

# From Digital to Analog: Disco Elysium's Conflict Transformation Mechanisms for Educational Larps

**Abstract:** This paper examines the narrative and mechanical elements of the role-playing video game *Disco Elysium* (ZA/UM 2019) through the lens of conflict transformation theory (Lederach 2003). Using a qualitative analysis of player-generated paratexts from Reddit communities alongside relevant game excerpts, the study explores two key elements. First, it explores the “character sheet” and internal monologue mechanism as a tool for self-reflection and personal conflict transformation. Second, it discusses the character arc of Cuno as a model for interpersonal conflict transformation. Findings suggest that *Disco Elysium's* skill system, narrative structure, and character design provide players with opportunities to thoughtfully navigate relationships, enhancing their competence in contextual analysis and critical self-reflection. While the game offers meaningful narrative-dramatic agency, its predefined structure limits flexible and individualized player intervention in conflict resolution, highlighting a contrast with the *transformational containers* of live action role-playing games (larps) (Bowman and Baird 2022). Therefore, this study underscores the importance of larp, where participants exercise greater agency, and psychological effects such as bleed, providing recommendations for translating digital role-playing mechanisms into educational analog contexts for fostering active engagement with conflict dynamics.

**Keywords:** conflict transformation, game mechanics, player reflection, *Disco Elysium*

Minyue Wu

University of Göttingen, Germany

*minyue.wu@uni-goettingen.de*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research has shown various transformational effects of role-playing games (RPGs) (Barab, Gresalfi and Ingram-Goble 2010), including community building, social skill training, identity exploration, and knowledge acquisition (Barab et al. 2007; Daniau 2016; Kampf 2016; Bowman et al. 2025a). This study focuses especially on conflict transformation, drawing on Lederach's theory (2003).

Lederach (2003, 14) reframes conflict as a “life-giving opportunity” for growth. Bowman et al. (2025b, 49f) feature it at both individual and structural levels: Conflict transformation can reshape self-perception, interpersonal dynamics, and worldviews; foster harmony in communication; and influence broader cultural structures to promote awareness, peace, and justice. These capacities extend beyond psychosocial life skills, defined by the WHO as “a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (WHO 1997, 1).

Research on transformational RPGs has so far focused largely on analog formats, especially live action role-playing (larp) (Winardy and Septiana 2023; Bowman et al. 2025a, 22). By contrast, the potential of digital format remains underexplored, despite extensive evidence for the educational value of gamification and game-based learning in fostering effectiveness, motivation, and engagement (Gee 2003; Arci 2008; Hartt, Hosseini, and Mostafapour 2020; Chen & Wu 2021; Sun, Kangas, and Ruokamo 2023). Drawing on Wittgenstein's concept of *family resemblances* (1953) to bridge analog and digital formats, this study addresses this research gap by examining the conflict transformation potential of the video game *Disco Elysium* (ZA/UM 2019) and investigating how its mechanisms can inform the design of analog educational formats.

*Disco Elysium* is a single-player computer RPG acclaimed for its narrative depth and player agency, as analyzed by Bodi and Thon (2020) and Banfi (2024). Its scholarly relevance is further evidenced by studies highlighting its historical symbolism and sociolinguistic dimensions (Castro and Kiersey 2025; Kjeldgaard-Christiansen and Hejná 2022). Beyond academic interest, the game has been adapted into larp and tabletop formats, which also points to its potential for educational applications, e.g., the larp *97 Poets of Revachol* (Rolling 2025).

Set in the fictional war-torn city of Revachol, the game follows protagonist Harry Du Bois—an amnesiac, alcoholic, and drug-addicted detective—as he investigates a murder in Martinaise alongside Lieutenant Kim Kitsuragi, his deuteragonist partner from the Revachol Citizens Militia, the city’s police force. As the case unfolds, Harry reconstructs his lost identity while confronting personal demons, political tensions, and philosophical dilemmas through deep conversations with diverse non-playable characters (NPCs) representing different struggles, ideological, and social perspectives.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Lederach (2003) identifies four dimensions of constructive change: “the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions” (26). This study focuses on the first two dimensions, in line with research on the development of social competencies through RPGs (Bowman and Standiford 2015; Pallavicini et al. 2020). The personal dimension concerns self-esteem, well-being, emotional stability, and individual capacity, while the relational dimension highlights communication, dependence, power dynamics, and emotional impact (Lederach 2003, 27). Prior scholarship shows how analog RPGs can advance both dimensions: Englund’s (2014) ethnographic study in Ramallah demonstrates how larp fosters personal growth, moral imagination, and rehabilitation, while broader research links larp to creativity, identity exploration, community support, and social skill development (Baird 2023; Volkmann 2024). For Lederach (2003, 30–33), such transformation depends on dialogue, requiring both communicative exchange and individual willingness, and extends beyond immediate issues to the broader social contexts of conflict.

Video games offer a parallel but distinct arena for dialogue and reflection through non-linear “adaptive storytelling” (Adams 2010; Utsch et al. 2020). By granting narrative-dramatic agency, games deepen immersion and engagement, allowing players to influence plotlines through meaningful choices (Murray 2001; Thon 2007; Tanenbaum and Tanenbaum 2009; Cole 2018; Emmersberger 2023). These interactions occur within the “magic circle” (Huizinga 1949), where game rules temporarily replace those of daily life, enabling players to apply real-world knowledge (Linser, Lindstad, and Vold 2008; Salen and Zimmerman 2003). Within this frame, players learn fictional histories, form attitudes toward characters, and build emotional ties with avatars. Research has further emphasized the transformative potential of such experiences; Barab et al. (2009) demonstrate that immersive, interactive storytelling encourages reflection on underlying social values, thereby fostering personal transformation. Similarly, Melcer et al. (2020) show that choice-based interactive story games can effectively support learning, particularly in cultivating research skills and reasoning abilities.

Engagement with these dynamics fosters reflective play, shaped by player preferences and personality (Rapp and Gerrig 2006; de Lima, Feijó, and Furtado 2020). Through mechanics and characters, games promote intellectual exploration and perspective-taking (Gandhi, Miller, and Cooper 2022; Miller et al. 2024), functioning as “active self-monitoring” (Perkins and Salomon 1992, 7) that supports transfer of learning. Within Lederach’s framework, this corresponds to

the personal dimension—as players reflect on emotions, values, and decision-making—and the relational dimension, as they explore interactions, power dynamics, and conflict resolution.

Yet single-player video games remain constrained by developer frameworks, which limit narrative-dramatic agency (Adams 2010). Analog formats such as larp, by contrast, grant players greater freedom to co-create characters, relationships, and narratives within a group setting. Off-game interactions, especially debriefing, further enhance opportunities for reflection (Bowman and Baird 2022). This flexibility allows for a deeper exploration of conflict transformation, reinforced by phenomena such as the *bleed* effect—the spillover of emotions between player and character (Montola 2010)—and the *Batman effect*, where adopting an alter ego enhances perseverance and self-control (White et al. 2017).

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

As Lederach (2003, 21) notes, “people must have access and voice in decisions that affect their lives.” In larp, players can directly influence interactions and relationships, with a debriefing phase designed to facilitate guided reflection (Bowman et al. 2025b). Video games, by contrast, often shift reflection on conflict and relationships outside the game’s magic circle—into reviews, commentaries, or community discussions. Social media platforms thus serve as collaborative spaces where players share perspectives, theorize about narratives, and explore alternative outcomes, reflecting gaming culture’s participatory nature (Burwell and Miller 2016; Mukherjee 2016; Švelch 2020). Such interpretative posts, viewed as paratexts under expanded frameworks (Aarseth 1997; Consalvo 2017), provide valuable insights into players’ perceptions and reflections, making them central to this study.

In the first stage, posts from the *Disco Elysium* Reddit community were searched separately using the keywords “reviews,” “changes,” “transformation,” “conflict,” and “reflection.” The analysis included thematic discussions of specific scenes or character development, while excluding simple sentiment expressions. Following an initial review, and informed by the researcher’s own gameplay experience, the character sheet mechanism was selected as the first focal point, as it exposes players to the protagonist Harry Du Bois’s internal conflicts and his relationships ( $n = 17$ ).

In addition, this study analyzes the arc of Cuno, a troubled character frequently discussed by players in relation to Harry’s personal conflict transformation. Posts debating Cuno’s role and the significance of his ending ( $n = 26$ ) were selected as representative examples of relational conflict transformation. These posts were interpreted through the lens of conflict transformation theory, with anonymized findings presented in the following sections alongside relevant game passages.

### 4. THE CHARACTER SHEET AS A MECHANISM FOR INTERNAL CONFLICT AND SELF-REFLECTION

The character sheet is a core mechanism in *Disco Elysium* that, as theorized by Bodi and Thon (2020), enhances player agency by introducing flexibility within the otherwise predetermined storyline. It consists of four core attributes—Intellect, Psyche, Physique, and Motorics—each subdivided into six skills. Players configure their avatar by allocating experience points across these skills, which directly shape the outcomes of conversational skill checks and thus determine what information becomes available. This system of character building facilitates distinct playstyles and individualizes role-playing experiences (Bodi and Thon 2020; Peterson 2013, 366), enriching the narrative and directly engaging players with the process of conflict transformation.



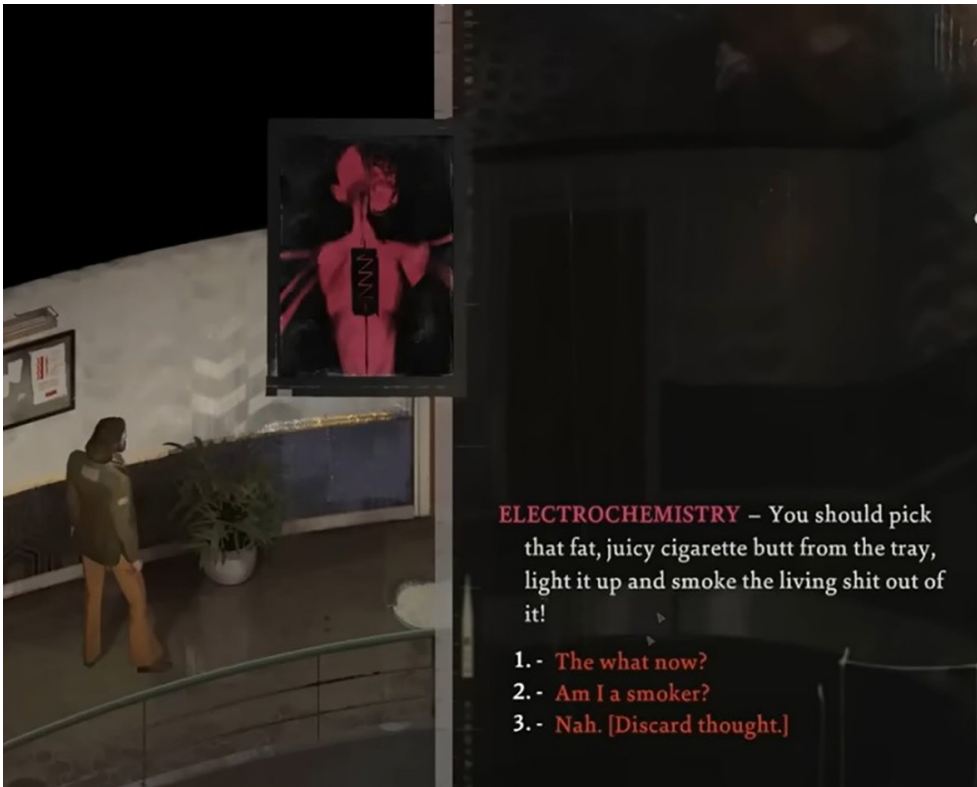
**Figure 1:** Overview of skills

Unlike traditional RPGs, the character sheet in *Disco Elysium* serves a dual function. While it acts as a primary interface for shaping a character's abilities and enhancing playability (Hermann and Reininghaus 2021, 33), it is also a fundamental narrative device. In this unique system, individual skills manifest directly as internal dialogue during conversations, providing players with a real-time, unfiltered insight into protagonist Harry Du Bois's perceptions, emotions, and reactions to events and the environment, sometimes presenting conflicting perspectives. This mechanism deepens players' understanding of the game world by offering additional context from an internal viewpoint.

For instance, the skill Empathy provides insights into thoughts, feelings, and motivations, fostering an understanding of character relationships and tensions. This skill aids in conflict transformation by helping players navigate complex interpersonal dynamics (see Figure 4 for an example). As demonstrated in the following comment, empathy is considered one of the most valuable skills for deeper understanding:

Empathy. It seemed like it was the skill most useful for understanding people and making them happy. I quickly discovered it was far from the only skill good at that, but it certainly was the kindest about it. Lord knows Harry and the downtrodden folks of Martinaise needed some compassion in their lives. It might not have been the most "practical" skill, but for some of the characters, it made the hard times a little easier to get through, and that was good enough for me. (Anonymized Reddit post, "What Skill")

In certain situations, players are prompted to choose responses to Harry's inner monologues, which dramatize his internal conflicts, including addiction, low self-esteem, and insecurity. Early in the game, for instance, Harry encounters addictive substances such as drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol. The following screenshot illustrates one such moment: a dialogue triggered by the skill Electrochemistry when Harry sees a cigarette. Here, three response options allow players to shape Harry's characterization, effectively staging a conversation between Harry and this facet of his personality.



**Figure 2:** Dialogue with the Electrochemistry Skill on Addictive Substances (Cigarettes)

By engaging with Harry's inner dialogue, players develop a more comprehensive understanding of his character, his internal struggles, and suffering, fostering immersion and facilitating their engagement with conflict transformation. The accumulation of information through these thoughts enables players to contextualize conflicts, aligning with Lederach's (2003) concept of conflict transformation. One player, reflecting on this aspect from a second-person perspective, described their experience as follows:

You're just engulfed by the pain, the ghost of your past, but it doesn't mean you want that pain to spread to others. On the contrary - all that suffering has the potential to shape you into an empathetic human being, provided you won't be consumed by flames. Where's Harry going with it? One can never be sure, but I am hopeful. The makings of a new beginning are there. (Anonymized Reddit post, "Cuno is the Most")

In *Disco Elysium*, however, when players encounter addictive substances, they can only choose whether to consume them, with no opportunities to help Harry overcome his addiction. Since these substances influence character development within the skill system, the game lacks mechanisms for positive change or recovery as part of its narrative progression. In contrast, an educational larp scenario could offer more freedom and flexibility, enabling players to reflect on and take constructive action toward change.

Interestingly, not every thought or skill leads to a constructive outcome (for instance, the monologue with Electrochemistry in Figure 2). Some skills may encourage self-destructive behaviors or amusing interactions, reinforcing dramaticity and a sense of authenticity in the player's perception of the protagonist's struggles. The character sheet thus simulates inner thought processes that can reveal conflicting or controversial perspectives, underscoring the complexity of

inner conflict and decision-making while intensifying both the magic circle and the bleed effect.

For educational purposes, this mechanism is comparable to the “inner team” consulting method developed by German psychologist Friedemann Schulz von Thun (1999), which conceptualizes personality as a dialogue among multiple internal “voices.” In this framework, an internal leader coordinates competing perspectives to enable self-clarification and coherent decision-making.

The following screenshots (Figure 3) illustrate such an internal debate: Harry’s consideration of whether to hand drugs over to Cuno, while other characters Cunoesse and Kim Kitsuragi are present. Cunoesse is Cuno’s companion, characterized by aggressive behavior and manipulative tendencies.

Here, skill Inland Empire and Suggestion urge him to comply, whereas Esprit de Corps advises against it, presenting an alternative vision of the future. This inner struggle encourages players to reflect on Harry’s relationships and to weigh the potential for transformation in their decisions.

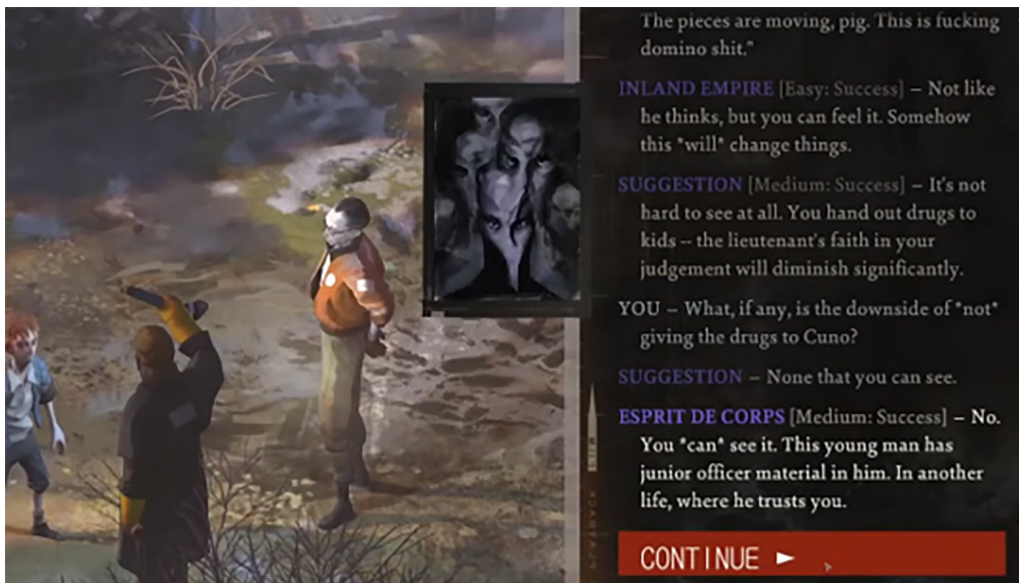
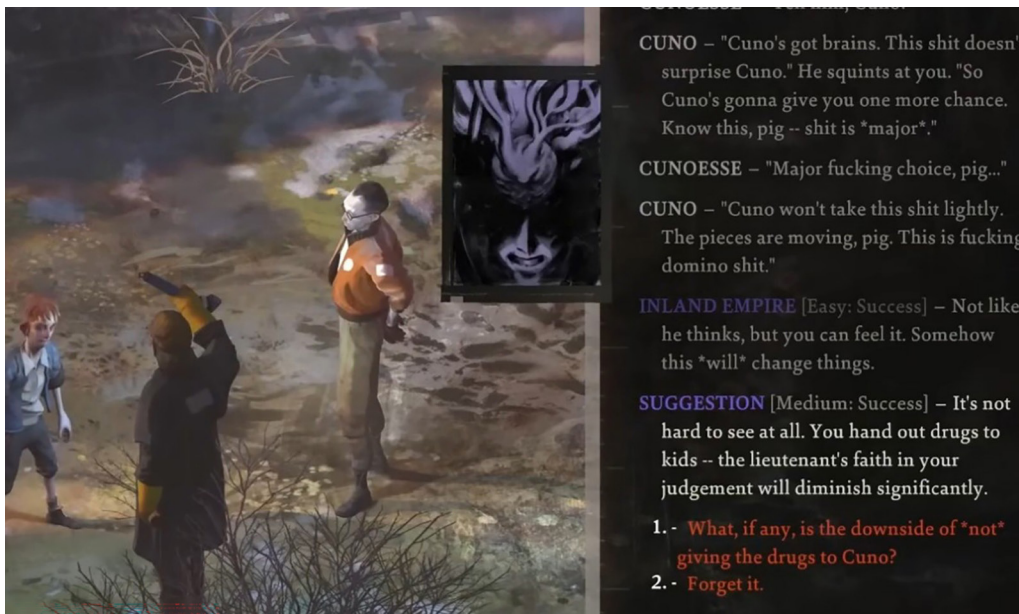


Figure 3: One example of controversial dialogue.

Discussions within the player community on Reddit highlight the significance of the character sheet and thought system, underscoring their impact. One player remarked that the mechanism helped them understand their own internal conflicts better, a sentiment echoed by others:

I suffer from anxiety and often struggle to be mindful of my own emotions, so being able to “characterize” them is helpful. The DE archetypes help me apply a name to my feelings, compartmentalize them, and put them in dialogue. I’ve found myself asking “what would volition say” more than once.

One of the benefits of great works of fiction is that they help us expand our understanding of our own and others inner lives. DE definitely worked that way for me. It’s a testament to the skill of the people who made it. (Anonymized Reddit post, “De helped me,” September 28, 2025)

## 5. RELATIONAL TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF CUNO

Another mechanism for relational transformation is character arc design. Through the bleed effect, which means deep emotional engagement with the story and immersion into a character (Montola 2010), players may experience processes of transformation.

Cuno presents the possibility of transformation within *Disco Elysium* and character development can engage players in reflecting on relationships. The following quote illustrates one such interpretation, where a player highlights Cuno’s importance and his reflective relationship with Harry:

I’ve seen and heard it discussed before that the real perpetrator of the murder is important as it sort of symbolizes what Harry could become if he doesn’t get himself together. The perp is old and tired and worn out from holding grudges for decades, lost in his own self pity and clinging to self destruction. We only hope that Harry can make healthy decisions and change his life before this happens.

Which is why I think Cuno is so important...

If the perp could be Harry when he’s older, Cuno could be Harry when he’s YOUNGER. (Anonymized Reddit post, “What Skill”)

Therefore, engaging with the Cuno’s arc can facilitate players in reflecting on conflict transformation.

By the game’s conclusion, players can recruit Cuno as Harry’s partner if Kim Kitsuragi is hospitalized. Cuno assists Harry in completing the investigation. During the final debriefing, he promises to behave and is recruited as junior officer training material. This transformation is evident at the end of the game, when Cuno promises to get sober and behave more prosocially, as illustrated by a player’s reflection:

There is definitely a psychological aspect to him referring to himself in the third person and you can realize this through a dialogue skill check, but if you have the ending with him he straight up explains that he’s going to be a little off because he’s sobering up and getting clean. You learn that [he’s] only 12 years old, which is honestly heartbreaking, but you have the opportunity to recruit him to join the RCM by convincing Jean that he really is a good kid who just needs an opportunity to become a better person. That dialogue gets Cuno to a point

where he is begging Jean to let you take him in, and he promises very scared and sadly that he will never curse or be rude again should you allow him to join the RCM because it means that much to him. (Anonymized Reddit post, "Why Does Cuno")

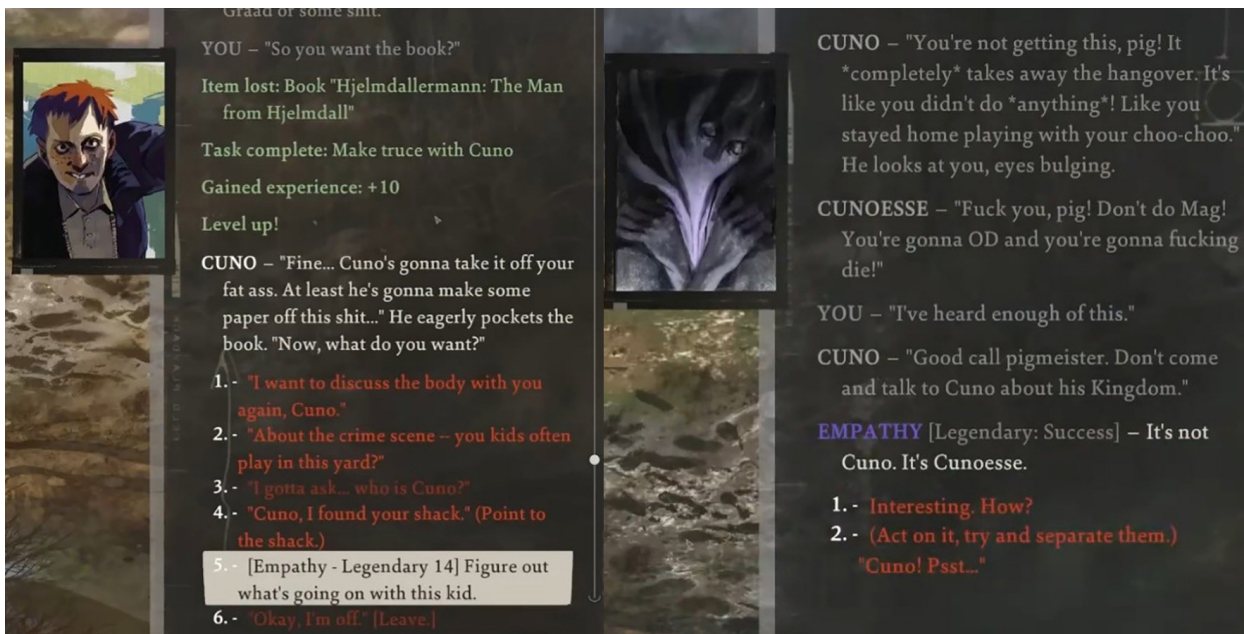
Cuno's growth aligns with the goal of conflict transformation. His change occurs late in the game, prompting some players to imagine his continued development beyond the game's ending, reinforcing themes of personal growth and conflict resolution:

However, there's something that gives so much hope about the future in bringing Cuno along with you: a street kid who hated not only you, but possibly everyone else now trusts you enough to become your partner and help the community. (Anonymized Reddit post, "I Prefer")

From this perspective, where Cuno can potentially "help the community," his conflict transformation extends beyond personal struggles to broader relational contexts, even reaching the structural level, as a member of the police force.

Upon first meeting Cuno, most players are shocked by his crude language and aggressive behavior. As the story unfolds, they have the opportunity to visit his home and meet his father, revealing his troubled family background and his connection to Cunonese. This reveals Cuno's true characteristics—intelligent, observant, and highly aware of his surroundings.

To understand Cuno's situation and foster his transformation, empathy is the most crucial skill—both within the game system and for the players. Technically, the skill Empathy provides cues that help players analyze Cuno's unusual behavior and recognize his toxic relationship with Cunonese, as shown in the screenshots in Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Skill Empathy Revealing Cuno's True Characteristics

Additionally, players must demonstrate a willingness to be empathetic, acknowledge his potential for change, and recognize the transformative effect this has on Harry, as illustrated in the post below:

I prefer the Cuno ending not just because he needs saving. but because it's a great representation of Harry redeeming himself. If this kid who's been doing almost nothing but throw the worst kinds of insults at him from the moment they meet can muster up the will to stand up for him and help out, then you know he's truly earned it. (Anonymous Reddit post, "What is the Best Worst")

Narration in *Disco Elysium* facilitates players to reflect on their attitudes towards Cuno and make positive changes. Early in the game, Harry has the option to punch Cuno if a skill check is passed. In response to this action, the game allows players, in further dialogues, to apologize to Cuno. This encourages players to make positive changes in the relationships and enhances empathy and communication skills on the side of players, as in the dialogue options seen in the following screenshots (Figure 5):

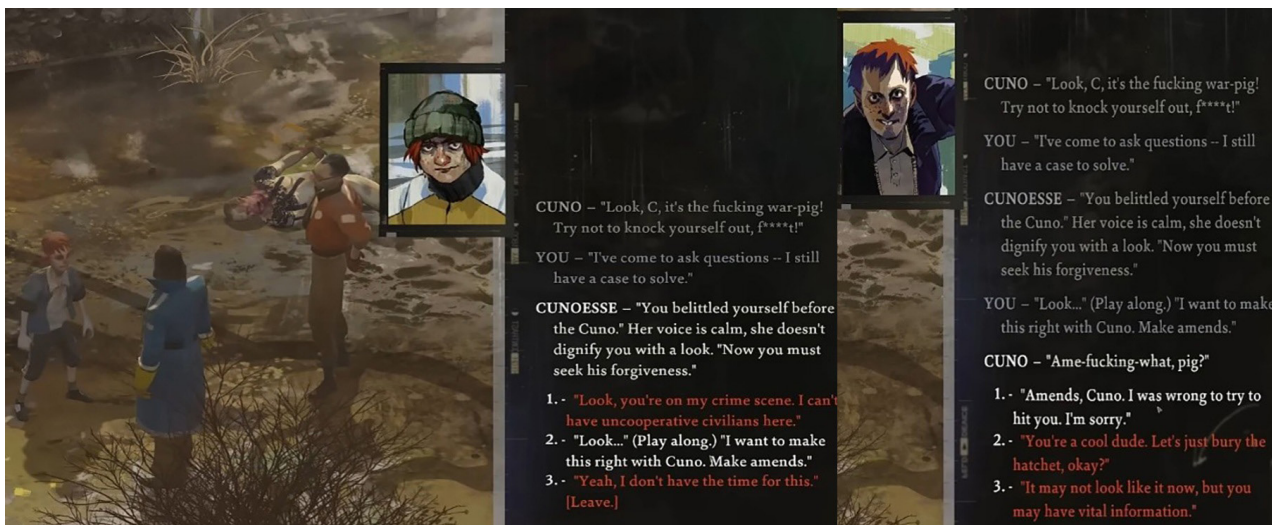


Figure 5: Dialogue Options for Apologizing to Cuno

Analyzing Cuno's transformation provides valuable insights into designing educational RPGs. It highlights the importance of allowing players sufficient time for progression and incorporating narrative cues that encourage exploration of character histories, meaningful decision-making, and the development of skills for constructive change.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

This article examined the potential of *Disco Elysium* to facilitate personal and relational conflict transformation by analyzing two key game mechanisms, providing players with greater narrative-dramatic agency in video games, and deepening emotional engagement: the character sheet and the transformational arc of the character Cuno. These game mechanics can be adapted for larp to facilitate structured self-reflection, foster a bleed effect, and support processes of personal growth (Brown 2018; Bowman and Hugaas 2019; Hugaas 2024).

The transferability of these findings is a critical concern, as reflections articulated by players in online forums cannot be assumed to result in substantive behavioral change in real-world contexts. This underscores the necessity of meaningful pedagogical design and targeted intervention to ensure the effectiveness of game-based learning.

As Lederach (2014) argues, transformation unfolds through a series of processes. For learning outcomes to extend beyond the magic circle of the game and into real-world conflict situations, they require conscious abstraction and repeated practice (Perkins & Salomon 1992; Barrett and Ceci 44

2002). Furthermore, Plass, Homer, and Kinzer (2010, 11ff) point out that scaffolding and relevant feedback, dynamic assessment, information design, and interaction design are fundamental cognitive components of playful learning in a digital environment, underscoring the need for pedagogical structuring.

Analog RPGs, particularly larp, can provide such conditions by integrating guided reflection and embodied practice that support transfer. Previous research highlights larps as effective *transformational containers* (Baird, Bowman, and Hugaas 2022), enabling participants to reflect on their identities, relationships, and beliefs (Bowman and Baird 2022), while developing personal skills, social competencies, and creativity—especially through structured phases such as debriefing or other after-play activities (Tychsen et al. 2006; Daniau 2016).

While prior research has largely treated character sheets as a functional device for sustaining gameplay (Hermann and Reininghaus 2021, 32), its potential for educational purposes remains under-examined (Martinoli 2022; Sotirov et al. 2023) and can be addressed in further studies. For example, in the design of the character sheet, an analogy to the psychological tool the “inner team method,” according to Schulz von Thun (1999) can be applied to players to articulate and process internal conflicts, eventually promoting the Batman effect for personal growth. A potential larp adaptation could focus on inner reflection by incorporating internal voices as playable roles, enriching participants’ understanding of their character’s psyche, enhancing the bleed effect.

Furthermore, community discussions surrounding Cuno’s transformation highlight how affective skills (e.g., empathy), contextual understanding (e.g., history and dilemmas), and narrative-dramatic agency work together to enable constructive change. This aligns with Lederach’s theory of conflict transformation, which emphasizes that conflicts are “life-giving opportunities” (2003, 14) for growth.

In addition to those two adaptable game mechanics, the following 3 design principles can tentatively be identified as potentially informing the design of educational larp:

1. Characters should be intentionally designed with the potential for growth and transformation, and players should be given opportunities to explore this potential;
2. Interactions should recur with dynamic consequences, thereby fostering deeper reflection and creating opportunities for change; and
3. Players require sufficient time and agency to develop their own perspectives on their characters, supported by structured reflection aligned with the learning goals (e.g., conflict transformation).

Empirical research is needed to test how the design principles proposed here can be practically implemented in larp settings.

While this study focused on personal and relational transformation, *Disco Elysium* also presents significant potential for engaging with political ideologies and societal tensions. Future research could investigate these political and historical dimensions to further understand the game’s full educational potential.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Using *Disco Elysium* as a case study, the research analyzes gamer-generated content with relevant

game excerpts to identify two key game mechanisms that promote reflection on conflict. The findings indicate that these mechanics can be adapted to foster deep personal engagement and encourage players to consider constructive change beyond the magic circle of the game. However, the study notes that achieving a high transferability of learning to real-world behavior requires pedagogical designs and guided practice. It proposes that larp could offer a promising environment to adapt these mechanics for educational purposes in a guided and embodied format. Furthermore, attempts at those translations can help bridge the existing research gap between educational RPG formats.

## REFERENCES

- Aarseth, Espen J. 1997. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. A Johns Hopkins paperback. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Adams, Ernest. 2010. *Fundamentals of Game Design*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, Calif.: New Riders.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "Cuno is the Most Important Character in the Game." Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "De Helped Me Understand My Own Brain." Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "I Prefer the Cuno Ending." Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "What is the Best & Worst Ending in DE..Like Literally the Best vs Worst Endings." Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "What Skill Did You Choose as Your Signature Skill and Why?" Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Anonymized post. N.d. "Why does Cuno...?" Reddit thread. Last accessed September 28, 2025.
- Arici, Anne Dickson. 2008. "Meeting Kids at Their Own Game: A Comparison of Learning and Engagement in Traditional and Three-Dimensional MUVE Educational-Gaming Contexts." PhD diss., Indiana University.
- Baird, Josephine, Sarah Lynne Bowman, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2022. "Liminal Intimacy: Role-Playing Games as Catalysts for Interpersonal Growth and Relating." In *The Magic of Games*, edited by Nikolaus Koenig, Natalie Denk, Alexander Pfeiffer, and Thomas Wernbacher, 169–71. Krems: University for Continuing Education Krems.
- Baird, Josephine. 2023. "Larp As a Potential Space for Non-Formal Queer Cultural Heritage." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 14: 71-81. [Link here](#).
- Banfi, Ryan. 2024. "Disco Pinball: Declining Games and Depression in *Disco Elysium*." *Games and Culture* 0 (0): 1–14. [Link here](#).

- Barab, Sasha A., Troy D. Sadler, Conan Heiselt, Daniel Hickey, and Steven Zuiker. 2007. "Relating Narrative, Inquiry, and Incriptions: Supporting Consequential Play." *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 16: 59–82. [Link here](#).
- Barab, Sasha A., Tyler Dodge, Adam Ingram-Goble, Charlene Volk, Kylie Pepler, Patrick Pettyjohn, and Maria Solomou. 2009. "Pedagogical Dramas and Transformational Play: Realizing Narrative through Videogames Design." In *Interactive Storytelling*, edited by Ido A. Iurgel, Nelson Zagalo, and Paolo Petta, 200–203. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 5915. Berlin: Springer. [Link here](#).
- Barab, Sasha A., Melissa Gresalfi, and Adam Ingram-Goble. 2010. "Transformational Play: Using Games to Position Person, Content, and Context." *Educational Researcher* 39 (7): 525–36. [Link here](#).
- Barnett, Susan M. and Stephen J. Ceci. 2002. "When and where do we apply what we learn?: A taxonomy for far transfer." *Psychological Bulletin* 128 (4): 612–37. [Link here](#).
- Bodi, Bettina, and Jan-Noël Thon. 2020. "Playing Stories?: Narrative-dramatic agency in *Disco Elysium* (2019) and *Astroneer* (2019)." *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* 6 (2): 157–90. [Link here](#).
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, and Andhe Standiford. 2015. "Educational Larp in the Middle School Classroom - A Mixed Method Case Study." *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 5: 4-25. [Link here](#).
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas. 2019. "Transformative Role-play: Design, Implementation, and Integration." *Nordiclarp.org*, December 10. [Link here](#).
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, and Josephine Baird. 2022. "Transformative Potential of Immersive Experiences Within Role-Playing Communities." *Revista de Estudos Universitários - REU*, 48: 1-48. [Link here](#).
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Angie Bandhosingh, Guus van Tilborg, Alessandro Giovannucci, and Taisto Suominen. 2025a. "A Brief Introduction to Role-Playing Games and Cousin Activities." In *Transformative Role-Playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 19–48. Transformative Play Research Series 1. Uppsala: Uppsala University Publications.
- Bowman, Sarah Lynne, Elektra Diakolambrianou, Kjell Hedgard Hugaas, and Josefin Westborg. 2025b. "Transformative Role-Playing Games: Types, Purposes, and Features." In *Transformative Role-Playing Game Design*, edited by Sarah Lynne Bowman, Elektra Diakolambrianou, and Simon Brind, 49–79. Transformative Play Research Series 1. Uppsala: Uppsala University Publications.
- Brown, Maury. 2018. "Post-Play Activities for Larp: Methods and Challenges." *Analog Game Studies* V (II), June 2. [Link here](#).
- Burwell, Catherine, and Thomas Miller. 2016. "Let's Play: Exploring Literacy Practices in an

- Emerging Videogame Paratext." *E-Learning and Digital Media* 13 (3-4): 109–25. [Link here](#).
- Castro, Vic and Nicholas Kiersey, eds. 2025. *The World Politics of Disco Elysium*. London: Routledge.
- Chen, Hsiu-Ling, and Cheng-Ting Wu. 2021. "A Digital Role-Playing Game for Learning: Effects on Critical Thinking and Motivation." *Interactive Learning Environments* 31 (5): 3018–30. [Link here](#).
- Cole, Alayna. 2018. "Connecting Player and Character Agency in Videogames." *TEXT* 22 (Special 49): 109–25. [Link here](#).
- Consalvo, Mia. 2017. "When Paratexts Become Texts: De-Centering the Game-as-Text." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34 (2): 177–83. [Link here](#).
- Daniau, Stéphane. 2016. "The Transformative Potential of Role-Playing Games —: From Play Skills to Human Skills." *Simulation & Gaming* 47 (4): 423–44. [Link here](#).
- de Lima, Edirlei Soares, Bruno Feijó, and Antonio L. Furtado. 2020. "Adaptive Storytelling Based on Personality and Preference Modeling." *Entertainment Computing* 34: 100342. [Link here](#).
- Emmersberger, Stefan. 2023. "Dramatic Agency und Moralische Dilemmata [Dramatic Agency and Moral Dilemmas]." *Colloquium: New Philologies* 8 (1-2): 79–100. [Link here](#).
- Englund, Tindra. 2014. "Live Action Role Play (Larp) in a Context of Conflict: An Ethnographic Study of Larp in Ramallah." Master's thesis, Malmö University, Faculty of Culture and Society. [Link here](#).
- Gandhi, Kutub, Josh Aaron Miller, and Seth Cooper. 2022. "'Philosophy Is Seeped into Every Brick' — Weaving Reflective Elements into Mass-Market Games." In *Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games (FDG '22)*: 1–10. New York, NY: Association for Computing Machinery. [Link here](#).
- Gee, James Paul. 2003. "What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy." *Computers in Entertainment* 1 (1): 1-20. [Link here](#).
- Hartt, Maxwell, Hadi Hosseini, and Mehrnaz Mostafapour. 2020. "Game On: Exploring the Effectiveness of Game-Based Learning." *Planning Practice & Research* 35 (5): 589–604. [Link here](#).
- Hermann, Adrian, and Gerrit Reininghaus. 2021. "Beyond the Character Sheet: 'Character Keepers' as Digital Play Aids in the Contemporary Indie TRPG Community." *RPG JARPS: Japanese Journal of Analog Role-Playing Game Studies* 2: 31–50.
- Hugaas, Kjell Hedgard. 2024. "Bleed and Identity: A Conceptual Model of Bleed and How Bleed-Out from Role-Playing Games Can Affect a Player's Sense of Self." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 15: 9–35. [Link here](#).

- Huizinga, Johan. 1949. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kampf, Ronit. 2016. "Long-Term Effects of Computerized Simulations in Protracted Conflicts: The Case of Global Conflicts." In *Persuasive Technology*. Vol. 9638, edited by Alexander Meschtscherjakov, Boris de Ruyter, Verena Fuchsberger, Martin Murer, and Manfred Tscheligi, 242–47. Lecture Notes in Computer Science. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, Jens, and Míša Hejná. 2022. "The Voices of Game Worlds: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of *Disco Elysium*." *Games and Culture* 18 (5): 578–97. [Link here.](#)
- Lederach, John Paul. 2003. *Little Book of Conflict Transformation: Clear Articulation of the Guiding Principles by a Pioneer in the Field*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing Company Incorporated.
- Linser, Roni, Nina Ree Lindstad, and Tone Vold. 2008. "The Magic Circle—Game Design Principles and Online Role-Play Simulations." In *EdMedia+ Innovate Learning*, 5290–97. Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.
- Martinolli, Pascal. 2022. "A Scholarly Character Sheet to Frame Learning Activities and Improve Engagement." *International Journal of Role-Playing* 12: 40-61. [Link here.](#)
- Melcer, Edward F., Katelyn M. Grasse, James Ryan, Nick Junius, Max Kreminski, Dietrich Squinkifer, Brent Hill, and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. 2020. "Getting Academical: A Choice-Based Interactive Storytelling Game for Teaching Responsible Conduct of Research." In *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games (FDG '20)*, 1-12. New York: Association for Computing Machinery. [Link here.](#)
- Miller, Josh Aaron, Kutub Gandhi, Matthew Alexander Whitby, Mehmet Kosa, Seth Cooper, Elisa D. Mekler, and Ioanna Iacovides. 2024. "A Design Framework for Reflective Play." In *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '24)*, 1–21. New York, NY: Association for Computing Machinery. [Link here.](#)
- Montola, Markus. 2010. "The Positive Negative Experience in Extreme Role-Playing." In *Proceedings of DiGRA Nordic 2010: Experiencing Games: Games, Play, and Players*, 1-8. Tampere: DiGRA. [Link here.](#)
- Mukherjee, Souvik. 2016. "Videogames as 'Minor Literature': Reading Videogame Stories Through Paratexts." *Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* 23: 60–75. [Link here.](#)
- Murray, Janet Horowitz. 2001. *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Pallavicini, Federica, Alessandro Pepe, Chiara Carmela Caragnano and Fabrizia Mantovani. 2020. "Video Games to Foster Empathy: A Critical Analysis of the Potential of *Detroit: Become Human* and *The Walking Dead*." In *Universal Access in Human-Computer Interaction. Applications and Practice*, edited by Margherita Antona and Constantine Stephanidis, 167–81. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 12189. Cham: Springer. [Link here.](#)

- Perkins, David N., and Gavriel Salomon. 1992. "Transfer of Learning." In *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd ed., edited by Torsten Husén and T. N. Postlethwaite, 425–41. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Peterson, Jon. 2013. "Character Sheets in 1975." *Playing at the World* (blog), July. Link [Link here](#).
- Plass, Jan L., Bruce D. Homer, and Charles Kinzer. 2014. *Playful Learning: An Integrated Design Framework*. Report no. 02/2014. New York: Games for Learning Institute. [Link here](#).
- Rapp, David N., and Richard J. Gerrig. 2006. "Predilections for Narrative Outcomes: The Impact of Story Contexts and Reader Preferences." *Journal of Memory and Language* 54 (1): 54–67. [Link here](#).
- Salen, Katie, and Eric Zimmerman. 2003. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Schulz von Thun, Friedemann. 1999. *Miteinander reden. 3. Das "Innere Team" und situationsgerechte Kommunikation [Talking with Each Other, vol. 3: The "Inner Team" and Situation-Appropriate Communication]*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Sotirov, Milen, Donika Nikolova-Sotirova, Todorka Georgieva, and Valentina Petrova. 2023. "From Dungeons to Dashboards: Integrating Game-Based Character Sheet in University Environment." In *2023 7th International Symposium on Innovative Approaches in Smart Technologies (ISAS)*, 1–6. IEEE. [Link here](#).
- Sun, Liping, Marjaana Kangas, and Heli Ruokamo. 2023. "Game-Based Features in Intelligent Game-Based Learning Environments: A Systematic Literature Review." *Interactive Learning Environments* 32 (7): 3431–47. [Link here](#).
- Švelch, Jan. 2020. "Paratextuality in Game Studies: A Theoretical Review and Citation Analysis." *Game Studies* 20 (2). [Link here](#).
- Tanenbaum, Karen, and Theresa J. Tanenbaum. 2009. "Commitment to Meaning: A Reframing of Agency in Games." Paper presented at Digital Arts and Culture, Irvine, California, December 12–15. UC Irvine. eScholarship. [Link here](#).
- Thon, Jan-Noël. 2007. "Immersion revisited. Varianten von Immersion im Computerspiel des 21. Jahrhunderts. [Variants of Immersion in 21st-Century Computer Games]." In *Medien – Zeit – Zeichen*, edited by Christian Hißnauer and Andreas Jahn-Sudmann, 125–132. Marburg: Schüren. [Link here](#).
- Tychsen, Anders, Michael Hitchens, Thea Brolund, and Manolya Kavakli. 2006. "Live Action Role-Playing Games." *Games and Culture* 1 (3): 252–75. [Link here](#).
- Utsch, Milo N. R., Gisele L. Pappa, Luiz Chaimowicz, and Raquel O. Prates. 2020. "A New Non-Deterministic Drama Manager for Adaptive Interactive Storytelling." *Entertainment Computing* 34: 100364. [Link here](#).

- Volkman, Noelle. 2024. "‘LARP has Changed My Life Completely’: The Community and Creativity of Live Action Role Players." PhD diss., California State University, Long Beach. ProQuest (31143596).
- White, Rachel E., Emily O. Prager, Catherine Schaefer, Ethan Kross, Angela L. Duckworth, and Stephanie M. Carlson. 2017. "The ‘Batman Effect’: Improving Perseverance in Young Children." *Child Development* 88 (5): 1563–71. [Link here](#).
- Winardy, Gary Collins Brata, and Eva Septiana. 2023. "Role, Play, and Games: Comparison between Role-Playing Games and Role-Play in Education." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 8 (1): 100527.
- World Health Organization (WHO). 1997. *Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools. Pt. 1, Introduction to Life Skills for Psychosocial Competence. Pt. 2, Guidelines to Facilitate the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes*. 2nd rev. Geneva: World Health Organization. [Link here](#).
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

## LUDOGRAPHY

- Rolling. *97 Poets of Revachol*. Czech Republic. 2025-.
- ZA/UM. 2019. *Disco Elysium: The Final Cut*. PC. ZA/UM.

**Minyue Wu**, M.A., is a Ph.D. candidate and research assistant at the University of Göttingen’s Department of Intercultural German Studies. Her dissertation explores scientific culture in higher education amidst the rise of artificial intelligence, with a primary focus on discourse analysis. Her broader research interests encompass technology-enhanced multilingualism development and game-based learning. Her work seeks to understand how emerging technologies can be integrated into higher education while maintaining a critical, human-centered perspective on scientific practices, pedagogy, and communication.