Editorial
Transformative Play Seminar 2022:
Education, Meaning Making, and Personal Development

Welcome to Issue 13 of the *International Journal of Role-Playing*. This special issue is the first of a two-part series collecting the short articles presented during the Transformative Play Initiative Seminar, held at Uppsala University Campus Gotland in Visby, Sweden on October 20-21, 2022. The Transformative Play Initiative explores the use of analog role-playing games as vehicles for lasting personal and social change. Uppsala University now also serves as the host for the *International Journal of Role-playing*, after years of stewardship by Marinka Copier at Utrecht School of the Arts. The editors are profoundly grateful for Copier's service to the journal and academic community.

The hybrid seminar was hosted by the Transformative Play Initiative research group in the Games & Society Lab at the Department of Game Design. This seminar was sponsored by the Sustainable Heritage Research Forum (SuHRF) at Uppsala and Region Gotland. All seminar talks were recorded and most are featured on the Transformative Play Initiative's YouTube page, where they are accessible to a worldwide audience. The main theme of the conference was Role-playing, Culture, and Heritage, although participants could submit presentations on any relevant topic. While the seminar actively encouraged presentations from academics and practitioners alike, this issue contains only open peer-reviewed, scholarly articles. Seminar participants contributed to the peer review process, commenting on each other's work as part of the submission process, engaging in scholarly dialogue during the seminar, and following up afterwards to respond to peer review recommendations for their post-seminar proceedings articles.

The need for a seminar devoted to analog role-playing games (RPGs) is evident, as the topic is often marginalized in game studies as a whole. Similarly, academic exploration of the transformative potential of analog RPGs is less common than in digital games within the discourses of Serious Games, Games 4 Change, game-based learning, gamification, etc. In total, the seminar had 31 in-person presentations, including keynotes by Tadeu Rodrigues Iuama from Brazil, Liv Hernø-Toftild from Denmark, and Michał Mochocki from Poland. Our fourth keynote speaker, Mohamad Rabah from Palestine, was not able to attend our seminar, as the Swedish Embassy in Israel did not issue him a visa in time. Instead, Rabah sent us a statement, which was read aloud at the seminar. In addition, the seminar featured 10 online poster presentations, which were presented through Zoom as a parallel event to the conference. To our knowledge, the number of countries represented by speakers was at least 18, including presenters from Asia, South America, North America, and Europe, indicating a wide interest in this subject matter cross-culturally.

This issue will emphasize Education, Meaning Making, and Personal Development, with our upcoming Issue 14 reserved for topics specifically related to culture and heritage. Our first two articles present new approaches to educational theory with regard to analog role-playing games. Maryanne Cullinan and Jennifer Genova's "Gaming the Systems: A Component Analysis Framework for the Classroom Use of RPGs" presents terminology and a conceptual model for understanding the various aspects present when using RPGs in formal learning contexts, divided into context, materials, structural, and functional components. Their Conceptual Matrix unpacks these various categories with regard to specific domains of learning objectives, such as academic skills, social emotional skills, and executive functioning skills.

In a similar vein, Josefin Westborg's "The Educational Role-Playing Game Design Matrix: Mapping Design Components onto Types of Education" establishes the various types of role-playing games from which people can learn—leisure games, stand-alone educational RPGs, RPGs in education, and educational RPGs. In her matrix, Westborg distinguishes these games with regard to their relative use of framing activities, including emotional, intellectual, and educational processing, as well as the settings in which they likely take place, including informal, non-formal, and formal learning. While based in existing pedagogical literature, Cullinan, Genova, and Westborg's theories arise from personal experience as practitioners who have been using RPG in school settings for several years.

The next article focuses upon the applied use of role-playing for educational purposes with an emphasis on human rights. Aditya Anupam's "Playing the Belly of the Beast: Games for Learning Strategic Thinking in Tech Ethics" describes an interactive digital narrative the author is developing called *Lights Out Warehouse*, which is geared toward engineering students in universities. The game explores ethical issues around automated labor and organizing, topics that players navigate through a series of conversations with their manager at *NileCorp*, a company similar to Amazon. Players are encouraged to find solutions that increase justice for everyone, "where workers have more rights, the company benefits, and players keep their job."

Pivoting toward patterns of participation, our next article explores player behavior in the hugely popular Murder Mystery Games (MMGs) in China called Jubensha, a form of larp. In "Player Category Research on Murder Mystery Games," Shuo Xiong, Ruoyu Wen, and Huijuan Zheng present a player typology inspired by Bartle's (1996) Player Taxonomy of MUD participants, as well as GNS Theory (gamism/narrativism/simulationism) originally outlined as the Threefold Model by John Kim et al. (1997) based on theory developed by the indie tabletop role-playing game community in discussion forums, which was later developed by Ron Edwards (2003) at the Forge. The authors posit eight types of players based on their research into Jubensha players: professor, braggart, conqueror, detective, actor, politician, socializer, and viewer.

Our topics then shift more toward meaning making and personal development through role-playing games. Miguel Angel Bastarrachea Magnani's "A Coin with Two Sides: Role-Playing Games as Symbolic Devices" explores the ritual and mythic nature of RPGs and how these elements converge as symbols. The author's rich theoretical approach contributes to the growing literature on role-playing games and philosophy, as well as depth psychology, exploring RPGs "as apt tools that profoundly transform our subjectivities and re-enchant our worlds with new mythologies."

Along these lines, Ayça Durmus and Sedef Topcuoglu present an example of game design for such purposes in "*Self Arcana*: A Self-Reflective, Story-Based Tarot Game." The authors discuss the development of *Self Arcana*, a role-playing game involving drawing one's own tarot cards and engaging in storytelling in order to achieve greater self-insight. Durmus and Topcuoglu present a duoethnography, describing their own experiences playing the game, as well as their takeaways about its potential as a reflective tool.

Our last two articles discuss the use of role-playing games as a tool for identity exploration, particularly with regard to sexual identity. In Giuseppe Femia's "Reparative Play in *Dungeons & Dragons*," the author presents an autoethnography about his experiences playing *D&D* and his ability to express his queer identity through emergent play, particularly around expressions of asexuality. This example highlights RPGs' potential for what Femia describes as reparative play, following the work of Eve Sedgwick (2003) and Kara Stone (2018), in which queer players can use fiction to "give an accurate and positive representation of themselves while promoting alternatives to heteronormative culture."

Finally, Albert R. Spencer's "The Vampire Foucault: Erotic Horror Role-Playing Games as a Technologies of the Self" describes the potential of games such as in the World of Darkness to provide opportunities for *transformative bleed* (Bowman 2010; Beltrán 2012, 2013; Kemper 2020), in which players can experience personal transformation as a result of experiences bleeding-out into their daily lives. Spencer describes how character creation in World of Darkness games emphasizes deep character exploration and shadow work, as they are directly inspired by Jungian depth psychology. His autoethnography of his own experiences in *Vampire: Dark Ages* offer a vivid account of such play, in which Spencer used the character and co-created fiction as a springboard to explore dilemmas personal to him as a player. According to the author, in such play, the character and game function as what Michel Foucault (1988) called a "technology of the self."

Placed together, alongside the upcoming *Issue 14: Role-playing, Heritage, and Culture*, these articles represent a maturing field of role-playing game studies: one moving beyond basic definitions and foundational work to develop more complex theory and practice. They also represent a deepening of work in this emergent field of transformative play, which encompasses not only what happens in classrooms or non-formal learning environments, but also leisure play experiences.

As editors, we find these developments exciting and look toward the future of our field with great enthusiasm and curiosity as the journal transitions into its next era.

-- Sarah Lynne Bowman, William J. White, and Evan Torner
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