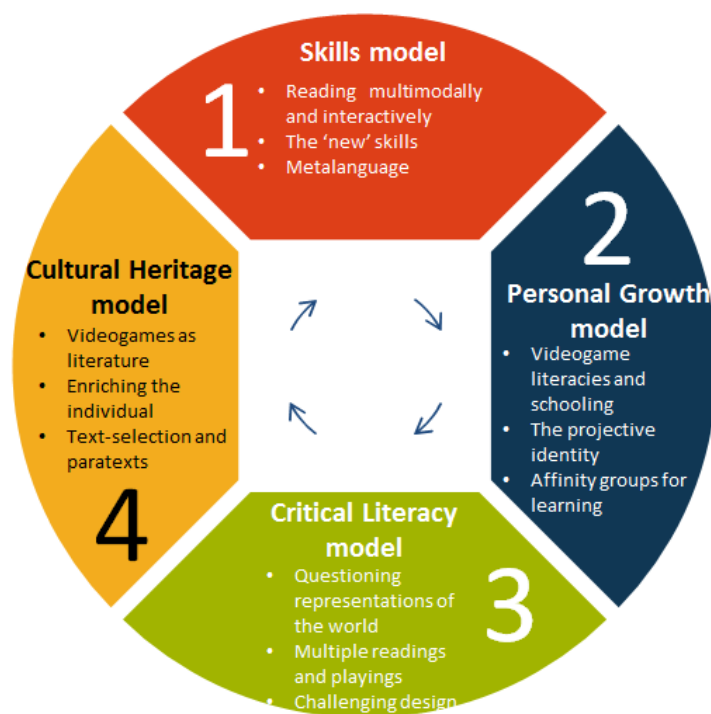


Figure 33: A Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English

The Framework above serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it recognises and integrates existing work connecting digital games and school-based literacies (Apperley & Walsh, 2012; Beavis, 1999b; Gee, 2007d; Spires, 2015; Squire, 2008b; Steinkuehler, 2010; Walsh, 2010) with findings from this study to articulate the way videogames can be incorporated meaningfully into these contexts. As classrooms are historically-constituted social spaces where the possibilities for action matched to such a field are historically produced and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b), attempts to bring videogames into these classrooms will need to negotiate the disciplinary forces which structure these spaces. The four models of subject-English discussed throughout this paper are examples of these forces, highlighting the subject-English classroom as a “field of struggles” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989, p. 40), which videogames must to some extent oblige, but which can simultaneously encourage innovation in response to the accommodation of New Media texts. As such, the focus in each of the study’s three research questions on pedagogies, textual practices, and learning and teaching, respectively, highlights the value of relating the outcomes of this investigation to the context where it matters most. The Framework visualises, and later elaborates on, what videogames in the subject-English classroom would look like in practice.

Secondly, the inclusion of videogames in subject-English reveals how the goals of the models, realised through classroom practice, are not mutually exclusive nor achieved in isolation. As explained below, in the context of videogame play and study, it is rare for the imperatives of any

model to be realised without the engagement of other models. The interest Personal Growth supporters have in encouraging students to explore their personal worlds and experiences through text requires activating the skills which operationalise today's videogames. Likewise, a Cultural Heritage focus on enriching the individual through types of reflection about texts and the world can also capture the ambitions of Critical Literacy enthusiasts. This necessitates an eclecticism to which Locke (2015, p. 25) argues all English teachers should subscribe. Evaluating each element of the Framework in the context of videogames-as-text provides evidence in support of English as a 'plurality of practices' (Doecke, 2016; Howie, 2005; Locke, 2015).

5.1 Skills Model



Finding one: Videogame study benefits from pedagogies of multimodality which recognise the interactive nature of videogames as well as the unique metalanguage associated with this textual work.

Finding two: The collaborative and problem solving skills students need for twenty-first century success can be developed through the study of videogames in subject-English.

The Skills model of English has tended to focus on gaining control of specific skills often with a practical quality. In the past, this has included preparing students for the language demands of different subjects in the school curriculum, as well as the language demands of adult life, including the workplace (Cox, 1989). The context of twenty-first century New Media texts requires further work to expand on print-based notions of reading to include semiotic meaning-making across a range of multimodalities (New London Group, 1996). The notion of skills is presented here is conceptualised broadly, and includes those less tangible, but no less significant, social competencies which are predicted to play an ever-important role in post-schooling success, such as problem-solving and collaboration (Griffin et al., 2012). It also recognises that the prevalence of language, both within games and as they are enacted, requires a metalanguage to support learning and teaching. The study's interest in questions of the intrinsic practices of videogames focuses attention on many of these skills and the pedagogies necessary to develop them.

Reading multimodally and interactively

In an age of digital texts, the reconceptualisation of reading comprehension to incorporate meaning-making through multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) represents an approach essential to the teaching of videogame-as-text. Acknowledging how visual language, and the language of film, has already infiltrated subject-English, the identification of various modes, supported by activities which required students to deconstruct videogame front-covers and game trailers showed how pedagogy could be used to support reading of the multiple modes of meaning-making present in videogames. The presence of a range of modes in the watching and playing of games supported students to differentiate between the ways that text, visuals, and sound were functioning, and to distinguish between the many modalities simultaneously and interdependently in operation. This was evident in the way students responded to teaching which guided them to focus on the relationship between modalities and genres. When combined with embodied experiences of gameplay, reading practices were observed which demonstrated how representations in one mode contributed to understandings in other, less favoured or comfortable, modes, a complex form of synaesthesia (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 180) which supported learning. Digital texts which utilise many modalities to communicate with the audiences are likely to become an ever more ubiquitous feature of young people's textual practice, and the ways that these meanings are developed through a combination of embodied experiences and explicit instruction is an important aspect of how scaffolding can support an understanding of these texts.

The development of reading skills will also need to shift to accommodate interactivity. The interactive aspects of videogames are distinctive from typical subject-English texts. The very fact that the game as it appears on the screen does not exist until it is played, and that this changes as user input is incorporated into the unfolding events, fractures traditional reader/author, and viewer/director, approaches to understanding text. Whilst textual practices associated with reading a novel also require collaboration, or transactions (Rosenblatt, 1988), between the reader and the author in the meaning-making process, the interactive element of videogames represent textual practice that will require expanding models of English. For example, analysis related to student engagement with videogames during the intervention showed that collaboration which was student-to-student, student-to-text, and text-to-student contributed to form 'the text of the text' (Ryan, 2001, p. 17). The incorporation of user input into the unfolding text was a significant element affecting the meaning attributed to these texts, and which occurred across a spectrum of interactivity (Grodal, 2000). Traditional approaches to the teaching of reading which position students as the passive recipients of knowledge, or which construct reading as an activity aimed at

‘finding’ the intended meaning of the author/director, are insufficient for videogame-focussed classrooms.

The ‘new’ skills

The study also found that videogame play and study in the classroom challenged the existing social space of the English classroom in ways that encouraged the types of collaborative and problem-solving skills promoted as essential for success in the twenty-first century (Australian Education Council, 2008; Griffin, 2011). The introduction of videogames, supported by paired and group gameplay, resulted in a space characterised by social collaboration and talk which fostered interactions centred on supportive student-centred problem-solving behaviour. During these moments, more confident and experienced gamers took it upon themselves to offer advice and guidance to others who appeared to be struggling to progress through gaming activity. The social environments associated with videogame play and study encouraged master and apprentice relationships (Gee & Hayes, 2012). Throughout gameplay activities during the intervention, the experts in the group quickly became apparent, and technological affordances, in combination with pedagogical decisions about the classroom space, allowed these students to contribute to a game-anchored learning environment. This was evident in the way Brad assisted others to understand the controls. Outside of the study, this was apparent in the way Harley spoke about playing *Minecraft* online with other players. Furthermore, the collaboration was valuable for both the master and apprentice. The master benefited through the valuing of the knowledge and skills they possessed, and by making the cognitive effort required to reframe this knowledge into a form useful for the learner. The apprentice benefitted through the learning associated with the support they received. The study’s findings help us move beyond a notion of skills captured by an individual’s engagement with a text, such as the rote repetition of grammar exercises often associated with a rhetoric of ‘the basics’ (Watson, 1994). The skills of videogames are socially realised and socially mediated and demonstrate the limitations of teacher-centered pedagogies of English.

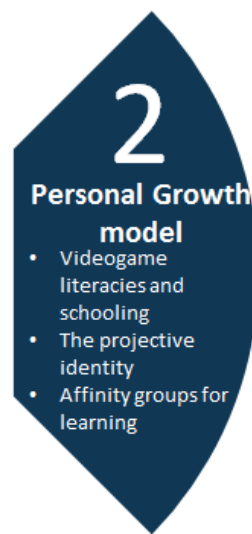
Collaboration for problem solving was not always the product of explicit instruction. Observations from the large multiplayer gaming sessions revealed that when young people play and work collaboratively, they are more willing to ask for help from others. During these moments, the team-based nature of play fostered ways for students to work together in ways they had not previously demonstrated during the study. In addition, the way Harley and Adam used questions during the Paired Gameplay and Note-taking activity to navigate their virtual characters through the story, as well as their recount of the importance of talk in assisting their at-home gameplay progression, suggest that these forms of textual practice provided access points to informal learning (Mizuko et al., 2013, p. 33), an important feature of many emergent digital technologies.

The most dramatic aspect of the Skills model to be reworked is in terms of developing the capacity to create a range of digital texts, including videogames. Subject-English as a place where students are supported to create texts through the control of various semiotic systems makes an ideal learning environment for game creation. Though intervention activities did not include opportunities for game-creation, a review of the literature, in combination with student talk during the study about videogame play, reveals the value of developing these skills. Scaffolding students to design, develop, publish and play their own games within subject-English and literacy contexts has been the focus of numerous case studies (Beavis & O'Mara, 2010; Buckingham & Burn, 2007; Pelletier et al., 2010; Walsh, 2010). What these examples show is that proficiencies in programming (Buckingham & Burn, 2007; Walsh, 2010), and explicit support from classroom teachers (Beavis, 2014; Beavis & O'Mara, 2010), need to be brought together. Ways of thinking about text that are prevalent in media studies and information and communication technology, such as computational thinking principles (decomposition, pattern recognition, abstraction, and algorithms), have been mandated for teaching as a 'General Capability' within the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015), and represent fundamental skills for students of the twenty-first century.

[Metalanguage](#)

This study also found that the possession and deployment of a metalanguage for videogame study was needed to facilitate teaching and learning with these texts. A distinct language of, and about, videogames emerged during the intervention, but was not formalised through classroom learning or teacher legitimisation. This language tended to take one of two forms: language about technology, and language about gameplay. For example, language about technology included terms like: sync, HDMI cable, Xbox, controllers, and projector. Language about gameplay included references to: multiplayer, online, co-op, save, and avatar. In the absence of an authorised metalanguage, students relied on traditional subject-English discourses attached to print-based study and film-as-text. These connections to existing knowledge support the idea that teachers can use print and film-based knowledge and skills to support videogame learning and teaching, a productive convergence of 'old' and 'new' media discourse (Luke, 2007). Developing the disciplinary knowledge of videogames-as-text will require going beyond existing discourses used to understand the dominant texts of today's subject-English.

5.2 Personal Growth Model



Finding three: Learning and teaching benefits from engaging with and validating the videogame identities students bring with them to school.

Finding four: For those who possess the requisite social and cultural capital, projective identity work provides a pathway to learning, especially when pursued through social activity and membership of affinity groups.

Personal Growth has always had an interest in the formation of students' life worlds, and valued the establishment of classrooms so that they are places for place for pupils to meet to share experiences, to talk about people and situations in the world, and to gather new experiences as a result of taking from the shared store of experience (Dixon, 1975, pp. 6-7). The increasingly prevalent role played by videogames in the home (Brand & Todhunter, 2015), and the importance of videogame textual experiences reported by students during the study, validates the need to play and study these texts in schools to provide space to engage with students' experiences. Reconsidering text-selection possibilities involves a re-evaluation of the cultural capital valued in the classroom. In the context of videogames-as-text, it will be important to consider how teacher practice creates space for the gaming capital which students possess in differing quantities. Personal Growth's emphasis on the experiences of individuals requires pedagogies which encourage the negotiation of identities. The projective identity work enabled by videogame play can be supported with learning activities geared towards navigating the space between virtual and real world identities. This will encourage journeys into self-knowledge and experience. When combined with the type of social activity that typifies affinity groups, including the aforementioned collaborative problem-solving skills, and the immersive affordances of being transported into the virtual world of the videogame,

the outcome is one which creates the environment for a relationship between language and experience in ways envisaged by Personal Growth advocates (Britton, 1970; Dixon, 1975; Moffett & Wagner, 1976). The study's third question, and its focus on how people negotiate their identities through textual practice, between the real and the virtual, brings to the fore the learning and teaching associated with supporting student-understandings of their life worlds.

Videogame literacies and schooling

Intervention activities valued the videogame identities students brought with them from their home contexts, demonstrating that growth in language requires pedagogies that do not exist in isolation from the life experiences of students (Dixon, 1975, p. xv). Engaging with identities typically mobilised online or in out-of-school digital environments created an opportunity in the classroom for students to talk about and enact features of themselves not usually encouraged during traditional textual study. For some students, the strength of these identities allowed them to take on new roles, joining old and new identities captured by certain types of thinking and interacting. Rather than 'play' in digital environments representing a superficial form of identity work (Bauman, 2011), the role of student-as-player was one which when fully adopted, as students actively took control of virtual characters and reflected on this relationship through gameplay activities, resulted in reflexive practice and the capacity to engage in a process of continuous learning. Those students with videogame identities that encouraged taking on and making choices about and through virtual characters could realise the learning possibilities that came with matching identity and learning (Gee, 2007d, pp. 53-54).

Contrary to those suggesting that videogame play is bereft of meaning (Donnelly, 1998) or that engagement with digital technologies undermines human actors (Bauman, 1998), the study found that young people's social experiences with videogames were often highly meaningful and intimately linked to their sense of self. Within family, friendship and school-based contexts, the students in the study shared accounts of their gameplay which were intimate and genuine. The affordances of this form of technology, including multiple controllers, multiplayer gameplay, online gaming, and in-game communication, provided the tools for the co-construction of textual experiences. Learning and teaching in the classroom encouraged students to share their experiences, and through exploratory talk with other members of the classroom, to take from the shared store of experience to form new understandings about themselves and their world (Dixon, 1975).

Activities which allowed students to form bridges between home-based videogame literacies and classroom learning repositioned students' perceptions of subject-English and their capacity to perform in the subject. Studying and playing videogames throughout the intervention negated the deficit discourse which Brad, Harley and Cam had used to talk about subject-English prior to the intervention. Consequently, the effect of applying Personal Growth pedagogies to popular digital texts was a shift in how some students conceived of the potential of subject-English learning and teaching. Students took learnings developed during intervention activities across to their literacy practice in their traditional subject-English class, suggesting that videogame study can impact constructively on learning in non-digital contexts.

However, not all students possessed the dispositions necessary to be able to construct the learning environment of the study as a place of possibility. As a result of prior experience with videogames, or a lack thereof, some students limited their involvement in gameplay. The high levels of student engagement demonstrated evident throughout the study were expected but there was much to learn from those who felt uncomfortable fully embracing gameplay and study. The social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) students brought with them to the study, as well as real-world identities featuring gendered, videogame, and school-based dispositions, impacted participation. Most students during the study participated enthusiastically, taking up every opportunity to play videogames at school. Perhaps as a result of this enthusiasm, these same students were also highly cooperative in the completion of learning activities which at times involved extensive periods of writing. For some, this was exacerbated by a paucity of videogame-specific skills. While intervention activities provided space for Personal Growth philosophies of shared experience and student talk to be linked to the study of videogames-as-text, the limited participation of some students provides a warning for teachers considering working with these texts. Pedagogies that embrace the experiences students bring with them cannot ignore the knowledge and skills required to attain and negotiate such experiences.

The projective identity

Taking on and playing with identities represented a powerful means of engaging students with learning activities to better understand themselves and their relationship to the world. Projective identity work, a negotiation between real-world and virtual identities (Gee, 2007d), was highly valued by students, and those able to participate in such work gained access to new affordances of action, and were observed to produce an increased commitment of self. One manifestation of these affordances was evident in the way students spoke about inhabiting virtual characters during out-of-study gaming, and through the way different students used the avatars of Jimmy Hopkins and

Commander Shepard within the study. The application of personal goals and desires onto virtual characters opened up ways to talk about how identities were revealed and shaped, and contributed to the enjoyment students experienced as a result of this form of textual practice. Linking immersive gameplay which involves projecting, with explicit teaching aimed at providing experiences to discuss the double-sided nature of the projective identity, from the real-world player onto the virtual character, and vice-versa, ensured that gameplay during these instances was purposeful and targeted at student understandings connected to self and their experiences in the world.

Immersion in narratively rich worlds made possible through videogame play represented a catalyst for deep learning produced through authentic projective identity work. At a time when there is great concern about student disengagement from schooling (Gallup, 2015), and the effect this has had on participation and performance (Lamb et al., 2015), the emotional connection of students to their immersive experiences with this text-type were noteworthy. Evidence from the intervention of emotional responses to gameplay and study contributed to engagement and improved learning. This advances theoretical work arguing that such a connection exists (Gee, 2007c, 2007d; Ryan, 2009). The capacity of videogames to transport their audience into worlds of another place and time resulted in powerful forms of embodied learning (Gee, 2008; Mott et al., 1999) which were prolific in the out-of-school videogame-playing lives of the students in the study.

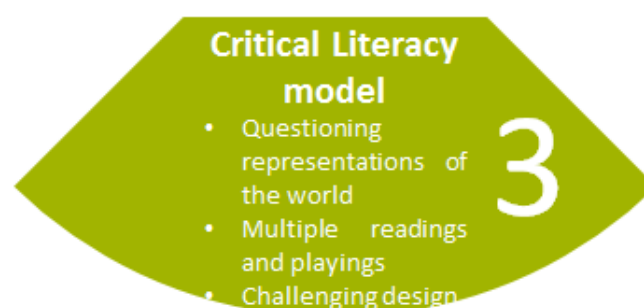
Projecting was observed to be most powerful when it took place socially. Analysis of the Eight-player Gameplay activity and of student recounts of social gaming outside of the study revealed that commitments to virtual characters and worlds were more substantial when they were made in collaboration with other people. Brad's experiences gaming with his family members, and Adam and Harley's social gameplay and game sharing, impacted their experiences of gameplay and the form their projecting took. Videogame play and study in these instances was more likely to be constructed in terms of possibilities when students had a sense that projective work was a collaborative activity completed in association with other people. This highlights how projective work is affected by the presence or absence of other human players equally committed to seeing virtual characters as their own character in the making (Gee, 2007d, p. 50), a view about learning similar to that espoused by social constructivist theorists (Bandura, 1977; Bruner, 1966; Vygotsky, 1978).

Affinity groups for learning

The learning affordances associated with affinity groups which formed during the study were substantial. Gee has written widely about the way that 'newbies' in videogame related affinity-groups are not segregated (Gee, 2005b, 2007d; Gee & Hayes, 2012). These spaces accommodate and support a continuum of people with different skill levels (Gee, 2007d, p. 225). This principle correlates to Hattie's work establishing the effectiveness of social forms of learning, including

reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning (2009; 2011). While it is easy to lament the extended hours some young people commit to gaming, findings from this study revealed how the practices associated with videogames led to the formation of momentary, extended, and extensive affinity groups characterised by rich teaching and learning spaces (Gee, 2007d; Gee & Hayes, 2012; Hayes & Duncan, 2012). For example, intervention learning activities which emphasised group work and various opportunities to negotiate gameplay socially resulted in a shared interest and willingness to commit to particular affinity group practices. Even when these groups were short-lived, they facilitated deeper learning and a sense of belonging within a community of sharing language and experience. Personal Growth supporters have long-supported the value of effective programs which arrange for students to centre on and teach each other (Moffett & Wagner, 1976). This is a feature of informal learning with videogames that can assist in this goal.

5.3 A Critical Literacy Model



Finding five: Students can be scaffolded to challenge the representations of the world presented by videogames.

Finding six: Classrooms activities which open space for multiple playings and readings prompt students to consider these texts in new ways, including the relationship between elements of their design and their purpose.

Advocates of critical literacy argue that subject-English and literacy contexts demand working with students so that they come to understand every day and popular culture texts in new ways (McLaren & Lankshear, 1993; Misson & Morgan, 2006; Morgan, 1997). Critical approaches to textual study which have long been applied to subject-English (Mellor & Patterson, 2004; Peel, 1998) can similarly be deployed in the videogame-focussed classroom. As videogames are so rarely the objects of study in schools, this raises the question of the efficacy and ethics of scaffolding students to read these texts critically, to question the representations of world they create. Key to this approach is providing explicit instruction which opens up videogames for multiple readings through guided

playing. Furthermore, videogames, like any other text, are designed in particular ways for specific purposes. Focussing on the design features of these texts developed new ways of thinking about the activities these texts encourage, and the socially-constructed nature of their enactment. The employment of critical practices to understand the intrinsic practices of these texts, in collaboration with the validation of the personal experiences of students, in terms of home videogame practices and knowledge, exposes the dilemma of opening these popular texts to new readings at the risk of diminishing the pleasure students gain from them.

Questioning representations of the world

Classroom activities which aimed to examine the meanings within videogames supported students to question the underlying beliefs and values in these texts and to focus precisely on the views of the world which they presented. Studying videogames which present a range of views of the world help students to question these representations. This aim is best supported by explicit teaching and learning activities. Whilst some research suggests that videogames are designed to encourage this kind of critical work (Simkins & Steinkuehler, 2008), or that the communities which support videogame practice produce these effects (Steinkuehler, 2006b, 2007), evidence from the intervention suggested explicit strategies were needed in order to scaffold student thinking. This was most evident in the disparity of critical practice during intervention activities specifically aimed at critical thinking and activities that allowed a less-structured, free-play, approach. The former produced critical readings of texts, including opening up texts so that they could be seen in new ways, a goal Misson (2006) argued is at the forefront of the purpose of subject-English. The latter was usually devoid of critical practices. Thus, it was not videogames in isolation which fostered critical literacy, but rather discipline-specific pedagogy in combination with the contexts and communities of practice around videogames which had the potential to achieve this.

Applying critical pedagogies to the study of videogames was revealed to be problematic in two respects. Firstly, the engagement and fun associated with playing videogames, an unavoidable by-product of studying these texts authentically, complicated critical work. When critical literacy instruction was not overt, students reverted to the uncritical consumption of these texts, especially during social and multiplayer gameplay. It became difficult to discern whether students could not activate a critical capacity in such a context, or whether they simply 'deactivated' this ability when it was not the explicit focus of a learning activity. Though fun is an important element in the work of subject-English classrooms, and videogames can be advantageous in encouraging this catalyst for learning (Beavis & O'Mara, 2010), classroom teaching which included guided critical work built capacity so that the uncritical consumption of these texts was avoided. Considering what analysis revealed about the depiction of virtual characters which reflected narrow stereotypes of gender, and

what this means for how viewers/players are positioned to view the world, the development of a critical lens to interrogate these, and other digital texts, requires constant reinforcement and repetition of critical questioning.

Multiple readings and playings

All texts are open to multiple interpretations. A critical literacy for videogames requires a pedagogy whereby multiple readings and multiple playings are pursued. Analysis from the Power in Bully activity showed that learning activities that encouraged alternative ways of thinking about the text, for example through the inclusion of newspaper articles about the banning of videogames, prompted students to consider the impact of contextual factors which informed their understanding of the game. When this was accompanied by critical literacy questions, that have been developed for use with current subject-English texts (including: are there gaps of silence in the text? Who is missing? What has been left out? In whose interest is the text? Is the text fair? (Tasmanian Department of Education, n.d)), alternative readings emerged. Combining this kind of work with opportunities to play videogames in different ways (single/paired/multiplayer/online-offline) and for different purposes (to explore language, to build skills, to study genre, to develop knowledge) will create the changed conditions necessary for shifting students towards a more critical orientation to these texts.

Where multiple readings and playings offer emancipatory potential is in terms of raising and addressing issues of gender affecting participation and performance in the classroom. All students constructed gender in terms of the affordances and limitations of being a girl or boy in their out-of-school and in-study gaming practices. These constructions, in a dialectical relationship with other social, cultural and textual dispositions, caused some students to self-regulate away from contributing during classroom activities. Even students with strong videogame identities, such as Kate, were subject to the gendered social relations and spaces associated with the study. Other studies have demonstrated the capacity of videogames to liberate young people, and especially young women, from limited perceptions of gender through videogame play which meshes real-world and virtual identities (Beavis & Charles, 2007; Gee & Hayes, 2010). Yet, in contrast to the informal out-of-school contexts associated with the aforementioned studies, when this kind of textual work was brought into the formal learning environment of a classroom, a multitude of identity interplays (real-world identities with virtual identities, schooling identities with videogame identities, familial identities with textual identities) acted as obstacles for some students. Providing access to virtual characters and gameworlds for play and study throughout the intervention was not enough to overcome restrictive gendered norms meaning the learning benefits connected to videogame-learning, be they generated by Skills or Personal Growth pedagogies, could not be realised by all.

Challenging design

The study also found that unique design elements of videogames require dedicated teaching and learning which focusses attention on the relationships between the structure and style of these texts and their purpose. Analysis showed that students could discuss the relationship between game design and purpose, for example, Brad's examination of the multiple storylines discovered when playing *Mass Effect*, and Sharon's suggestion that the story of *Forza Motorsport 4* was in the room, as much as in the game. However, more explicit attention needed to be paid to this aspect of studying videogames. Other case-studies incorporating both game design and critical understandings of videogames have shown that critical literacy pedagogies can be used to focus attention and raise awareness of the effect of central design elements (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Buckingham & Burn, 2007). The critical, in this sense, is more than a reasoned analysis based on evidence and argument. It aims to shift the reader into understanding the complicity of the videogame's design in positioning audiences in particular ways. Pedagogy which considers the structure and style of the text and the effect of specific genres of videogames will become even more important as the ever-expanding diversity of videogame genres across multiple platforms and with various design affordances develop.

5.4 Cultural Heritage Model



Finding seven: Videogames are texts which provide access to culture and which facilitate the enrichment of the individual.

Finding eight: The selection of videogames for play and study, and the inclusion of videogame paratexts in support of this, requires careful consideration.

The Cultural Heritage view of English emphasises the value of great works of literature and the need for schools to lead children into an appreciation of that which has been regarded as the finest (Cox, 1989). Attitudes towards the form and function of literature within a Cultural Heritage model of subject-English have been shifting for some time, and no longer resemble that advocated by early exponents of this approach. Literature has been reconceptualised in such a way that considers culture as more than a single body of print-based literature which represents “the best which has been thought and said” (Arnold, 1869, p. 6). Space now exists for the study of a range of text-types. The notion that it is only through the canon that the civilising project of schooling can be achieved (Arnold, 1908; Holbrook, 1961; Leavis & Thompson, 1933) is challenged by findings from the study. The enriching effect which can be achieved with and through traditional texts is as equally attainable with videogames. Nourishment of the intellect and imagination of students should be sensitive to text-selection opportunities and limitations, whilst considering the ever-increasing role played by the paratexts which teachers use to develop understandings of the world. The study’s interest in issues of pedagogy and the effect they have on learning and teaching is paramount here.

Videogames as literature

While the term literature, in the context of subject-English, has commonly been used to refer to writers of the Great Tradition (Watson, 1994, p. 51), and as a means to help students understand the culture in which we live (Thomson, 2004b), challenges to these views have opened up space for subject-English to initiate young people into a diversity of cultural heritages via a range of texts. Contributions to the discourse over the past fifty years have been particularly important in shaping what can ‘count’ as literature today. Dixon’s (1975) summary of the events at Dartmouth recounts the difficulty in discriminating between ‘traditional’ literature and other stories, films, plays, or even the personal writings and spoken narratives. Eagleton’s (1983) writing on literary theory provides a more epistemic shift regarding literature as objective knowledge, arguing that this can no longer be considered the case because of “value judgements with their roots in social power relationships” (p. 11). Cox’s (1989) report on subject-English in England advocated expanding literature to include texts from different cultures and countries so as to value “a greater range of human thought and feeling” (p. 94), a view shared by Watson (1994) and Sawyer (2007) in their analyses of the

Australian context and the pressures of multiculturalism and post-modernity. These views help explain how it is possible that the Australian Curriculum defined texts to be studied within the Literature strand of English as including “written, spoken or multimodal and in print or digital/online forms” (ACARA, 2011a), and how the 2017 Senior Literature syllabus in Victoria (VCAA, 2016) mandates the study of at least one text from: film, radio, television, or a multimedia text. This shift in rhetoric opens literature to new texts and practices.

Data collected from students during the study showed a capacity to produce and reflect on understandings about *their* cultural world as a result of guided instruction with videogames. This supports an expanded definition of literature, and the value of a more inclusive view of culture. Students reflected on cultural knowledge from a range of videogames and how this knowledge informed their view of the world. This was evident in Kate’s discussion of *Sims*, Brad’s reflection on the appropriation of a female avatar from the *Princess Resurrection* game, and classroom talk associated with relationships of power in *Bully*. There is room for curriculum and classroom practice to establish a videogame canon that combines texts which reflect the cultures which students come from, as well as investigating videogames which have been established as offering a significant contribution to the field. Subjective lists produced by authorised sources which identify the top videogames of all time (such as IGN Magazine, Game Rankings, PCGamer, and Game Informer Magazine) represent a starting point for students and teachers to discuss ‘the best’ the field has to offer, and what these games legitimise in terms of culture.

Enriching the individual

Data from throughout the study demonstrated that the development of the individual is a goal that can be achieved when appropriate pedagogies are matched with carefully selected videogames. Contemporary videogames place gamers in fictional worlds often designed around reflective decision-making. When the actions associated with playing in these worlds were combined with learning activities, as was the case in the discussion and written reflection which occurred throughout the study, and in particular in relation to the game *Bully*, the learning which occurred resembled that which Leavis has said should typify Cultural Heritage work in English; namely: reflection on the values which determine, or should determine, the important choices of life (Leavis & Thompson, 1933). A key theme of Cultural Heritage has always been the enrichment of the individual through engagement with text. This view is evident in Arnold’s General Report of 1880, when he stated that “Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character” (as cited in Watson, 1994, p. 46). It is equally evident in Holbrook’s (1961) insistence on the civilising power of literature and its capacity to provide nourishment of the imagination. Videogames are texts which have the capacity to prompt reflection about values and judgement and which can be supported by

pedagogy. This was evident in the reflections offered by Brad regarding the social role videogames had in facilitating relationships within his family and friendship groups.

Text-selection and paratexts

Videogame text-selection for classroom study matters greatly. The narrow selection of games chosen for classroom learning in this project constructed a limited gaming environment. Due to game-rating restrictions, the most popular 'big-budget' games, usually containing the most affordances for play, were not utilised. This was compounded by the inability to consider PC-based games due to issues of access. Logistical challenges with internet and online connections meant that the online multiplayer component of games could not be harnessed. The most popular videogames today have the capacity to draw people from around the world together to play simultaneously in online environments, and to engage with these environments through well-designed and complex virtual characters. This type of practice did not materialise during the intervention due to the restricted infrastructure of the study, again constricting some possibilities for action necessary for projecting. When combined with the severely limited time which could be dedicated to gameplay throughout the study, the result was a context significantly different to that in which out-of-school gaming occurs. Furthermore, the very act of bringing an out-of-school textual practice which usually takes place without supervision, online, and with entertainment as its motive, into a classroom environment demonstrated a juxtaposition in context which produced different forms of practice. A more authentic attempt to engage with the cultural knowledge and practices affiliated with modern videogames required planning for these logistical hurdles and contextual differences, and a willingness to reshape the learning environment to accommodate videogame varieties.

Videogame cultures are extensively dependent on the paratexts which surround their practice. Given the emphasis within the Cultural Heritage approach on helping students to understand the history which has shaped the culture in which they live (Thompson, 1998, p. 18), including paratexts into the classroom is a necessity. This is a difficult task as the paratexts which inform gaming practices originate in fluid social spaces such as online forums, YouTube videos, massively multiplayer online worlds, and game-walkthroughs. These spaces tend to distribute power amongst many contributors and lack central organising authorities (Consalvo, 2009), quite unlike schools and traditional classrooms. Many of the social paratexts which controlled the reading and playing of videogames during the intervention represented static encounters. Similarly, the range of material paratexts used to develop understanding of these texts was limited (videogame trailers and front-covers representing two examples). It is difficult to determine what effect greater inclusion of paratexts may have had on assisting students to understand the videogames studied during the intervention, or the broader field of videogame culture. The very existence of paratexts, and how

they function as places of transition and transaction (Genette & Maclean, 1991), represented by popular culture and easily accessible digital texts, is at odds with those who believe that only a very small minority have access to the “finest human experience of the past” (Leavis, 1930, p. 3). These texts are the new Cultural Heritage and they will require greater attention in the classroom if the new ways of thinking about the possession and distribution of culture, and the route to values, principles and ethics which they encourage, are to be realised.

5.5 Bringing the models together

The organisation of the study’s findings into a *Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English* shows the complex relationships between these dominant paradigms of subject-English, and the importance of resisting a linear approach to such models (Green, 2016). For example, it is important to recognise the function Skills approaches play in facilitating the goals of other approaches to English. Personal Growth’s interest in the formation of students’ life worlds, and how their experiences can be explored and understood through texts, is bounded to the ability of that student to decode and comprehend these texts. The journey into self-knowledge and experience which Dixon advocates should be the goal of the English teacher (Dixon, 1975) is best achieved when students possess the skills, mechanical and social, and the metalanguage for such activity. Likewise, classroom learning which utilises videogames to reflect on texts in the world, and on what texts says about the world, reveals an ambition shared by supporters of Critical Literacy and Cultural Heritage. Videogames in this context provide the material for the growth of the mind, a response to culture which allows a “sense of the human situation and of the nature of life” (Leavis, 1930, p. 13). Reflecting on the thinking related to this textual activity is the equal concern of proponents of the Cultural and Critical.

The study also revealed tensions between the imperatives of the models when applied to videogame study. Those subscribing to Critical Literacy attitudes risk adopting a lens with which to study videogames that undermines the unconscious pleasure and fun associated with these texts, and associated with other popular culture texts (Misson & Morgan, 2006). Rather than creating space for pupils to meet to share experiences, to talk, and to gather new experiences (Dixon, 1975), a critical approach can minimise the videogame literacy experiences students bring with them to classrooms. Similarly, a critical approach to subject-English which values videogames based on the premise that for students to understand their world, they must engage with the texts of their world, especially popular culture forms which go beyond the printed text, is at odds with Cultural Heritage adherents who describe the prospects of mass culture as “very dark” (Leavis, 1930, p. 17). Videogame literacies

challenge, reinforce and push beyond the current work of English teachers, work which is always mediated by pedagogical imperatives. There are obvious challenges to applying existing pedagogies of English to the study of videogames, but also enormous opportunities to be found by bridging the gap between the models themselves, and then adapting these so that they can be appropriately applied to videogames-as-text.

Conclusion

This thesis began by introducing the work of Bowman (1982), who more than thirty years ago analysed the characteristics of one of the first popularly accessible videogames, *Pac-Man*, to contrast the learning and teaching this game encouraged with traditional schooling at the time. Bowman's critique of modern schooling, like Gee's *What videogames have to teach us about learning and literacy* (2007d), are part of the same political project. As with this study, they involve an analysis of the taken-for-granted, an attempt to reveal the naturalisation of human experiences through socialisation, and to develop understandings about the learning and teaching associated with text.

The questions

The path this project has taken is inseparable from the three phenomena which have informed it, and the research questions directed towards each of these phenomena, namely; young people's identities, videogames as texts, and pedagogy. Investigating the social reality at the intersection of these phenomena through a series of research questions, motivating the collection and analysis of data, and synthesising this analysis into a series of findings and concluding thoughts represents an exercise fraught with epistemological and ontological challenges, typical of all social research, but which paradoxically opens up new ways of talking and thinking about subject-English. New insights are essential if we are to seriously consider how to best prepare young people for future literacy practices. The question of English teaching in the new millennium has attracted great attention since the turn of the century (Beavis, 2006; Doecke, Homer, & Nixon, 2003; Durrant & Beavis, 2001b; Green, 2008; Luke, 2004; Sefton-Green & Nixon, 2003). The study's three research questions have focused on the role videogames have to play in this future and the impact this will have on students, teachers and future iterations of subject-English.

On the question of pedagogy, the study shows that the inclusion of videogames into subject-English requires a diversity of learning and teaching approaches. Skills, Personal Growth, Critical Literacy and Cultural Heritage models represent philosophies of studying texts in different ways. There is value in adopting imperatives underpinning these approaches as they are and applying them to the play and study of videogames. Playing and understanding videogames requires *skills*, of the decoding and the

social variety. Videogames are present in young people's life worlds, and students need spaces at school to share and talk about these experiences in ways which integrate language from home and school to synthesise knowledge and allow *personal growth*. As with all texts, videogames position gamers in particular ways, valuing some views, whilst silencing others. Students will need help to *critically* unpack these positionings. Finally, engaging with texts for the purpose of knowing and understanding *cultural heritage* and enriching the individual is a goal achievable through videogames. However, these four approaches only truly gain meaning when they are enacted in a context, and in partnership with texts. The unique features of videogames promote the adaption and innovation of these models.

On the question of intrinsic videogame practices which will impact on their study, we can conclude that while these texts do share features with other texts traditionally studied in English, there are distinct videogame practices. The interactive and immersive component of videogame practice impacts their realisation. Similarly, the socially-mediated performance of these texts, in terms of gameplay collaboration and affinity groups, are at odds with the often-solitary way that print-based texts are enacted. When combined with the highly multimodal nature of videogames, we are left with a text that demands new ways of conceptualising textual study in subject-English.

On the question of the projective identity capacity of videogames, we can conclude that Gee (2007d) was right; to an extent. Videogames do facilitate an interplay between real and virtual identities. At the nexus of this interplay is the projective identity, an opportunity for gamers to project their own values and desires onto virtual characters. However, the forces impacting on the ability of gamers to project are immense. In the context of school-classrooms, these forces include, but are not limited to, the influence of the teacher and their choice of pedagogies, the construction of the social space as a place for action, the structuring effect of histories of schooling, and the dispositions which students bring with them. The most important dispositions (school, gendered, and videogame identities) are implicated in the possible learning benefits achievable through meaningful projecting. While not all students are equally prepared to partake in projective identity work in the classroom, there is evidence that some will benefit from the opportunity for projecting.

The *Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English* organises the study's findings in response to the three research questions and lays the foundations for introducing videogame literacies into subject-English contexts, an activity which when combined with current subject-English pedagogies was revealed to provide the setting for rich and meaningful textual practice. Considering the diversity at the centre of the English classroom and the importance of continually rethinking English teaching and schooling in the context of shifting textual landscapes (Green, 2003;

Luke, 2004) the changes suggested by the model, and indeed the premise of this thesis, will have implications for students and teachers.

The implications of videogames in subject-English for students

Young people bring with them to school deep and complex identities which can be harnessed to create new learning potentialities. As the most recent survey of videogame play has demonstrated, videogame play has become highly popular in the twenty-first century (Brand & Todhunter, 2015). Time spent engaging and interacting in these digital environments produces dispositions about, and in preparation for, action in the social world. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of the identities associated with this form of practice and how these features of self can be harnessed through New Media texts so that learners are given opportunities to negotiate relationships between old and new identities, an idea advanced as a crucial step in learning (Gee, 1992, 1996).

For too long, educational institutions have acted as sites of cultural reproduction with a narrow vision of legitimate culture, the result being lost learning opportunities and the exclusion of many students. When the cultural capital recognised as legitimate in these classrooms expands, so to do the possibilities for the investment of 'self'. The texts schools choose to include or exclude open and close occasions for students to connect their out-of-school textual dispositions with in-school practices. If subject-English is to provide spaces for students to explore themselves and their place in the world, then an expansion so-called legitimate culture, to recognise the complex social, cultural, and textual influences of videogames, is needed.

Studying videogames in subject-English takes up the challenge of expanding young people's understandings of everyday life. The task of revealing, confronting, and reformulating meanings derived from text, and everything texts have to say about gender, family, work, race, etc., is an enormous one. For example, the benefits of working with students to critique and fracture the representations of gender in videogame protagonists might not be seen or known until long after such classroom work has occurred. However, challenging the reproduction of objectified practices which produce and maintain the habitus represents a symbolic revolution that is both possible and necessary. This revolution requires an "overthrow of the order of things" (Bourdieu, 1996a, p. 201), beginning here with the everyday texts that are consumed *en masse* by young people, yet challenged so infrequently outside of classrooms.

Working critically with texts risks diminishing the pleasure students experience during gaming. Misson and Morgan (2006) have warned that applying a critical literacy approach to texts that young

people engage with for fun and pleasure threatens the aesthetic experiences that draw people to texts in the first place. The critical threatens the seductive nature of these texts and the very essence which draws people to them in the first place – fun. In other words, the imperatives of Personal Growth and Critical Literacy approaches appear at odds here. Is it possible to critically engage home videogame literacies without undermining the pleasure students gain from these texts? Should teachers avoid this type of textual practice altogether? While there was no evidence of student dispositions towards videogames being more negatively orientated post-intervention in contrast to pre-intervention, there is the possibility that sustained application of critical pedagogies will impact on the joy students experience as a result of engaging with videogames.

Students are not a homogeneous group with equal levels of gaming capital that would make the inclusion of videogames into subject-English classrooms a place where projective-identity work was inevitable. Adopting neat descriptors that characterise all young people as digital natives (Prensky, 2001) ignores the complexity of practice associated with digital texts and ignores the diversity of skills and knowledge associated with any group of learners. Providing the means for students to mesh old and new identities is an admirable goal, but involves the challenge of navigating the diversity of dispositions which students bring with them to every learning context. While videogames give the impression that everything is possible, when placed in the context of a classroom, learning benefits will depend on many factors, not least of which is the delicate match-making exercise between dispositions embodied within the habitus and the rules and expectations of the field. Those who lack the requisite ways of talking, thinking and ‘doing’ videogames will struggle to partake in the strategies of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 66). This highlights the crucial role of teachers in helping to negotiate variations in habitus so that all students can enjoy the benefits of studying these texts.

The preparation of students for post-schooling success similarly requires consideration of the skills young people will need when they enter the workforce. Strategies for success in a twenty-first Century world will require more than training in print-based decoding. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Australian Education Council, 2008) argues for schooling which helps prepare students to “approach problem solving in new and creative ways” (p. 5). This is a goal which can be achieved through the combination of new technologies and explicit pedagogies. The latter will require further research to investigate whether other twenty-first century skills, such as metacognition, creativity, learning to learn, ICT literacy and information literacy (Griffin, 2011) can similarly be developed through engagement with New Media texts in subject-English contexts.

Lastly, the study's validation of a diversity of cultural capital challenges whether the Western Canon offered by past iterations of Cultural Heritage is sufficient for the development of students. Along with existing literature which has found that role-playing games provide an environment for the development of critical and ethical reasoning skills (Simkins & Steinkuehler, 2008), consider the following examples of recently released videogames⁶⁰ as possibilities for enriching students:

- *Life is Strange* (2015): an emotional narrative-driven game where the gamer plays as a girl who attends a competitive, private art-school, and who has the ability to rewind time. The result is a butterfly effect, a ripple in time, that affects subsequent events in the game.
- *That Dragon, Cancer* (2016): based on the true story of Joel, a four-year-old boy with terminal cancer. Other characters have blank polygon faces which serve to invite players to empathetically project themselves onto the story.
- *1979 Revolution Black Friday* (2016): set in Tehran, Iran, this political dystopian thriller includes multiple-choice conversation trees and a protagonist who can be controlled to take photos during the game which reveal real-world primary source images from the Iranian Revolution.
- *Firewatch* (2016): set in a fictional national park, players assume the role of Henry, whose tragic backstory has led him to live alone in the woods, and whose only contact with the outside world is via walkie-talkie.

These texts provide rich stimulus material for reflection. They contain stories and themes which require students to reflect on who they are and what they value. The games represent cultural realities which students will face in their lifetime. Contrary to those criticising the inclusion of popular culture texts into literature study (Donnelly, 2008; Wiltshire, 2010), the stories in these games, and the textual forms in which they appear, represent stories ripe for moral and spiritual development.

[The implications of videogames in subject-English for teachers](#)

Adult anxiety about the 'newness' of videogames, and their capacity to engage absolutely, is not sufficient justification for ignoring these texts and their associated practices. With change comes anxiety, and a disparity between teacher identities and the new forms of text has the capacity to produce considerable angst. Salen's (2008b) argument about change is apt. She says that despite our desire to change the way that learning and thinking occurs in classrooms, we are limited by old

⁶⁰ These game summaries were produced by Farber (2016) in an online magazine article titled *Using Games for Serious Learning in High School*.

tensions which pit the real against the virtual, the in-school against the out-of-school, the formal and the informal. The concerns about videogame mirror these same tensions. At a time when questions of student-engagement continue to be asked and attention focussed on those students disengaged from schooling (Gallup, 2015; Thomson et al., 2013), playing with virtual characters, in digital worlds, and inviting students to become a part of the narrative construction and enactment is a positive outcome for students that will be impacted by each teacher's ability to reconcile their professional identity within a version of subject-English that is changing. Goodwyn (2011) refers to this as a process of identity reformation that must be treated as both necessary and ordinary.

Teachers need to be supported in the work they do with students to understand their textual worlds. Schemas such as the *Framework for Videogames in Subject-English* articulate one way forward for teachers. It can be conceptualised as a tool which allows teachers to adapt and adjust what they already know about their craft so that it is better suited to new and emergent technologies. The framework itself will change depending on each teacher's repertoire of practice and the contexts in which they operate. As with other research establishing models for teaching with and through videogames (Apperley & Beavis, 2013; Apperley & Walsh, 2012; Salen, 2007), it will be through practice that teachers make sense of the potential of these texts. One challenge they will most certainly face, moving forward, will be how to respond to changes in the design and function of videogames which will inevitably arise as technologies related to videogame production advance.

The rapid advancement of technologies which enhance graphic representations, as well as increasing access to virtual reality devices, will accelerate experiences of narrative in immersive digital environments, prompting teachers to re-evaluate how they arrange time and space to accommodate the 'play' of this form of textual practice within the confines of institutionalised schooling. The lack of time available for videogame play suggests planning for play will need to be prominent if the reported benefits of active learning (Dewey, 1938; Gee, 2007d; Lave, 1991, 1996) and transformational play (Barab et al., 2010) are to be fully realised.

What matters most in student learning is teacher effectiveness (Hattie, 2011). In the videogame-orientated subject-English classroom this is closely tied to content-knowledge associated with videogame literacies. However, if teachers are not properly prepared for rigorous and authentic classroom instruction, then a focus on videogames may achieve little more than increased engagement. The increasing production of educational resources to support the use of videogames in classrooms more broadly is positive. Likewise, the increase in the number of presenters at literacy conferences speaking about the integration of videogames in schools, at least within Australia, as well as the development of models aimed at conceptualising how teachers should navigate such

integration, such as Apperley and Beavis' (2013) *Model for Critical Games Literacy*, represent good starting points. However, teachers can go further, familiarising themselves with a range of popular videogames, the paratexts which surround them, and engaging with these texts through play in the same way that they would any other text selected for study. Confidence in their own videogame literacies is a precondition to supporting student learning.

The 'how' of teaching and learning with videogames remains the area requiring the most immediate further research. This will require further development in terms of: interactivity, game creation, ICT skills, and supporting projecting. In response to interactivity, there will be implications for teachers at a planning level as they consider how to record and collect material-resources which support comprehension, given the fluid nature of unfolding narratives. At the classroom level, this will require attention to the reframing of notions like text and textual practice with students. An emphasis on game creation and ICT skills raises questions about the preparedness of teachers to offer explicit instruction to support students in these areas, especially given that the majority of subject-English practitioners have received undergraduate specialisations in literary and linguistic methods of analysis (Patterson, 2000b). They will need professional development to gain the skills and knowledge in this area. Lastly, the 'how' of teaching with projective identity work as an objective will be challenging. Despite the arguments of those theorising and reflecting about the projective capacity of videogames in educational contexts (Gee, 2007c, 2007d, 2008; Unsworth, 2006), rarely has this aspect of gameplay been researched in the context of classroom learning. More work is needed to establish what teachers can do to establish the ideal environments for playing with identities and enhancing the conditions for students to experience relevant learning opportunities. It is only through navigating the theory and practice nexus, or the 'why' with the 'how', that teachers will come to understand a pathway to videogames in English.

Final thoughts

Subject-English has undergone substantial change since Mackaness' (1928) audit of English teaching in England in 1928 revealed that for each week, English was allotted a half period for grammar, half for the novel, one for composition, one for poetry, and two for Shakespeare. As recently as 1990, Watson and Davis' (1990) analysed the current challenges facing English in Australia and identified the major issues as including: the teaching of reading, the place of literature, censorship, the teaching of writing, speaking and listening, and criteria for language development. The only reference to digital technologies was a passing reference to the role of word processing (p. 17). Since the turn of the century, the prevalence of published resources aimed at subject-English, with titles such as P(ICT)ures of English (Durrant & Beavis, 2001b) and New Literacies in the English Curriculum

(Unsworth, 2008b), reflect an ongoing redefinition of what subject-English should look like in a twenty-first century world.

New Media texts which play an important part in young people's lives and are symbolic of broader technological shifts are redefining what matters in subject-English. Beavis' (2013b) claim that videogames and gameplay are the epitome of multiliteracies in the wild, due to the multidimensionality of these texts, is also a warning to those seeking to tame the latest digital textual forms which "inhabit and are shaped by the out of school, leisure-time contexts in which they are played" (p. 59). Three characteristics of these New Media texts provide examples of the type of subject-English work that will need to be accommodated. Firstly, forms of practice associated with socially mediated gameplay suggest that the design of these texts provides many opportunities for gamers to work together to co-construct their textual experience. Secondly, the textual interactive and immersive potentials that challenge traditional author/reader paradigms encourage learner-participation in extended engagement. Thirdly, common ways of thinking, talking, acting and valuing associated with videogame practice provide the material for affinity groups to form, populated by master and apprentice relationships (Gee, 2007d, p. 227). These practices are a challenge to the order of things, and encourage us to re-evaluate existing models of subject-English and their appropriateness for a twenty-first century World.

Today, there are more forces acting on subject-English than ever before. A renewed emphasis on back-to-basics and print literacy has manifest in standardised testing and accountability which has forced itself into the subject-English space with often negative consequences (Brass, 2015a; Frawley & McLean Davies, 2015). Simultaneously, techno-cultural change, the question of twenty-first century skills (Griffin et al., 2012) and the mandating of digital competencies in the curriculum (ACARA, 2015) have also played out within the discipline area. When these are combined with historical models of subject-English which are themselves distinct and often in competition against each other (Macken-Horarik, 2014), and the evolving out-of-school literacy practices of young people, what is left is a subject with the appearance of a schizophrenic sense of itself.

The integration of new technologies need not be a threat to the subject, but in fact, it can enhance the great work English teachers are already doing with text, and suggest some new ways forward. This project responds to those calls for introspection. It responds to those who have variously invited: engagement with new perspectives (Boomer & Green, 1988), reimagining and remaking the subject (Durrant & Beavis, 2001a; Green, 2001), being attentive to the "substance and method of producing histories of English" (Patterson, 2002, p. 45) reassembling the field (Luke, 2004), and

affirming the possibilities of English as a project for the future (Doecke, Howie, & Sawyer, 2006). What counts as subject-English should always be answered with a firm gaze towards the future.

English and literacy educators will continue to negotiate a path through, in-between, and past the texts that have dominated classroom teaching for so long. As Ryan (2001) says, we would do well to adopt an attitude that is “an alternative to both the rapturous celebrations of digital literature and Luddite laments for the book that have greeted the recent explosion of information technologies” (pp. 11-12). The findings emanating from this study are important not because they offer generalizable statements that can be applied universally to all educational contexts, but rather because of what the collected data highlights about the lack of homogeneity within one such social space. The subject-English classroom is a place of diversity: a diversity of texts, a diversity of textual abilities, a diversity of pedagogical potentialities, and a diversity of dispositions differently predisposed for investment. We want all students to be able to benefit from the “profits of distinction” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 250) that result from learning and teaching with texts in these spaces. In his defence of English, Misson (2006) argues that the reason English has been constructed as enormously complex these days is because it reflects the complexities of texts in the world. A *Framework for Videogame Literacies in Subject-English* represents the opportunities and challenges associated with just one of these texts and the need to continue to challenge what the subject is on about. We would do well to remember that the habitus is a product of history (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). If we accept that we are preparing today’s students for a world of textual practice vastly different to that which dominated much of the 20th century, then we must consider how the texts and pedagogies of subject-English can change to produce new dispositions orientated to future literacy practice.

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Appendix A: Videogames used during the study



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Appendix B: Table of Game Introductions

Alicia game introductions

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza	Dungeon siege
text	Title Introduction to game and company Bold Signs School name (wasn't much)	Plot Name of town Setting Not m	Brand of cars logos	Text of voice over About empires and rulers and the town
visuals	Lighting Screen shots Scenery Flash forwards panning	Light and dark grey clouds above town Dark village Girls standing around fire and snow Panning over landscape Lights on in town	Snap shots Of cars Racetracks Footage of racing cars	Looks like pages of a book Colours of brown yellows and black dark
dialogue	Attitude Tone Sarcastic Plot	Plot Old English voices How they Felt	Talking about love of cars and how they sit in our society. Voice over Emotive language	About empires and rulers and the town Voice over Serious (sad and optimistic)
music	Repetitive Little bells Soft Simple	Choir Eerie	Subtle car noises	Minimal Low soft

Brad game introductions

Techniques	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4
Name of the game	Bully	Fable 2	Forza	Dungeon siege 3
Texts	Setting the area (Bullsworth), Shows the nature of the characters. Not a heavy text game.	The font and style of the games name, is sort off fancy and curly; an old or fantasy like. Gives the instructions.	Car brands and logos, promoting cars and differences.	Lets people see the words being said. The words include commas and dots (...) to indicate pauses.
Visuals	Playable areas of the school, senary and style of the area. Shows the school at the end, with ats total are a shown.	Following the bids path, you can see the area of the world. Kind of like an open world games from the looks of things. Very dark area, with small sections of sunlight	Shows short snapshots or cut scenes of cars racing, and various parts of the cars. Most of the cars racing have something to do with speed. I think the game isto let people race, when they cannot in the real world.	Sort of like a story book. The images are slowly moving in a direction, letting the eyes wander over the whole image and take it all in. The images match what is being said by the narrator.
Dialog	Sets the characters, and a basic plot.	Tells you who you are (A sister), sets your character,	The game is made to be really realistic, as the narrating voice said, it's a place to race, a safe haven for those who want to race at top speed and 'burn rubber'.	The narrator reads out the text that is shown on the screen, putting the emotion into the words. He includes the viewer at the end by stating the veiws role in the game (The last of an empire).
Music	Kinda like school bells, almost a mischivous sound.	Serious music, sounds serious	Wasn't any main music, perhaps a partiotic track playing faintly in the background.	Serious music, with almost a doom and gloom tinge to it.

Cam game introductions

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza4	Dungeon siege3
Text	Company Highlights start of letters Introducing location	The text comes straight from the start. Introducing the location of starting point.	Logos	History before the game happened to get you to date on what's been happening.
Visual	Cartoon world Based at a school Lighting	Cartoon world/realist factors to it Smooth edges Lighting	Real life world Lighting Effects to show the wether	Cartoon world Lighting Colours Smooth edges
Dialog	Sciatic wording Harsh words Tone Plot	Cheerful wording	Voice over Proud words The use strong words to gain action.	Voice over Sad voice Hopeful voice
Music	Cheeky music	Strange music	Sound effects	Sad music

Harley game introductions

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza 4	Dungeon Siege 3
Text	Very bold text, only stating what you need to know	- Introducing the location - Clues of what is going to happen during the gameplay - Text for direction	Different brands of car interior and actual cars	- Subtitles - Plain white lettering - History written down
Visuals	Wide Panning Camera View	- Bird travelling a long distance, hinting an adventure tale - Cartoony fantasy	- Real life footage - Using weather, sunny happy positive weather - Fast snapshots	- Drawings of a war and after during their rebuild - storybook
Dialog	- Sarcastic comment - Anger in voices	- Introducing characters - Poor children wishing of a better life	- Introducing the game as a way of living - Using a famous person from the car racing world - Speaking very proudly and emotionally	- Old wise man talking to you as the character - Fear and pride in his voice - Voiceover
Music	Simple little repetitive tune	Grand music	- More car motors than music - Wheels screeching	A mystic choir as you would find in a fantasy movie

Kate game introductions

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza 4	Dungeon Siege 3
Text	Words to introduce the game (company). Very little text, mainly used for the title. Bold. Different signs Gives us a name.	To set the scene and story. Very little text. Introduces location. Gives you direction.	Logos on cars, Almost no text,	Subtitles showing everything that is said, '...' to show pauses. Enforces what is being said, Like a history book intro, Text in a book being read out.
Visuals	Show different places (future settings). Cartoon world (not completely realistic) Bright lighting. (tells us what it's not)	Darkish, sets mood of different places, Smooth edged looking animation,	Uses real cars and footage, Flashing clips & no long sequences (it's a fast game), Bright colours, Positive setting	Images showing events, Not animation, They look hand painted, Don't get much of an idea of the animation, Dark and light for different events, Brown colours like old things,
Dialogue	Sets up the characters. Basic plot. Angry, loud, sarcastic voices.	Explains characters (learn relationship), Kind voices (English accents), Sets up gameplay,	Real people talking to you, Proud and very passionate, Emotive language, Someone who knows about cars (from Top Gear)	Voice over telling a story of the past. Tells you who you are, Serious and sad tone,
Music/sounds	Slow, simple, repetitive, soft, cheeky. School bells.	Epic, mysterious, serious, adventurous.	Used when logos pop up, Mostly sound of cars and engines, Tells you about the game, Little or no music,	Soft, dark, sad, mysterious, Sound effects from the scenes shown in pictures (birds cawing)

Rachel game introductions

	Bully	Fable 2	Forza	Dungeon Siege
Text	Title Company name School name Game company Font Signs	Plot Information Name of town Setting Not much text At the start Intro Directions	Logos Subtle Small	Dialogue of voice over
Visuals	Lighting Scenery Screen shots Flash forwards Style of imagery	Lighting Colour Dark areas and light areas Scenery Fire Overview of the whole area	Snap shots Cars Tyres Race tracks Real footage Sunny weather	Picture Drawings Lighting Dark/light Not a lot of colour
Dialogue	Attitude Tone Sarcastic Basic plot/ story	Old English Plot Characters dreams & wishes Gives an idea of where the story is going- to the castle. Characters relationship	Voice over. Informative Cars and racing Exploring Person form top gears voice Emotive language	Informative History Different people in the area Voice over Serious
Music	Repetitive Bells Soft Quite simple	High pitched Changes sound level throughout choir	Engines Volume level changes.	Low volume Dark music

Appendix C: Videogames Genre and Story Comprehension Answers

Alicia

1. How is genre created differently in video games compared to novels?

Genre is created mostly by text in Novels where as video games use visuals dialogue and music.
To set a genre

2. Why is genre important in a text?

It is important because it sets a scene or image so we can get a good Idea of surrounding characters voices and it won't just be plain text

3. Which story is the most interesting to you why?

Fable 2 because it doesn't give me a pacific story, it looks as though it would be more interactive.

4. Should we study video games why? Why not?

Yes we should study video games as they are marketed for around our age group making them more interesting to study. Plus I think we would be more likely to be interested in studying them compared to novels as they are interactive.

Brad

Q1 How is genre created differently in video games compared to novels?

It is created mainly using visual images and sound, things a novel or a simple piece of writing cannot do. The games generally let the players see the areas of the game, so they can get a rough idea of the setting. From there, most players can assume what the game is about, and generally connect the dots about what genre it is without even realising it.

Q2 Why is genre important in a text

It sets up the framework for the story . The story generally follows the genre closely, and the developers can use the genre as a guide line. And example of this is a game called fear. As the title suggests, it is a horror game. The developers keep finding new ways to scare the player, going way past strange and horrible things that jump out from around corners. If things did just continue to jump out, the gamer would begin to expect it, and therefore, the fear element and genre of the game would be pointless.

Q3 which story is the most appealing to you, and why?

I would say that the story of *Bully* is the most interesting to me. I have never played a game with such a strange concept. Like most games, the game is made to let people do things that they shouldn't do in the real world, such as bullying. The game intrigues me, to step into the shoes of the bad guy. In most games, you are automatically a good guy, set to save the world or simular things. That or you have to make decisions and choose if you want to save the world or doom it. But with this game, you are automatically the bad guy, set to be a bad guy. Although I generally prefer First person view over Third person view, I still think the game has potential and is a solid change from most games in the gaming industry.

Q4 Should we study video games?

Definitely. I might be a little biased due to the fact that I do enjoy video games, but I think that they are way more interesting to study than just simple books or movies. They have all of the traits a book and a movie has plus more, and is fun to play. There are countless things to study about one simple game, and I think that they can really teach you things that movies or books cannot.

Cam

- 1) How is genre created differently in video game then novels?

Genre is created differently because it uses visual, music and interaction as well, instead of just music and visual.

- 2) Why is genre important in a text

Genre is import in texts because they are main factor that creates themes. The main point to genre is to make the story as interesting as possible for the gamer and for him/her to be able to choice which games he/she would like to play though choosing a genre.

- 3) Which story is the most interesting to you and why?

The game that most interest me is *Dungeon Siege 3*. It has captured because I have never heard of this game before and it has a really interesting starting clip. Unlike most games this has no real starting clip instead it has book with pictures which moves across to show the story.

- 4) Should we study video games?

Yes I do think we should study video games. We already study lots of texts in English but a lot of the people get bored with this, so to be able to get the interested you need to find a way of them to enjoy the experience, this is where videos games come in. almost everyone has played and enjoyed them so why not study them. They have a story, they have themes and genres just like movies and books. They are just like any other text but instead the student will enjoy studying them instead of getting bored and doing a bad job of it.

Charlie

1. How is genre created differently in video games compared to novels?

Genre is created differently in video games compared to novels because you need aren't introduced to the genre in a specific way as you are in a novel, as in a novel you read the blurb and can see the genre by only text. In a novel you have to use the music, text, visuals, dialog and also interactivity to discover the actual genre of the whole game

2. Why is genre important in a text?

Genre in a text is important because if there was none it would not make sense and be hard to understand what you are reading, also most people decide what to read through genre and if there was none it would be nearly impossible to choose what to read.

Even without knowing you create a genre in a book so it would be difficult to not have one.

3. Which story is the most appealing to you? Why?

The *Bully* story is most interesting to me because I have played it before and know I enjoyed it when

It first came out, but if I had not played any before It would be *Dungeon Siege* because that is the usual genre of games I play and enjoy.

4. Should we study video games? Why or why not?

I think we should study video games because it would give kids a chance to get more interactive with what they are learning and would keep a lot more kids interested with the classes that are doing it.

Kate

1. How is genre created differently in video games compared to novels?

In novels, genre is created partially by the image on the cover of the book, but mainly by the type of language that is used. The way things are described and explained, the way the character talks and the names of people, places and things are very important in novels when creating the genre. In video games, all of these things are used, but there is more than just that. Video games use the visuals, the animation and the sound to create the genre. If the lighting is dark then most of the time, something is bad. It's just like creating a genre in a movie only you can involve the player much more and text can be used more to help set the scene. The type of animation that is used can help show whether something is going to be action packed and fast, or soft and gentle.

2. Why is genre important in a text?

Genre is important in a text to help set up the story and tell the reader/watcher/player how they should be feeling about what is going on and what they can expect the story to be like. It gives them an idea of the sort of events that are going to happen and what sort of characters are going to be involved. In a novel, the genre helps tell the viewer what sort of world the events are happening in. Is it modern day or is it a completely made up world? In other texts, this aspect is not *as* important in video games and movies and you have the visual there to guide you, but the story would still make no sense if you couldn't tell at the beginning that you were playing a fantasy game or watching a fantasy movie. Genre gives the characters and story context.

3. Which story is the most appealing to you and why?

I'm almost tempted to say that the story lines of '*Bully*' or '*Forza 4*' seem most appealing (although the racing car game doesn't actually have a story). They seem very simple and entertaining. However the story of '*Dungeon Siege 3*' seems very interesting and it makes me want to find out what the game will be like to play. I really don't know, although I know that the story line of '*Fable 2*' seems very dull... I think that it was partly the way the characters moved and how their voices seem detached... It made it seem less interesting than the others.

4. Should we study video games? Why/why not?

Video games are such a big part of our world these days. Good ones have proper storylines with morals and aspects that you can study. It's just like studying a movie really, only you can interact with it and sometimes change the story with your actions. I'm not sure if we *should* study video games, but it is definitely something that we could do. There are lots of people who would be much more interested and engaged when studying video games than books or movies and they may be able to focus more on the work. Games can provide good lessons or tell stories just as well as any book.

Rachel

1. How is genre created differently in video games compared to novels?

In a novel genre is created with text and sometimes images throughout the book or on the cover. In a video game genre is created by a range of different things, like lighting and colours, if the picture is darker it means that the story will have more darkness in it. The Characters Attitude (body language) and appearance help as well as it helps determine their personality and therefore their actions. Text and dialogue indicated the story line. And the music helps set the scene.

2. Why is genre important to the text?

Genre is important to the text because it helps set the story line making it easier to follow as you play the game or read the novel. It broadens your knowledge and understanding of the history and background of the text.

3. Which story is the most appealing to you and why?

The Story which is most appealing to me is *Forza* because it looks fun and interesting giving you the chance to race cars. It gives you the real experience.

4. Should we study video games, why or why not?

Yes we should because images and more interactive texts tend to interest us more. I still think we should study text but perhaps video games as well as they will challenge our minds in different ways. They give us different aspects to study than a novel does.

Appendix D: News Articles about banning Bully

Bully game dropped from UK shops

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6063502.stm>

A video game depicting playground violence has been banned from some UK shops.

Bully, known in the UK as Canis Canem Edit, will not be stocked in Currys or PC World.

A spokesman for parent company DSG International said the videogame was not in keeping with its "family-friendly image".

Questions have been asked about the game in the House of Commons and children's charities have condemned it.

In the US there have been attempts to have it banned in some states.

Florida lawyer Jack Thompson had argued that Bully - a PlayStation 2 title developed by Rockstar Games - was a "Columbine simulator". A judge decided against a ban earlier this week.



Images from the game have shocked anti-bullying campaigners

Sensitive issue

The decision to ban the game from stores under the DSG International umbrella is "very unusual" according to spokesman Hamish Thompson.

"We took a view that because it touches on a sensitive issue - violence in school - that it is not a product we would stock," he said.

"We are committed to a good working relationship with Rockstar Games and will continue to stock all of its other titles," he added.

These include Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, which has also been the subject of controversy due to its depiction of violence.

In recent years DSG International has withdrawn two other games, Hitman and Manhunt.

"We decided to take them off our shelves. There was a lot of tabloid focus on them. With Hitman, there were religious sensitivities," explained Mr Thompson.

The Bully game - which carries a 15-certificate in the UK - shows a character defending himself from school bullies. Tackling the bullies and stopping them from picking on other children is a key feature of the game.

It is due to be released on 27 October and anyone wanting to get their hands on the title will not have too much difficulty as other UK stores including Game, HMV and Woolworths, will all stock it.

Judge clears Bully game release

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6054262.stm>

A US judge has rejected attempts to ban videogame Bully in Florida, after complaints it was a "public nuisance".

Judge Ronald Friedman said that violence in the school-based game did not mean it was a nuisance.

The attempt to ban the title was made by lawyer Jack Thompson, a well-known campaigner against what he believes are violent video games.

"There's a lot of violence," Judge Friedman said. "A whole lot. Less than we see on television every night."



The game is set in an American private school

A spokesman for developers Rockstar said the game, called Canis Canem Edit in the UK, had a teen-only rating in the US and a 15 rating in the UK.

The BBC News website was shown an unfinished copy of the game. In it, the main character has to defend himself from school bullies as well as form alliances with different cliques in the school.

Tackling the bullies and stopping them from picking on other children is a key feature of the game.

'Columbine simulator'

Mr Thompson said the game should not be sold to young teenagers, calling it a "Columbine simulator", in reference to fatal shootings carried out by two students at a high school in Colorado in 1999.

The judge did not offer a ruling, saying he would consider the matter further if Mr Thompson wanted a hearing after the game was released.

The game goes on sale in the US on Tuesday and in the UK on Friday.

Mr Thompson told Miami newspapers that he did not plan to continue his campaign against Bully.

On Wednesday, the judge ordered the game's publisher Take-Two to give him a copy of the game, along with someone to play the game for him to watch before he made a decision.

"You did not see the game," Mr Thompson told the judge at Friday's hearing. "You don't even know what it was you saw."

Mr Thompson criticised the decision to have an employee take him through the game, arguing he could have avoided making violent choices.

MP attacks school bullying game

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4380020.stm

A video game featuring school bullying must be treated in the same way as a violent film, an MP has said.

Former Labour minister Keith Vaz urged the government to refer Bully, which has a pupil fight scene, to the British Board of Film Classification.

Failing that, it should be banned, he told the House of Commons.

Bully's publisher, Rockstar Vancouver, said the game, not yet released, would be an "engaging story" and products should not be "judged by their titles".

'Make changes'

Mr Vaz, MP for Leicester East, asked Commons leader Geoff Hoon: "Do you share my concern at the decision of Rockstar to publish a new game called Bully in which players use their on-screen persona to kick and punch other schoolchildren?"

"Will you ask the prime minister to refer this video to the British Board of Film Classification? If they don't make any changes will the government use its powers to ban this video?"

Mr Hoon said the game's distributors had yet to put it to the BBFC to consider an appropriate rating.

The precise contents, "disturbing though they sound", and the degree to which it might be considered harmful to children were "not yet known", he added.

A screenshot from Bully shows three uniformed pupils fighting.

One of them can be seen kicking a classmate in the back, while a third looks on with his fists clenched.

Liz Carnell, director of the charity Bullying Online, said: "Our view is that bullying is not a joke. It is not a suitable subject for computer games."

Giving Bully an 18-rating would not stop children playing it, she said.

'Real life'

A Rockstar Games spokesman said: "We support and admire the groups who are working hard to address the long-standing problem of bullying.

"We all have different opinions about art and entertainment, but everyone agrees that real-life school violence is a serious issue which lacks easy answers.

"Bully is still a work-in-progress, but when it's finished we believe most people will agree it offers an exciting experience and tells an engaging story.

"More and more people are beginning to recognise that the stories in video games have as many themes and plotlines as books and movies.



A school called Bullworth Academy features in the video game



Mr Vaz said the game could be banned

"Just as books aren't judged by their covers, video games shouldn't be judged by their titles or individual scenes."

The game would be "submitted to the appropriate bodies" to be rated, he added.

Roger Bennett, director general of the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association, said: "As Mr Vaz knows, any game can be automatically referred to the BBFC for a rating.

"It is disingenuous to suggest any game be banned when the content has yet to be finalised."

He added: "Every game published in the UK carries an age rating on the box, providing guidance to ensure that consumers can make informed choices when buying games, in the same way as one would buy a film or take guidance on post-watershed TV viewing."

Appendix E: Bully Comprehension Answers

Adam

How does Bully explore power?

Bully shows the social hierarchy that exists in a school and how the headmaster has the most power, ~~and~~ down to the nerds and pushovers who are controlled by the bullies.

Brad

How does Bully explore power?

As the player, you have the power to choose how to use your character. You have the power to be good or evil. (Sidenote- ~~Power~~ Power can be easily replaced with the word 'choice', or 'choices'). The game allows the player to be powerful, to change who Jimmy is with a few choices. He or she can base Jimmy ~~off~~ ^{on} themselves, or anyone they like, even the opposite of who they are. It almost lets the gameplayer play a good, choosing what fate awaits who they want.

Harley

How does Bully explore power?

Bully explores power ~~through~~ by showing all the different groups throughout the school and their level of power. The principle has the most power in the game as he controls all the students and prefects no matter how rebellious the students become. The game shows Jimmy's rise to power as he fights with all the different groups and tries to become the most feared bully in school. The game gives you the choice of having power or being controlled by other powers, such as other bullies.

Sharon

topkins?

How does 'Bully' explore power?

* by illustrating ^{dis}rebellion against authorities, it explores ideas about who really holds power in the school.

* Also, the power of responsibility for actions, and the power to choose what's what.

Kate

How does Bully explore power?

Bully shows the different people who can hold power over us and what gives them the power (big, strong, small).

It shows different ways you can ~~use~~ use the power that you have over people and how you can abuse that power without really realising it.

It gives you the choice. Lets you decide how you want to play. You are given the power to control the character of Jimmy.

Rachel

How Does Bully Explore Power?

Bully explores power through the majority of the characters.

Some which use their power for good others use

there power for bad. Jimmy uses his power for both good and bad depending on the situation.

The headmaster uses his power for bad, he looks down upon the students and controls them.

The school bullies use their power for bad manipulating the vulnerable students. Power is

shown through authority. The game player

has power of some decisions, wheather to fight or apologize and help people or not.

Appendix F: List of pre-intervention Guiding Questions

1. Are you a gamer? What kind of gamer are you?
2. How often would you play and what kind of games?
3. Why do you think some games might appeal to you or might attract you more than other games?
4. Have you got any particular consoles?
5. Are there particular genres that you think that might interest you more than other, game genres or even story genres?
6. What about the idea of studying games in English?
7. And how do you think we can do study games? What kind of activities can we do that might be useful, remembering what school is supposed to do or what you think it is supposed to do?
8. Okay and that leads me to English and what you think of English. Are you a reader?
9. What kind of books do you read?
10. How would you describe yourself as an English student?
11. What would a typical English classroom look like? What are the typical activities in an English classroom?
12. What about some of the assessment that you might have done this year or that's usually done in English-type classes?
13. What do you think about when you think of words like narrative or stories?
14. Are there particular characters that you have been drawn towards, whether it's films or stories or books?
15. Why did you sign up to be involved?

Appendix G: List of post-intervention individualised Questions - Kate

Overall Questions⁶¹

What was your overall impression of the study?

Was it what you thought it would be?

How about the difference between Activities done during class (examples) vs gameplay moments?

What would you change about a unit on vgs?

Questions about Power and Bully

Question of whether games like Bully are useful educationally?

Question on power. Cam said Bully explores power cos it shows how much peoples influence over others is another form of power. Is it you that has power over Bully, the game makers over you, me over you, or something else?

Cam said “we need power to feel good about ourselves”, link this to the popularity of gaming? What about power from schooling? What about power from reading?

Giving advice while Cam played Bully minigames. No story in the Bully mini games, maybe a story outside of the game, what kind of story? Explain?

In the identity section of the Bully , you mention a whole range of things that represent you, how big a part is gaming? How much does it influence you compared to some of the others?

Questions about Story

Reading videogames: Introduction activity looking at the intro of several games, what do you think The techniques used to create the opening scene and genre of games? Is this a form of reading?

Symbolism in game? Reading?

Impressed by choice of characters, are the games with recognisable elements easier to play or make sense of? Why?

During car-racing Kate said “There is no story. One player is winning and one is losing”. Isn’t this the plot of most stories? A winner and a loser?

Everyone chose the nerds to be out of the different niche groups. Why? Is the portrayal of different groups important here?

Activity comparing visual to audio effects in both *Fable 2* and *Halo 3*, it this a form of reading? Meaning making? Does this matter that much to understand what is going on?

Is there a connection between being familiar with games and enjoying them more?

⁶¹ Questions and notes in this section were recorded as the intervention progressed and in anticipation of the teacher-researcher taking on the role of interviewer post-intervention. It was for this reason that an informal writing style was adopted with regards to grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Questions about Multiplayer Sessions

Almost no talking during the car-racing game after initial controls figured out. Why is this?

Only control or power was over direction and speed?

Adam said, 'there was a big difference between multiplayer and single player cos you talk about direction. How could we apply this to novels etc?

Types of interactivity in gameplay, Fable2?

Adam said "girls don't seem to enjoy it as much". Is this the case?

Boys vs girls issue, girls seemed more distant, why is this? Stereotypes?

(Sharon responded with, it's not our whole lives), boys got defensive, why?

Questions about impressions of the *Halo 3* session?

Notes from *Halo 3* session:

Harley – stopped the game to invert his controls. A technical skill. ?

Competition amongst the boys for the lead, less so amongst the girls. Why?

Boys happy to ask for instructions and help to others, despite the fact they are already experts. Girls very quiet about asking for help. Why?

Split to cars and choosing colours, change of mood amongst the girls. Why?

Notes about Kate's involvement during the intervention.

Pre-intervention Interviews

Doesn't play that often, was obsessed for while.

In Sims you get to make the people, making them do what you want.

I like the ones where you don't have to followed the story.

I like dark things, like Batman, more intriguing and interesting.

Good idea to study in English. Cos ppl do find stuff to interact with more, and easier to learn from, rather than imaging or not being able to take part in.

Games with lessons, with a purpose are better for school, not just going around and killing for the sake of it.

Yes, a reader. Likes creepy books. A good student, aware of it, esp creative writing.

Always been good at writing.

Analysing things, over analysing things, finding more meaning then there is.

"There is meaning in everything. Games with stories, you can pull apart the stories, and find out what the person who made the game wanted you to think or feel"

Stories as events that fit together into one overall thing.

Characters, i like the sarcastic characters, not nice at first then are, under the surface, don't want ppl to see it.

The study sounded like fun. Interesting to think about games in a way i haven't really thought about them.

Lesson 1

Plays games mucking around, not really big on following the story.

Played Batman Arkham, and the Sims, controlling what happens.

Used to play Sims all the time, borrows them from her bro. Batman Arkam.

Suggesting the teacher play Spore (really cool). Idea of building creatures and evolving. Very excited tone. Sees CivV and starts talking about all these other similar genre games. ie. Roller coaster tycoon, Age of Empires.

Bully: "looks too educational."

-regarding the boys- they are too good at this. I play the Sims

In relation to a game cover, "I don't know what the themes are in this one".

Talking to herself about other games she's like to play "We should have played Assassin's Creed, that would have been fun, or Oblivion, skyrim (said with excitement), skyrim's fun."

In response to Alicia and Rachel, "I write stories all the time."

Lesson 2

Knows Spores very well.

Describes how the intro of *Dungeons Siege* sets up the game to be "Soft, dark, sad, mysterious,"

Using genre in games: If the lighting is dark then most of the time, something is bad. It's just like creating a genre in a movie only you can involve the player much more and text can be used more to help set the scene. The type of animation that is used can help show whether something is going to be action packed and fast, or soft and gentle.

Which story is the most appealing to you and why?

I'm almost tempted to say that the story lines of 'Bully' or 'Forza 4' seem most appealing (although the racing car game doesn't actually have a story). They seem very simple and entertaining. However the story of 'Dungeon Siege 3' seems very interesting and it makes me want to find out what the game will be like to play. I really don't know, although I know that the story line of 'Fable 2' seems very dull... I think that it was partly the way the characters moved and how their voices seem detached... It made it seem less interesting than the others.

Should we study video games? Why/why not?

Video games are such a big part of our world these days. Good ones have proper storylines with morals and aspects that you can study. It's just like studying a movie really, only you can interact with it and sometimes change the story with you actions. I'm not sure if we *should* study video games, but it is definitely something that we could do. There are lots of people who would be much more interested and engaged when studying video games than books or movies and they may be able to focus more on the work. Games can provide good lessons or tell stories just as well as any book.

Lesson 3

Discussion around love for Shakespeare.

Telling us what stories involve, characters, tales, structure, timeline, events, and a bad bit. A problem/complication.

Power in Bully

Characters in Spor. Not sure if they are characters. They can be good or bad, or make them die. Sometimes they are, but you can change them.

Jimmy thinks he'll have a lot of power, and then gets there and realise he doesn't.

Game banned cos you go around a beat ppl up ... you are experiencing more.

Lesson 4

Normally games have a fantasy violence ... they have a lower rating.

Using power to change something they don't like. Like bullies.

I get really obsess about things.

In game, I'd probably beat everyone up and not do what you are supposed to do. It's fun.

Power in a game, diff to a book, its animated, you can actually see the people and their faces.

Multiplayer gameplay Comments

Said Dungeon Siege had limited options of power. Didn't know what story was developing.

No story during Bully mini games. "There wasn't a story. They were just mucking around."

Less talk during gameplay of Ultimate Alliance.

During car-racing Kate said "There is no story. One player is winning and one is losing". Isn't this the plot of most stories? A winner and a loser?

You have to work together during multiplayer. You can't go off and do your own thing.

Kate's Bully Power Booklet

In the identity section, you mention a whole range of things that represent you, how big a part is gaming?

How much does it influence you compared to some of the others?

You say you would get Jimmy into trouble cos you wouldn't normally be like that. What opportunities then do games provide?

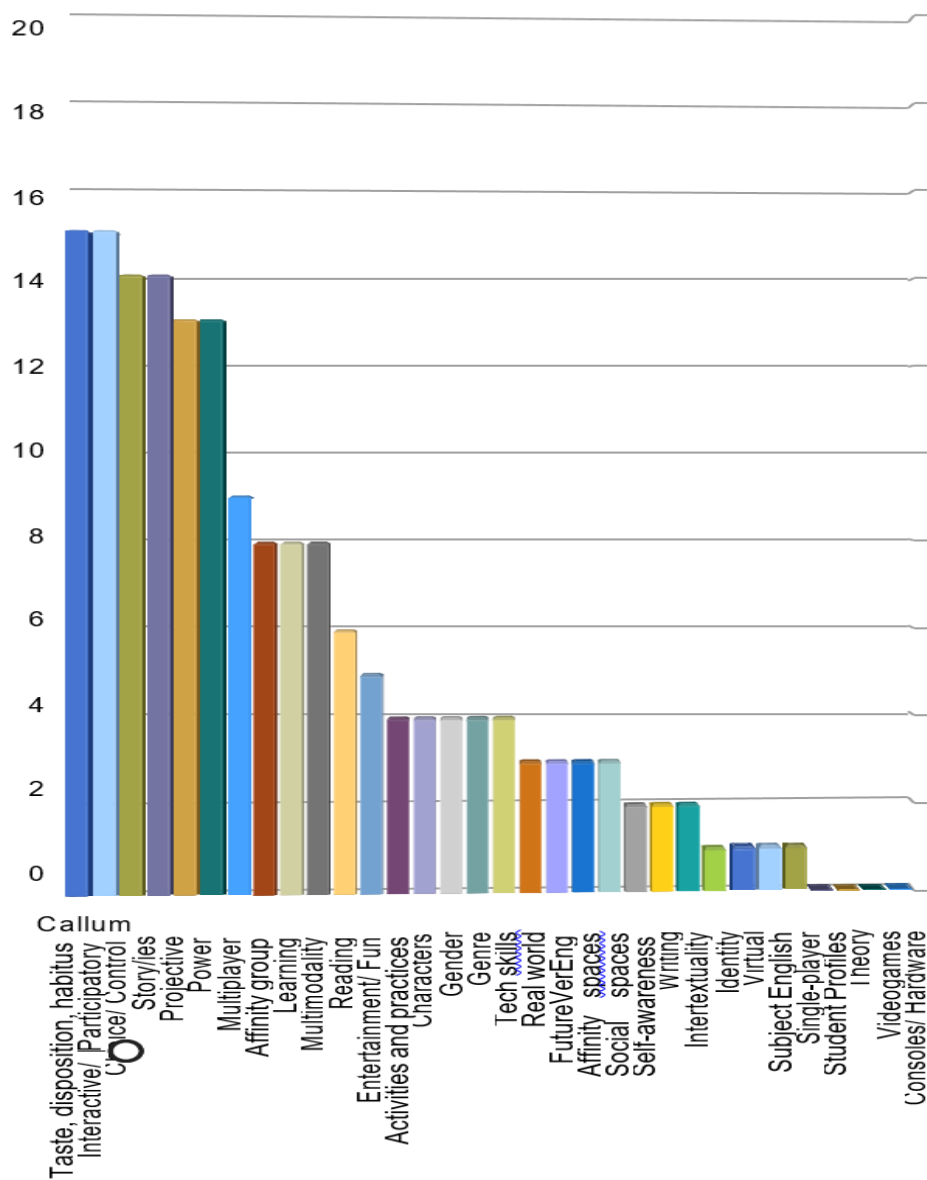
Challenging authority through game players, is this a bad thing?

Question of whether games like Bully are useful educationally?

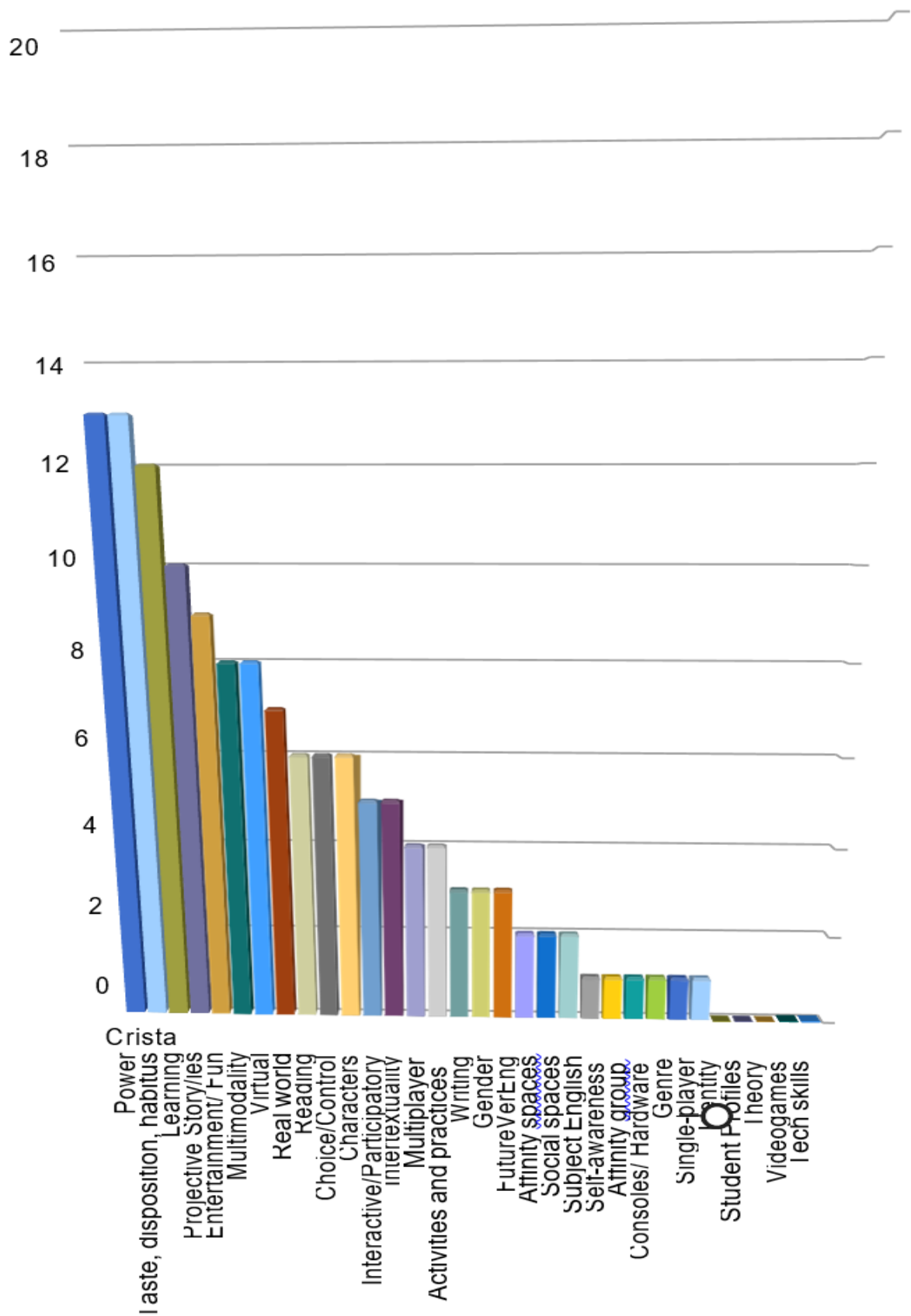
Appendix H: Coding structure

Classroom Intervention	Characters	Subject-English	Reading	Miscellaneous	Taste, disposition, habitus
	Choice/control		Writing		Power
	Consoles/hardware		Activities & practices		Affinity groups
	Entertainment & Fun		Future English		Affinity spaces
	Gender		Subject-English		Social spaces
	Genre				Self-awareness
	Interactive & participatory	Projective identity principle	Real-world		
	Intertextuality		Virtual		
	Learning		Projective		
	Multimodality		Identity		
	Multiplayer				
	Single-player				
	Stories				
	Tech Skills				

Appendix I: Data Analysis Coding Cam



Appendix J: Data Analysis Coding Kate



Plain language statement for persons participating in the
research project:

“Reading Videogames in the English Classroom”



Hello! My name is Alexander Bacalja. I am a student at the University of Melbourne. I am doing a project to find out what it might be like to study videogames in an English classroom. The purpose of this project is to understand how young people understand the stories in videogames and what kinds of activities teachers can do with these texts in the classroom. When I finish my project it will be part of my degree, called a Doctor of Philosophy. My supervisors, Dr. Larissa Mclean Davies and Dr. Pam Macintyre, help me with my project. We work in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Your school principal and your teacher have given me permission to give you this letter to tell you a bit about my project. Once you have read the letter you can decide if you would like to take part. You should talk to your parents about the project too.

The project involves being a part of a small group of students who will study several videogames. You and all the other students from your class who are taking part would go into a spare room during the times when you would normally have English classes. For up to 12 lessons I will be your classroom teacher and together we will complete a range of activities similar to those that you would normally do when studying a novel or film. These will include: asking and answering questions about the games, discussing the themes and language used in the games, learning to be critical of the various parts of the games' stories, and actually playing the games in class.

As a part of the project I will be doing short individual interviews with you before, during and after we have studied the videogames. I will be using audio and video-taping to record these interviews and the classroom activities we complete together. I will also collect the work that you have completed during our classes. Only my supervisor and I will see these things, so please don't worry that your teacher might look at them. The project will have nothing to do with your school report or your grade for English. During the project we will work with your teachers and the school to make sure you do not fall behind in your work.

If at any time you do not want to be part of the project, you can tell me and go back to the classroom where the rest of your class will be continuing with their work. Any contribution you have made can also be withdrawn from the study if you no longer want to take part.

Everything will be done to make sure your part in this project is confidential but this may be difficult because there are only a small number of students participating in this project. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee.

After the project is over, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. It is also possible that the

results will be presented at academic conferences or in academic journals. All video-tapes and audio-recordings will be locked away safely in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education for 5 years after the project is finished. I have to do this because it is a University rule. After that my supervisor will destroy them.

Remember, you don't have to take part unless you want to. If you have any questions you should talk to your teacher or a parent. If they don't know the answer to your question, they can contact me, or my supervisor, or the Research Ethics Office at the University for you.

If you want to be part of my project, and your parent/s agree, please sign your name on the accompanying consent forms (one regarding participation and one regarding audio and video-taping) where it says "participant", and get your parent or guardian to sign as well.

Mr. Alex Bacalja (Student Researcher)

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Dr. Larissa McLean Davies (Responsible Researcher)

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Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics

The University of Melbourne

8344 2073

Appendix L: Consent Forms of Parents and Students

MELBOURNE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Consent form for persons participating in the research project:

Reading Videogames in the English Classroom



Name of participant:

Name of investigator(s): Alexander Bacalja, Dr. Larissa Mclean Davies, Dr. Pam MacIntyre

1. I understand that participation is voluntary and will involve interviews and classroom activities, which will be recorded by video and audio recording equipment, and the completion of written activities, and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
2. I understand that I will be involved in studying a range of videogames, a number of which have received M ratings by the Australian Classification Board.
3. I acknowledge that:
 - a. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - b. The project is for the purpose of a student research project;
 - c. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - d. I am aware that the small number of participants in this study may have implications for protecting the identity of the participants;
 - e. A pseudonym will be used in the final report for this subject.

I consent to participate in this research project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

Participant signature:

Date:

I give consent for my child to participate in this research project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

Parent/Guardian signature:

Date:

HREC: 1136679.1; Date: 13/11/17; Version: 1.3

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

The University of Melbourne Victoria 3010 Australia

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As one of your classmates plays the game Bully, write the story as you see it unfolding. This activity will be divided in to two parts: the prologue (the introduction to a text), and Chapter One 'Making friends making enemies'. Try to

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Prologue and Chapter One questions

1. Who is Jimmy Hopkins? Can you relate to him? Why or why not?

2. Most stories have a complication, a series of difficulties forming the central action of a narrative. Hypothesise what complication/s Jimmy will face in this text?

3. The story in Bully will unfold differently depending on who is playing the game. What would you do with Jimmy's character, either in Bullworth Academy or in the local town of Bullworth, if you had total control over his character?

Playing with characters in videogames

When we study novels and other texts we often ask questions about key characters in these texts and how they change or contribute to the story. One expert on videogames, James Paul Gee, has developed a theory about the characters in videogames and how people connect with these characters. He has called this theory the 'Identity Principle'. He says:

“Learning involves taking on and playing with identities in such a way that the learner has real choices (in developing the virtual identity) and ample opportunity to mediate on the relationship between new identities and old ones. There is a tripartite play of identities as learners relate, and reflect on, their multiple real-world identities, a virtual identity, and a projective identity” (pg.64, 2003)

Fill in the table below to capture some of the ways that you create and impact upon the character of Jimmy Hopkins from the game Bully

<u>Real-world identities</u> These are the many beliefs and values, types of person, that together make you unique. They may include things like: a reader, a game player, a brother, a student, born overseas, a tennis player, a boy, etc.	
<u>Virtual identities</u> These are the characteristics of the virtual characters in a game, in this case Jimmy Hopkins.	
<u>Projective identities</u> This is the area between the real-world and virtual, where who you are impacts upon the virtual character. In what ways might you project your own values and desires on to Jimmy Hopkins?	