

Community Organization and Impact in Online Games

This is a report produced from a *TED Conversation* that ran one month, from February to March 2014, about interpersonal interactions and relationships within the communities that organize around online games. Our intent was to create a "natural laboratory" by grounding the conversation in contemporaneous experiences of gamers that both reflect and influence the attendant community experiences. We explored this online conversation as a form of "participatory journalism" (see e.g., <http://bit.ly/MgDdwA>). The list of key words below summarizes some of the more important threads.

- raw person or raw individual
- identity or persona or self
- self efficacy
- leadership
- engagement
- communication
- second-person standpoint
- communities or commitment
- respawn or one-life or lobbies
- mental health and wellness
- hard conversations
- civic hacking or civil hacking
- friends
- teach or learn
- civilized
- the long tail

Community interactions can be interesting and consequential outside the context of the gameplay around which the community organizes. We believe this potential for games is poorly understood by the general public. Yet there is an intense and general curiosity about what occurs in the interactions among gamers and in the impact of gameplay in society.

Our claim is that there is "no neutral" in the effects of significant interpersonal interactions that occur in online games. Games have prosocial effects or antisocial effects irrespective of genre (e.g., first-person shooter games).

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Summary

Our stated intent was "to create a natural laboratory for this TED conversation by grounding the conversation in contemporaneous experiences of gamers that both reflect and influence the attendant community experiences."

We refer to this kind of conversation as [diaβlogue](#). This is distinguished from a web-Based LOG of one's own ephemeral opinions. A diaβlogue utilizes multiple communication platforms to create a distributed and decentralized collaboratory for systematic development of capabilities. It thus is a synthesis of best practices in continuous beta and open innovation.

A diaβlogue removes walls between insiders and outsiders, it tends to eliminate the distance between presence and remoteness, and it blurs the distinction between first-hand and second-hand experience insofar as it provides all networked participants with inescapable accountability for their impact on each other and on their respective situations.

This TED Conversation built on what had been mostly oral communication between behavioral scientists and informants in and around a particular online game community over a two-year period. It has created a collaborative journal that is open to the public and, to the extent it is edifying, for the public good.

The TED Conversation did, in fact, both reflect and influence the contemporaneous experiences of gamers in the [Division IGR](#), a constitution-based gamer community. We believe we thus have made some progress in developing or at least promulgating a new form of [participatory science journalism](#).

While our intent was to build bridges between communities of practice rather than to draw a large audience, we are pleased that the open conversation has drawn outside interest ranging from "Linked Wellness" to "Blended Learning."

Note that in the text of the conversation, the original posts are listed in reverse chronological order. Indented under each original post, the comments are listed in chronological order.

The Conversation

□ [Justin Bastian](#)

9 hours ago: With 11 minutes left, I want to thank Dr. Riccio for creating and hosting this first-of-a-kind TED conversation, TED for granting us access to their amazing platform, everyone one who shared their personal experiences, questions and concerns and those of you who tuned in as this conversation progressed. I am proud to have been apart of this effort.

If you would like to remain plugged into the conversation or to learn more, head over to our:

Community Website - www.thedivisionigr.com

Community Forums - <http://community.thedivisionigr.com/>

Twitter - https://twitter.com/D_IGR

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/THEDIVISIONIGR?ref=hl>

Cheers!

[Gary Riccio](#)

13 hours ago: Thank you to all who contributed comments to this Conversation!

I now have 134 pages of deep thoughts and very personal experiences to digest. I haven't seen anything like the complexity and nuance in this crystallization of perspectives. When one considers how many people are involved in playing online games, and how many hours are devoted to playing such games, it is remarkable how superficial the commentary about this phenomenon usually is in the press.

Thank you, again, for elevating the dialogue.

[Justin Bastian](#)

9 hours ago: Thank YOU Gary!

[Gary Riccio](#)

1 day ago: With one day left in our conversation, let's give a shout out to Fritzie, our TED host. Thanks Fritzie!

[Justin Bastian](#)

1 day ago: Thank you Fritzie! I hope you've come away from this conversation more knowledgeable about or communities. :)

[Brady Rozens](#)

17 hours ago: Technology has evolved in the last decade to help facilitate pro-social outcomes never imagined by human kind. From Alpha Numerical pagers to VOIP headsets, this gave an individual the power to network. These types of prosocial tools

were utilized in video games during SOCOM: U.S. Navy Seals for the Sony Playstation 2. Utilizing both tools a pager and the games provided VOIP headset, bonds were formed on a worldwide scale. Myspace was founded in 2003 the same year SOCOM one of the more popular shooters of the era. This really networked a community of gamers and allowed them to utilize teamwork to complete skill based objectives. Now today this experience is shared on the internet in the form of Live streaming on services such as TwitchTV and you stream. And new social tools such as Twitter and Facebook have APIs that are integrated into the new Sony Playstation 4 operating system. Now the gamer can utilize better tools to stay connected and further promote prosocial gameplay on a level we have never seen before. How do we use it to solve bigger problems with fellow gamers and mental health? Many people are researching this, and are very close to a solution. Hang on to your seats.

16 hours ago: Sphere of influence. Networking. Good fight Heroes. Games, social networking and mental health. World influence.

Hang on indeed!

Gary Riccio

9 hours ago: There is much to be learned from the history of technology about what is similar and what is different about the emerging influence of new technology. The initial expectations and ultimate impact of telegraph and telephone are instructive in speculation about the evolving influence of the internet.

In an 1838 letter to Francis O.J. Smith in 1838, Morse wrote: "This mode of instantaneous communication must inevitably become an instrument of immense power, to be wielded for good or for evil, as it shall be properly or improperly directed." (extracted 12MAR2014 from <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/predictions/150/1830.xhtml>)

Authors Charles F. Briggs and Augustus Maverick wrote in their 1858 book, The Story of the Telegraph: "The whole earth will be belted with the electric current, palpitating with human thoughts and emotions" (extracted 12MAR2014 from <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/predictions/150/1830.xhtml>)

As reported in the book "Bell" by Robert V. Bruce, Kate Field, a British reporter who knew Bell, predicted in 1878 that eventually: "While two persons, hundreds of miles apart, are talking together, they will actually see each other." (extracted 12MAR2014 from <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/predictions/150/1830.xhtml>)

See also: <http://www.colorado.edu/communication/meta-discourses/Theory/carey2/tsld002.htm>
<http://courses.educ.ubc.ca/etec540/Sept04/kangd/Researchproject/inventionoftelephone.htm>

If the most important similarities have to do with intentional communication between two parties, with the intent of edification and influence, it seems to me that the most important difference is in online games. The social media to which Brady refers augment game play by providing deeper and broader shared awareness of concurrent experience. More importantly, amid the fun, collective game play brings surprising (existential) gravitas to social media to the extent that communication is about behavior that is visible to others and that brings opportunities for influence on others.

- [Troy Mills](#)

5 days ago: Rockstar's latest Grand Theft Auto installation has taken a very interesting line on the war against party poopers. Certain actions while playing online are awarded either good sport or bad sport value. Blowing up other players cars or leaving games while they are still going are all considered bad sport behavior. Given enough bad sport "points", the player is "dunced" or removed from public servers and forced to play in a server only for bad sport players. I have often wondered if there is any order and civility in these servers. Rockstar made the choice to not ban people for being bad sports but to put them all together. If only other games would do the same thing. It raises the question if enough bad examples are purged will the community go into remission and start fixing itself? Would the bad sport servers be filled with people trying to get back into public and acting civilized, or would they just embrace their fate? I have to believe that there would be some people that I would never play with if other games adopted this system. I have to remain positive that remove enough bad eggs and we can get back to the wholesome and quality community of the past.

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

3 days ago: I've been involved in trying to direct or "steer" a community in a collaborative and positive direction that benefits the objective play mechanics in some of these games. The truth is it can only work where people share similar values and seek to gain a similar experience from the activity. The surprising part is there are those that share the same value for exploitation and what others consider "bad sport behaviour"

One example is the dedicated space on the SOCOM server Playstation set aside for the eSeals. This was a competitive initiative with structured events and tournament ladders. We had our own forums and Admins. The problem is the Admins had no control over the dedicated server space. These lobbies quickly became the home of exploiters and cheaters for the soul purpose of sharing, learning and practicing the exploits, glitches and cheats. These were commonly known as GNK rooms or "Glitch No Kill" which is an understood agreement to only share cheats and glitches and to not kill others on the opposing team. It was a collaborative effort to undermine the "rules" of the game to gain advantages over others. This became the shared objective and provided the entertainment for those involved.

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: Thanks Troy and Scott for this kind of detail. The notion of community we all have been discussing in most of this TED Conversation suggests that we will have to consider many of the social structures that have been constructed in physical communities, included self governance and policing, that reflect and promote shared values. As in physical communities, it will be important to determine how to pay for, or otherwise motivate, the social structures to minimize the antisocial behavior that the vast majority of gamers who don't want in video games.

- Scott Woodbury

3 days ago: Another example is the Survival game DayZ which is both a PVP and PVE game type "Player verses Player and Player vs Environment" It's not a round based game with time limits like other shooters, you start with a character with only the basic cloths, no weapons or other supplies except a flashlight. The AI antagonists are zombies which predominantly occupy areas around towns and buildings where needed supplies are located. In addition there is an element of degradation for your character and your supplies. You have hunger, thirst, your cloths and weapons accumulate ware, damage and you can suffer from injuries. The end result is your death.

Many players when well equipped and healthy will turn on other survivors for sport, These players in the game are known as "bandits". Friends will form a group to pray on newly spawned players, or will single out individuals. There are handcuffs and rope in the game to capture players and there is rotten food and disinfectant with the mechanic to force feed a captured player.

This activity can create the element of distrust of a met player on a server and some will KOS or "Kill on Sight" any player they meet.

These stressors as part the game mechanic create the drama and reward for using your wits and skill. The reward is duration, the value is in your ability with the sparse equipment you can find or take from another. The end result is most everyone will eventually die and need to respawn to begin the process all over.

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: Thanks again for more detail, Scott. The PVE aspect of an online game certainly will help to create more engagement. PVE in a multi-player (not purely PVP) can be a potent way to engage with others, even if the shared resource limitations are fictitious. How else would one explain the popularity of Farmville?

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: Wow, Troy, this is an amazing post. It introduces an element of impact and organization in online game communities that we haven't really addressed.

"Rockstar made the choice to not ban people for being bad sports but to put them all together. If only other games would do the same thing. It raises the question if enough bad examples are purged will the community go into remission and start fixing itself? Would the bad sport servers be filled with people trying to get back into public and acting civilized, or would they just embrace their fate?"

The parallels with physical communities are fascinating. What an interesting natural laboratory it would be to develop various models for this kind of penalization or Balkanization and observe the personal adaptations to it. This gets to the heart of what it means to be human, as a social being, and it is the kind of question that has spurred some of the deepest debates in philosophy and religion for all of recorded history. At the very least, one would think there are business models for this kind of market segmentation based on different experiences that different demographics want from online games, most notably the social experiences they desire.

It would be great if we can get more comments on this kind of segmentation in online games.

[Justin Bastian](#)

22 hours ago: Troy, what a great point. I am a firm believer this is the future of in-game community management. Though, I challenge Scott a bit, I think that if you categorize gamers based on good gaming behavior, and tier access to things like downloads, weapons, giveaway codes, etc. and base access on their good gaming ranking, you can motivate even the most antisocial gamer. You can also begin to target the anti community with various content to incentivize the climb out of the gutter. There is a science to be applied there. Yes, there will always be those you can't help but if the relationship between the studio and community is strong, this I believe can lead most to higher ground. A thought just came to me, imagine, for instance, if in H-Hour, one week out of the month (always random) the good gaming clans were allowed to enter the antisocial servers with weapons and capabilities not available to the anti community. Like shooting fish in a barrel. Fun scrim for the good guys, incentive to get the hell out of that server for the bad.

Scott, on paper the way you described DayZ sounds like a terrible experience, but it isn't. Actually, I think due to DayZ's game design, the heightened sense of isolation over long periods of time in-game lends itself to a greater desire and appreciation for community in the long run. Just as it was in SOCOM 2, when not running with a clan meant you were probably going to lose the majority of games you played, no matter how good you played as an individual.

[Gary Riccio](#)

9 hours ago: The various forms of social stratification suggested in this thread could be coupled with educational offerings or resources that don't suffer from most of the inherent inequalities of traditional forms of education.

<http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=35&articleid=90&ionid=549>

A more egalitarian meritocracy could be achieved if there was easy access to information about the norms, mores, and privileges about a social class into which one desires to move. For online games, social mobility across more-or-less exclusive "servers" could be facilitated by mentors, stakeholders, caregivers, and good Samaritans who may or may not be gamers themselves.

Social structures beget social social structures until some sort of sustainable equilibrium is achieved. Social equilibrium presumably would be characterized by consistency with shared values.

- [Troy Mills](#)

5 days ago: In our dreams we experience true freedom, we are only shackled by what our imagination is capable of and our subconscious will allow. The next closest thing while awake to this euphoric state would be video games, that is unless you are a psychopath. In video games whatever the designers create is the only limitation. You can kill prostitutes or anyone for that matter, rob stores, swing around like Spider-man, and break laws without any repercussions. So why not develop an alter-ego to go along with playing online. This creation is not held by the same laws and possible afflictions as its real life maker. I have a friend from college that after graduating due to terrible circumstances is now bound to a wheelchair. This doesn't prevent him from raiding tombs, deep sea diving, battling through combat zones. He once told me now that his life is impaired; at least he still has his video games. Gaming has prevented him from slipping into depression. Many people game to escape the mediocrity of their lives, or to briefly escape the crushing truths of reality. As much as I appreciate the freedoms that multiplayer gaming can have, I am also sickened by how these freedoms can lead to tormenting others. Online people that are bullied can become the bullies, trolls, or emotional siphons that can ruin online gaming for people. Not everyone that has this freedom will use it responsibly, which can lead to more negativity, and ruining the experience for other people. Instead of an escape it becomes a prison, where you are surrounded by the things you are trying to escape. The only way to break the cycle is accountability. Hiding behind the anonymity of your avatar, there is very little that keeps you in check, and ensures that you are not ruining the gaming experience for other players. We sign behavioral agreements to play online, but there is very little that enforces that agreement. Reporting systems are only affective if the people receiving the report care.

[Gary Riccio](#)

2 days ago: "I have a friend from college that after graduating due to terrible circumstances is now bound to a wheelchair. This doesn't prevent him from raiding tombs, deep sea diving, battling through combat zones. He once told me now that his life is impaired; at least he still has his video games. Gaming has prevented him from slipping into depression. Many people game to escape the mediocrity of their lives, or to briefly escape the crushing truths of reality."

Thank you, Troy, for commenting on this aspect of games. It connects nicely with the posts by David Brendel about video games that clinical trials have been shown to be effective in treating depression. The implication is that these effects are not limited to the time people play video games; they spread to other aspects of life. I am interested in learning more about how these effects beyond video games involve more than mood or feeling of well being. To what extent do they influence behavior and performance in settings outside of video games? To what extent do they influence one's perception of oneself and one's own capabilities (e.g., "self efficacy") outside of video games?

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: "Not everyone that has this freedom will use it responsibly... The only way to break the cycle is accountability. Hiding behind the anonymity of your avatar, there is very little that keeps you in check, and ensures that you are not ruining the gaming experience for other players. We sign behavioral agreements to play online, but there is very little that enforces that agreement..."

This part of your post, Troy, gets to the heart of this conversation: community. How do interactions in an online game community provide the "accountability" that is so central to personal liberty and pursuit of happiness in this kind of community, perhaps just as in other kinds of communities? Is it merely a community of practice, or is it a community of (shared) responsibility in which individuals can have an enduring impact on others because of a (shared) commitment to influence and be influenced?

Justin Bastian

21 hours ago: Troy, I think the problems you described are almost entirely manageable through both game design and the community's relationship with the studio. Unfortunately, most industry leaders look at that solution as a matter of risk and not a strategic investment of internal resources.

Great questions Gary. The answers are varying. In most cases, it is up to the individual players to determine these things for themselves. One gamer in a lobby is generally decent but has a terrible time communicating with others online, one uses the multiplayer experience to puke out all of his or her frustrations with life, one is a noob and has no idea what is going on, one is a wallflower and generally voyeurs the experience and another is a leader within an organized gaming community. If you're on that team, how do you influence those gamers in-game and collaborate towards a win?

Leadership, emotional intelligence and experience.

When activated, these three things tend to yield, almost by default, a sense of accountability and shared purpose in most gamers. Even when the gamer has no idea it's happening.

Gary Riccio

8 hours ago: I think the convergence of these three things is in "a climate of attention to micro-experiences" that may or may not be significant to different people and, if so, may be significant in different ways to different people.

<http://griccio2013c.wordpress.com/2011/09/06/the-power-of-micro-experiences-in-the-workpla/>

The attention that may or may not involve verbal communication. Silence may be quite informative. Nonverbal behavior is enormously important, especially in emotional intelligence, but what does that look like in the online world?

<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/importance-nonverbal-elements-online-chat>

Games provide a rich source of nonverbal behavior relative to other interpersonal interactions on the internet. Nonverbal communication in online games is another pervasive aspect of contemporary culture that is poorly understood by the scientific community and by the general public.

Gary Riccio

5 days ago: This past week, the conversation pivoted on testimonials about the value of video games in personal development and wellness. This led to links with other TED Conversations and TED Talks ranging from social action to education. In this respect, it is useful to point out that my participatory scientific journalism in online game communities evolved out of the convergence of two lines of research.

One line of research, to which Morgan Darwin and Scott Flanagan alluded in their interviews on Science in the Wild (see links in prior post), addressed leader development in ecosystems of [training and education](#) characterized by a loose weave of nested communities of practice.

The other line of research addressed web-based instructional technology for [blended learning](#) that enabled outside experts to make expeditious and relevant contributions to a program of instruction, while from a distance, that approached the quality of guidance provided by a mentor with deep knowledge of the context for a learner as protege.

The connection we see is that engagement with people at a distance can be as meaningful as when people are present in the same physical environment if there is visibility into the context that can both reflect and influence the interpersonal interactions and thus that provide inescapable accountability for the influence of participants on each other as well as their respective context. This blurs distinctions between first-hand and second-hand experience as well as between presence and remoteness. The more important characteristic is the second-person standpoint discussed in earlier posts.

- o [Gareth Digby](#)

4 days ago: Building on your comment regarding "web-based instructional technology for blended learning" and Socrates Window: Being able to bring real life experiences into the classroom is important in showing the students how the techniques and procedures they are being taught can actually be implemented. The ability to Leverage The Long Tail (as in Web 2.0) to reach those outside experts who can bring niche experiences to a teaching environment is very powerful. It seems counter intuitive as most of the time we see The Long Tail being used to push a product from a single location out to those niche consumers, where as here we are using the Web to reach niche producers in order to bring their experiences into a single location - the classroom. (Of course, the classroom itself can be online reaching out to niche consumers of education.) These techniques allow the community to change from a simple one-to-many (teacher-to-students) relationship to a many-to-many relationship (mentors/teacher-to-students).

[Gary Riccio](#)

2 days ago: Some background on Dr. Digby's insightful post:

While massive open online courses (MOOC) will get the most traffic and notoriety for an individual site, for example, most people on the web as such will be involved in extremely decentralized transactions between small numbers of producers and consumers of knowledge (and, more generally, any kind of product or service, and between all types of influencers and those influenced). This is the "long tail" (of a power law distribution), a term attributed to Clay Shirky.

"Power law distributions, the shape that has spawned a number of catch-phrases like the 80/20 Rule and the Winner-Take-All Society, are finally being understood clearly enough to be useful... we know that power law distributions tend to arise in social systems where many people express their preferences among many options... counter-intuitive aspect of power laws is that most elements in a power law system are below average, because the curve is so heavily weighted towards the top performers...

the long tail of weblogs with few readers will become conversational. In a world where most bloggers get below average traffic, audience size can't be the only metric for success... it can keep far better track of friend and group relationships... In between blogs-as-mainstream-media and blogs-as-dinner-conversation will be Blogging Classic, blogs published by one or a few people, for a moderately-sized audience, with whom the authors have a relatively engaged relationship...

Because of the continuing growth of the weblog world, more blogs in the future will follow this pattern than today. However, these blogs will be in the minority for both traffic (dwarfed by the mainstream media blogs)

and overall number of blogs (outnumbered by the conversational blogs.)""

(extracted 10MAR2014 from:

http://www.shirky.com/writings/powerlaw_weblog.html, Clay Shirky, "Power Laws, Weblogs, and Inequality," first published February 8, 2003).

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: See also Chris Anderson's article on "The Long Tail" in Wired (Issue 12.10 - October 2004) at

<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>

"For too long we've been suffering the tyranny of lowest-common-denominator fare, subjected to brain-dead summer blockbusters and manufactured pop. Why? Economics. Many of our assumptions about popular taste are actually artifacts of poor supply-and-demand matching - a market response to inefficient distribution...

What's really amazing about the Long Tail is the sheer size of it. Combine enough nonhits on the Long Tail and you've got a market bigger than the hits... most successful businesses on the Internet are about aggregating the Long Tail in one way or another. Google, for instance, makes most of its money off small advertisers (the long tail of advertising), and eBay is mostly tail as well - niche and one-off products. By overcoming the limitations of geography and scale, just as Rhapsody and Amazon have, Google and eBay have discovered new markets and expanded existing ones...

This is the power of the Long Tail."

Gary Riccio

2 days ago: I believe the concept of "aggregation" (e.g., to which Chris Anderson referred) is the key to understanding Gareth's insight. As the long tail extends to smaller and smaller niches, it becomes clear that we are not simply referring to markets comprised of individuals (e.g., demographics). In addition, we are considering markets that are needs even within individuals. Individuals, as consumers, bundle (aggregate) products or services to satisfy a variety of their individual needs. The internet gives consumers almost unlimited potential for such aggregation. Aggregation even can extend to connections with significant others in adjacent markets (e.g., friends and relatives who have a stake in the value provided by a variety of products and services).

The implication is that there is an unprecedented opportunity for intermediaries, as aggregators, to help consumers with this need of needs. Intermediaries can be people or technology, most likely both. They are "socio-technical." They are people with whom consumers (and

providers) will have what Shirky prescribed as a "relatively engaged relationship." Intermediaries must understand context. It may be that the fast route to this intermediation is to be(come) intimately involved in a variety of the offerings in the "conversational" long tail.

The connection I am seeing between Gareth's insight and this TED conversation over the last week is that the interpersonal interactions and engaged relationships in online game communities can be an informative model for internet-mediated teacher-student interactions and for any business that seeks to utilize social media in an inspired approach to gamification and management of social context that has a powerful effect on the customer experience. For online game communities to become an "informative model," however, we must come to understand them more deeply. We must come to understand what kinds of conversation foster an engaged relationship mediated by the internet and how.

Justin Bastian

21 hours ago: Gareth, wow, quite the conversation you've sparked. What amazing content. I will no doubt be revisiting this segment.

Gary wrote: "the interpersonal interactions and engaged relationships in online game communities can be an informative model for internet-mediated teacher-student interactions and for any business that seeks to utilize social media in an inspired approach to gamification and management of social context that has a powerful effect on the customer experience. For online game communities to become an "informative model," however, we must come to understand them more deeply. We must come to understand what kinds of conversation foster an engaged relationship mediated by the internet and how."

Bravo!!!

For us, the "conversation" revolves around persona development and the untapped potential of community play:

<http://www.thedivisionigr.com/citizenship.html>

And, the "how" centers on a Gamer Bill of Rights, or a consensus of shared values and purpose:

<http://www.thedivisionigr.com/constitutions.html>

Gary Riccio

8 hours ago: Thanks Justin. This brings us back to the collaborative inquiry of my colleagues and I with the U.S. Army that illuminated the relationship between shared values in a community and interpersonal behavior that can be observed in formal tasks, whether extraordinary or mundane, and in "extra-procedural activity" that is observable in all situations. And, connecting with your comment about "Leadership, emotional

intelligence and experience..." See [selected chapters](#) from the work on Outcomes Based Training & Education.

[Gary Riccio](#)

5 days ago: Episode 8 of Science in the Wild (guest: Justin Bastian), <http://bit.ly/1g3rs8x>, made more explicit the link between prosocial behavior in online game communities and that in other intentional communities discussed by Morgan Darwin (Episode 6) and Scott Flanagan (Episode 7).

[Gary Riccio](#)

Mar 3 2014: Listen to two conversations about analogous approaches to prosocial behavior in intentional communities, meaningful interpersonal influence, and ubiquitous teaching and learning. See also the concurrent TED conversations in my prior post.

Developing people and organizations: A new idea in healthcare (guest: Morgan Darwin) Episode 6 of Science in the Wild at <http://bit.ly/MCczib>

Developing people and organizations: Expertise & knowledge translation (guest: Scott Flanagan), Episode 7 of Science in the Wild at <http://bit.ly/1eXAVK7>

[Justin Bastian](#)

20 hours ago: These interviews were AMAZING!

As a 10-year veteran of the tactical gaming scene, I've come to learn that the similarities between leadership development in the actual special operations community and our shooter gaming environments is uncanny. Also, the convergence of science applies in almost the exact same ways. Certainly the benefits of the scientific relationship are the same.

I sure would like to hear Morgan and Scott again. I hope you have them back on Gary.

[Gary Riccio](#)

8 hours ago: "The teachers of this country, one must say, have its future in their hands. The earnestness which they at present show in striving to enlighten and strengthen themselves is an index of the nation's probabilities of advance in all ideal directions [p. 3]... You make a great, a very great mistake, if you think that psychology, being the science of the mind's laws, is something from which you can deduce definite programs and schemes and methods of instruction for immediate school-room use. Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediate inventive mind must make that application, by using its originality [p. 7]... A science only lays down lines within which the rules of the art must fall, laws which the follower of the art must not transgress; but what particular thing he shall positively do within those lines is left

exclusively to his own genius [p. 8]...many diverse methods of teaching may well agree with psychological laws [p.9]... To know psychology, therefore, is absolutely no guarantee that we shall be good teachers. To advance that result we must have an additional endowment altogether, a happy tact and ingenuity to tell us what definite things to say and do when that pupil is before us. That ingenuity in meeting and pursuing the pupil, that tact for the concrete situation, though they are the alpha and omega of the teacher's art, are things to which psychology cannot help us in the least [p. 9]... We know in advance, if we are psychologists, that certain methods will be wrong, so our psychology saves us from mistakes. It makes us, moreover, more clear as to what we are about. We gain confidence in respect to any method which we are using as soon as we believe it has theory as well as practice at its back. [p. 11]" (James, 1899/1907).

James, W. (1907). Talks to teachers on psychology: and to students on some of life's ideals. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. (Original work published 1899)

[Gary Riccio](#)

8 hours ago: The quote from William James, above, embodies the mindset of my collaborative inquiry with Morgan Darwin and Scott Flanagan that linked directly with prosocial sensibilities I found in some online game communities. A deeper understanding of these issues requires that we bridge the gap between the art and science of leadership, education, and training.

"A vast amount of pedagogically relevant research has been conducted in the century since James's remarks but his advice is still relevant. Our advantage today is that psychology and other academic disciplines are in a better position to help instructors become more keenly aware of where 'certain methods will be wrong,' to save us 'from mistakes,' and to give us 'confidence in respect to any method which we are using as soon as we believe it has theory as well as practice at its back.' We were mindful of James's advice from the beginning of the investigation, and it thoroughly infused our program of research. In general, through our interactions with the progenitors and stakeholders of OBTE, we diligently sought to identify the 'tact and ingenuity to tell us what definite things to say and do when that pupil is before us.' Concurrently, we identified relevant science and scholarship that 'lays down lines within which the rules of the art must fall, laws which the follower of the art must not transgress' " (extracted from www.scribd.com/doc/227110347/Epilogue-Integration-of-Leadership-Education-Training-And-Self-Development)

[Gary Riccio](#)

Mar 3 2014: Concurrent TED Conversations that are relevant to this conversation:

How do you teach students to believe in themselves and to be growth-minded?

http://www.ted.com/conversations/22995/how_do_you_teach_students_to_b.html?

What will it take for everyone to become a teacher?

http://www.ted.com/conversations/23187/what_will_it_take_for_everyone.html?

Gary Riccio

Mar 3 2014: Communities that organize around online games can provide easy forums for "hard conversations" we all need to have, as described in a recent TED Talk:

http://new.ted.com/talks/ash_bekham_we_re_all_hiding_something_let_s_find_the_courage_to_open_up

"All a closet is is a hard conversation, and although our topics may vary tremendously, the experience of being in and coming out of the closet is universal. It is scary, and we hate it, and it needs to be done..."

"Hard is not relative. Hard is hard. Who can tell me that explaining to someone you've just declared bankruptcy is harder than telling someone you just cheated on them? Who can tell me that his coming out story is harder than telling your five-year-old you're getting a divorce? There is no harder, there is just hard. We need to stop ranking our hard against everyone else's hard to make us feel better or worse about our closets and just commiserate on the fact that we all have hard. At some point in our lives, we all live in closets, and they may feel safe, or at least safer than what lies on the other side of that door. But I am here to tell you, no matter what your walls are made of, a closet is no place for a person to live..."

"Number one: Be authentic. Take the armor off. Be yourself... If you want someone to be real with you, they need to know that you bleed too... Number two: Be direct. Just say it. Rip the Band-Aid off.. And number three, and most important, be unapologetic. You are speaking your truth. Never apologize for that. And some folks may have gotten hurt along the way, so sure, apologize for what you've done, but never apologize for who you are." (Ash Beckham)

Gary Riccio

Mar 3 2014: Communities that self organize around online games are a good example of "civic hacking" described in a recent TED Talk:

http://new.ted.com/talks/catherine_bracy_why_good_hackers_make_good_citizens

"Hacking is really just any amateur innovation on an existing system, and it is a deeply democratic activity. It's about critical thinking. It's about questioning existing ways of doing things. It's the idea that if you see a problem, you work to fix it, and not just complain about it. And in many ways, hacking is what built America. Betsy Ross was a hacker. The Underground Railroad was a brilliant hack. And from the Wright brothers to Steve Jobs, hacking has always been at the foundation of American democracy..."

"And in Code For America, we really try to embody the spirit of Ben Franklin. He was a tinkerer and a statesman whose conception of citizenship was always predicated on

action. He believed that government could be built by the people, and we call those people civic hackers..."

"So it's no wonder that the values that underly a healthy democracy, like collaboration and empowerment and participation and enterprise, are the same values that underly the Internet. And so it's no surprise that many hackers are turning their attention to the problem of government..."

"And I'm trying to this day to articulate the sense of empowerment and responsibility that I feel for the place that I live based simply on this small act of participation. And by stitching together my small act with the thousands of other small acts of participation that we're enabling through civic hacking, we think we can reenergize citizenship and restore trust in government..."

"And we have our own brigades at Code for America... We have 31 brigade U.S... we're opening up the brigade to international cities for the first time, starting with cities in Poland and Japan and Ireland." (Catherine Bracy)

Justin Bastian

19 hours ago: "[Benjamin Franklin] was a tinkerer and a statesmen, whose conception of citizenship was predicated on action... Collaboration, empowerment, participation and enterprise are the same values that underlie the internet." Wow.

Small act = micro experiences = foundation.

Mexico app speaks to our Congo initiative.

Gary Riccio

8 hours ago: Justin briefly introduced his "Congo initiative" at the end of his interview on Science in the Wild. See Episode 8 at <http://bit.ly/1g3rs8x>

Gary Riccio

Mar 1 2014: Weekly Curation: To facilitate participation of visitors to this conversation, periodically I am highlighting key words one can find using one's browser (not the search utility in the panel at the upper left of this page). The key words will direct visitors to important topics from the first two weeks of this conversation. Visitors can then reply to the relevant post or write an "original post" (OP). Additional key works from the second week:

- * respawn or one-life or lobbies
- * mental health and wellness
- * friends

Gary Riccio

Mar 1 2014: "We have to stop disliking our children" (Penn Jillette on Video Games & Violence) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohzJqq_m3uo

The applause of the audience in this show is a thundering reminder of how ignorant we are, as a society, about the culture of playing video games and especially about the social aspect of online games, whether prosocial or antisocial. We need a different kind of public conversation that seeks above all else to become better informed.

It is important to note that, while we have been focusing on prosocial effects of online games in our TED Conversation, we don't assume that the effects are always positive. We do assume, however, that the most positive and the most negative effects are due to the social interactions that occur more or less spontaneously around particular online games rather than to the games themselves (to the extent that one can make a valid distinction here).

As Dan C points out, games can be designed to allow the development of relationships outside of gameplay. They don't have to foster it; they simply can avoid creating barriers to the social interactions that people crave. Communities will self organize if online games allow it. Games can come out into the commons or they can retreat to remote places where life confronts only that which is not alive. In the light of day, we can come to understand how people influence each other and what they come to mean to each other in new social media and new forums.

Justin Bastian

19 hours ago: "I believe, that [our] goal, without condescension and without manipulation, is to tell the truth as [we] see it."

Penn is amazing >> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsXxUKjkl8>

Gary Riccio

7 hours ago: "if I'm trying to convince them, I have not given any possibility of them being right" (Penn Jillette)

Gary Riccio

Feb 28 2014: Important and informative post a few minutes ago from Dan C about SOCOM Navy Seals franchise in reply to my reply two days ago to Luken Bacher

Gary Riccio

Feb 27 2014: "Heroes are ordinary people whose action is extraordinary, who act when others are passive, who give up ego-centrism for socio-centrism"

"develop the heroic imagination and hero talents, to think of one's self as a hero in waiting"

https://new.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_on_the_psychology_of_evil

Justin Bastian

19 hours ago: In my experience, giving up "ego-centrism for socio-centrism" doesn't mean we do so in sacrifice of our own well-being or personal ambitions. I have found that it actually enhances ones self-awareness, individualism and influence.

I ask, who, on average, embodies the heroic imagination in daily practice more than gamers? :)

Loved this presentation Gary. Great share.

Gary Riccio

7 hours ago: You make an important point, Justin. To some extent, the distinction between self and other is artificial, or at least the distinction is not always relevant. Check out my earlier posts in response to Tom Chatfield's OP in which I mention some of the scientific literature on more extended notions of self.

Ibarra, H., & Hunter, M. (2007). How leaders create and use networks. *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1), 40–7.

Neisser, U. (Ed.) (1996). *The perceived self: ecological and interpersonal sources of self knowledge*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Neisser, U., & Jopling, D.A. (Eds.) (1997). *The conceptual self in context*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jay Gransky

Feb 25 2014: Being a gamer for my entire life has helped me with issues and problems i have ran into through out my life. Let me tell you my story! I grew up in Tampa FL, with my two lovely parents. My mother always told me that i was going to be something great, Well teacher all through school didn't think that. Most teachers thought i was going to end up in jail with most of the kids i hung out with. this all started around 6th grade. After awhile i started to thinking the same way! I got into a lot of trouble through out middle school. after 8th grade summer i was going to become a freshmen in high school ! i was so pumped to get away from all those kids i hated and teachers. I was going to start a new life! But the thing was, the school i went to was right in the middle of the ghetto! So i started hanging with the wrong people. My freshmen year was tearable, I got into a lot fights and i didn't care what teachers said to me or thought about i just didn't care ! I ended getting kicked out of school and sent to another high school. now this school was all rich kids, so seeing all these kids pulling up in BMWs was kinda like a smack in the face. i ended getting kicked out of that school 6 months later. Now going into my sophomore year i went to a little HS kinda like a private school. the summer after my 9th grade year i didn't get into ANY trouble at all ! and the reason was, my Dad bought me a

PlayStation and Socom ! i fell in love with online gaming. i played for a few months before i met THE DIVISION IGR. When i met them, they took me in as a brother! Even if i was a knuckle head, i guess they saw something in me , besides being a complete animal at Socom! I was 15 years when i join them ! I'm now 21 ! and i am proud to say that my community has taught me more then i have every learned all through out school! i'm now a SGT in DIVISION IGR and a Student at a night working to go to a College for Graphic Design! I don't know where i would be without them!

Sgt.Shamrock

Justin Bastian

Feb 25 2014: Wow... amazing post Josh. Watching you develop over the years as a gamer and a young man has been an amazing experience. From getting to know you and your parents, to your friends, to your visions of a higher ground, you have taught me so much about the possible in online games. Thank you.

I am very proud of who you have become and continue to grow into. You have a very bright future ahead of you sir. Keep up the great work.

Gary Riccio

Feb 26 2014: Thank you, Jay, for the courage to write about this transition, and thank you for trusting us enough to share it in this open conversation.

I invite you to draw in some of your "brothers" in a back and forth about the details of how you interacted with each other inside and outside of game play so that we can come to a better understanding of the rich relationships that are possible in an online game community. I am sure you have some specific stories that demonstrate these possibilities.

Thanks again, Mr. Shamrock!

- Luke Ward

Feb 25 2014: I, as a gamer for literally my entire life, and a firm believer in gaming's potential benefits in research, study, mental health care and awareness, and a variety of other fields can say, without a doubt say that under the right circumstances, gaming has a profound prosocial effect on those who would like to capitalize on it. About three to four years ago aI was a very introverted person, rarely socializing with anybody outside of family and close friends. Gaming was my main pastime, still is, and I experienced firsthand the ardupus task of breaking through the thick exterior of gaming communities to find friends. It's true, a lot of the time, a multiplayer game's community can be hostile, unforgiving, exclusive, and even offensive, and I think that's why such a stigma around online gaming exists as it does today. But there are gold nuggets tucked away in that monolithic wall of sediment and nothingness that are collaborative, cohesive, competent communities, and the one I, and hundreds of thousands more, happened to find, was the community surrounding SOCOM.

SOCOM came about in the infancy of console multiplayer gaming, and it shows that the dissassociation with others related to online anonymity hadn't quite set in yet. People who were respectful, courteous, amicable, and good to chat with were in the majority; plentiful. The people I met on SOCOM, online, who frequently lived countries and continents away from me were the people who unknowingly taught me to socialize, got me out of my own shell, and for that I'm thankful. I want to show my thanks by saying that online gaming has potential to be a valuable tool in judging and furthering people's character development. It uncovers persona, for better or worse, it can test personality under pressure, introduce people to challenge, build character. Just needs to be in the right circumstances, and in that regard, SOCOM was a lightning bolt that struck a nail directly on the head.

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 25 2014: "It uncovers persona, for better or worse, it can test personality under pressure, introduce people to challenge, and build character."

Not only do you provide testimony as an example, but that description is the perfect way to describe the backbone behind the effort. You can always develop something incorrectly, hence the "hostile, unforgiving... and offensive" communities you explained. But if used correctly, the impact can be real. I couldn't have said it better.

Everyone wants to win, and therefore whenever you play a game to win, a lot of your actions, down to the smallest detail, have significance. This is a little different from reality, where individuals don't see every single minute detail of their activities with too much pressure or stress. In a video game, all of your actions in real-time are meaningful, based on how badly you want to win. Because you invest value, you naturally analyze your actions more, and improvements are made (at least, that's the typical way people respond to a negative outcome within gameplay). This dynamic can apply to not hitting your target in a shooter game, using a poor strategy in any RTS, or being a jerk to your teammates, which might keep you from winning the game.

In short, because you care about the game, you care more about your actions. You realize things about yourself, and as a result you improve (hopefully). This is my belief on what gets people out of their shell, what influences people to become more social, and what can make people feel more empowered in every day life.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 26 2014: Thank you, Luke and Daniel! These posts today are amazing. Online game communities may be the best kept secret of our time. And these posts also are helping us understand a little better why game design matters.

Require gamers to work together, reflexively, to achieve objectives that they "care about." Games can be designed to challenge gamers psychologically if not

morally (see my post about David Sears below). These are not tests that one passes or fails. This kind of test informs to the extent it "uncovers persona, for better or for worse" (i.e., they are formative assessments rather than summative assessments). The choices to do something with this information, for better, are what "build character" (see e.g., [Outcomes-Based Training & Education](#))

And that is where community is instrumental as the comments of Jay and Luke powerfully provide witness.

[Justin Bastian](#)

19 hours ago: Burnt wrote: "Not only do you provide testimony as an example, but that description is the perfect way to describe the backbone behind the effort. You can always develop something incorrectly, hence the "hostile, unforgiving... and offensive" communities you explained. But if used correctly, the impact can be real. I couldn't have said it better."

o [Troy Mills](#)

5 days ago: I came to the realization the other day as to why Socom and the community that it created was far better than what has replaced it. The game rewarded teamwork, and strategy definitely helped but that alone didn't solidify the community and bond it. Many people believe it was the lobby system and the deadbox, but to really get to the heart of it we need to understand what the world outside the game was like. When Socom 1 and 2 came out it was in a way the age of innocence for the online gaming community. It wouldn't be for at least 5 years before words like; cyberbully, troll, internet gangster, try-hard, or even youtube, would become house hold words. The first one was released nearly 1 year after 9/11, there was still internet chivalry. People were too busy being fascinated by the fact they could talk to people all over the world, to succumb to the intoxicating powers of anonymity. People put themselves out there and invited people into their lives; there was more concern with sharing things about themselves and making their existence known, than spreading hate and discontent. People were honest and friendly, helpful and kind; there are not many left online that have those qualities in today's online community. Now it seems just about every person you run into online is working some sort of angle, there is so much falsity people are content to hide behind a façade then be genuine for fear of backlash. People reinvent themselves as a coping mechanism to prevent being vulnerable. It doesn't matter how terrible you have it in the real world, you can be whomever you want to be online.

[Gary Riccio](#)

7 hours ago: Thanks Troy! So it sounds like online community *places* such as "the lobby system and the deadbox" might be necessary but not sufficient to generate the more prosocial behavior that the vast majority of gamers apparently want. My guess is that online communities also need long-term relationships among the members, even if not among all the members.

If one doesn't consider the historical context of another person playing the game, and especially if one doesn't consider the future impact of the shared experience, then one might as well be interacting with an algorithm or AI. In the razor's edge of the present, humanity is infinitesimally thin or almost nonexistent.

So the questions become: What are the social structures that bring humanity and commitment to the communities that play online games together? What are the online tools or business offerings that enable the formation and use of such social structures? If we can begin to answer these questions, we might find "the long tail" of the market for experiences in online game communities.

- [Troy Mills](#)

5 days ago: Especially in gaming unless you want to, no one will ever know the real you, you can hide behind your avatar and a cool user name. Being real and showing emotions is a good way to get picked apart and marked as a target for trolling or other nastiness. Online all you have is your reputation; KDR, awards, unlocks, hours played, rank. This is all fake stuff someone made up, it has nothing to do with real life. Truth is people get lost in all the fake and forget there is another human being on the other end.

Sometimes I wonder if Socom came out now instead, what the community might have been like. I can guarantee it would have been very different than the memories that people have about the community. Luckily it came out when it did.

On a side note being a leader can have similar issues as being in an online community. Not showing emotions and invulnerable. Being too real/ human can result in lost respect and people challenging your status, as well as subordinates questioning your authority.

[Gary Riccio](#)

7 hours ago: The key being "unless you want to."

It is difficult for me to imagine what it means to be a leader if "no one ever will ever know the real you." The difference between a leader and a manager (or perhaps a "boss") is that a leader is a role model. One can't be a role model if one is inauthentic or impenetrable.

No leader serves subordinates well by hiding emotions or vulnerability. Demonstrating how to utilize emotion and share it in overcoming obstacles is a valuable contribution to subordinates. This doesn't mean that one has to talk about emotions, although that can be of value if practiced judiciously. One can and should become attuned to nonverbal manifestations of emotion. Turning down the gain, so to speak, on this valuable channel of information can be dangerous.

Utilizing and sharing emotion experience as information about a situation increases one's ability to control the situation. The key is not to let emotions force one inside of oneself. If one comes to understand emotions as informative about self in relation to the social or physical surroundings, they can play a valuable role in maintaining the outward orientation that is critical in ambiguous or changing situations. [They can help one adapt.](#)

[Gary Riccio](#)

1 day ago: A more provocative claim is that online games allow one to manifest an identity that is more authentic, more true to oneself, than the identity that one is forced to have in the physical world. Other people reinforce one's identity, for better or for worse.

In the physical world, one is more limited in the groups of people in one's life (e.g., co-workers, neighbors), and this limited interpersonal context can be dissonant with one's true self. In other words, one may have to spend significant amounts of time with people who can't relate to or even recognize one's true self, especially if one has unusual likes and dislikes or ways of thinking.

In "the third space," social mobility is increased dramatically because it is unconstrained by distance and superficial characteristics of appearance. For better or for worse, one can find other people with similar idiosyncrasies or at least who understand and appreciate them in the context of shared values. For prosocial experiences, the key is finding a community in which one can have habitual relationships with others. In such enduring relationships, one can display the persistent idiosyncrasies that define one as an individual as such.

None of this means that one cannot and should not play games in which one can momentarily experience a fantasy identity. This does not preclude also engaging more continuously in online game communities that are primarily about getting to know oneself and others and enjoying the opportunity to influence and develop each other.

[Justin Bastian](#)

17 hours ago: "On a side note being a leader can have similar issues as being in an online community. Not showing emotions and invulnerable. Being too real/human can result in lost respect and people challenging your status, as well as subordinates questioning your authority."

I've found the key to effective community leadership to be the opposite Troy. The ultimate challenge for many gamers is to operate as a true persona, to shatter the notion that your actual identity places you at a disadvantage or diminishes your ability to be taken serious.

For some, the true persona pursuit takes real courage and presses on a real fears. What better place to practice ones self-awareness than a virtual world with "no real consequences." What's to loose?

What a better gym to work out interpersonal weaknesses and build core strengths than in the multiplayer games we play. Sure, mistakes will be made and vulnerability exposed. Until it fades out all together, embarrassment can be a reoccurring bi-product. One might even look like an ass hat from time to time. That's life.

Over and over, I've witnessed the persona pursuit transform lives.

Everything to gain.

Gary Riccio

7 hours ago: Opportunities for safe and frequent practice of any skill are enormously valuable. This is well established in simulation-based training for all sorts of skills in all sorts of professions or in the activities of daily living.

So the question become: What are the characteristics of a "safe" simulation or environment for practicing such things as leadership, judgment, authentic confidence, initiative, and accountability? Are there safe ways for one to experience "lost respect and people challenging your status" in a game?

LUKEN BACHER

Feb 25 2014: As a lifelong gamer, it is refreshing to see an interest from the scientific community on this subject. Rather than write a long-winded opinion with my first post, I would rather just list some events I have witnessed over the years within the SOCOM franchise.

- Two clanmates who played together nightly for years, married each other and are happily together to this day.
- Thousands of clanmates purchased consoles, games, and accessories for less privileged teammates to keep them a part of the team.
- Most longtime clans have been together for 5-10 years and talk on the phone between gaming. Countless stories have been shared of meetups in real-life, and people becoming real-life friends. In my case, I met a friend from this game who lived in the same city. Along with some other friends we met in-game, we started the largest community fansite for the gaming franchise that is still thriving today.
- I made a real life friend from the game. Watched him marry and serve a year long tour in Iraq. He came home to a discharge, a divorce, and no place to live. He lived on my couch for several months until he could get back on his feet.
- I was a clan leader of 100+ gamers that contained several high school and college students who I watched graduate, earn degrees, marry, and eventually have children over a period of seven years. I knew the names of their parents, wives, husbands, and kids who

even chatted into the headsets at times. I was there to counsel them with advice as a friend. I was there to threaten to kick them off the team if they didn't logout and goto class or work. I was there to take their mind off the death of a loved one if they needed it.

Some of us spent thousands of hours each on these games, and we were "on the phone" with headsets with the same 8-100 people. I learned that my time spent with specific online games was just an extension of real life like my cell phone. Except we were doing something really fun together as a team while we talked.

Gary Riccio

Feb 25 2014: Thanks Luke! An entire book probably could be written about the deeply personal stories behind each one of these bullet points. It sounds like you have experienced a meaningful presence in this kind of community for a very long time. I would like to hear more of course but this testimonial already tells us a lot about outcomes and impact.

I look forward to hearing more from you about how your community formed. Your community is not the Division IGR with which I have been doing "participatory journalism," for the last two years, about prosocial behavior in online game communities. What is it about the particular games you all play that drew you together and sustained the relationships for so long?

- Dan C

Feb 28 2014: " What is it about the particular games you all play that drew you together and sustained the relationships for so long?"

I like some of the guys here found this sense of community they speak of also with the Socom Navy Seals franchise. The Socom community was a lot more tight knit then you see in the typical juggernaut online games like COD. While we always liked to fashion ourselves as this special community other games didn't have I think the game itself is what fostered that kind of community more then the people.

The games nowadays seem more geared towards personal rewards and accomplishments. Instead of playing with the team they are paying attention to what they need to do to get this virtual trophy or to unlock this item or gun. That winds up taking priority over the objective they are supposed to complete. The games nowadays have respawn so being social and forming strategies isn't as important when you have unlimited lives to compensate for mistakes or "lone wolfing it" without your team. Games nowadays use the quick match system instead of the traditional lobbies so you don't go back to the same rooms and run into all the regulars from that room to form those close relationships.

Socom had lobbies, friends and clans would all know exactly where to be to meet up each day. The objectives required team work if you wanted to be successful. You had one life per round so if you died you would chat amongst the other dead to form a gameplay or counter strategy for the

next round. Or you might spend that time getting to know people on a more personal level. Since respawn is non stop action and less team oriented there's little incentive for people in those games to even be social with others in the game.

I really think a large part of what makes a very tight social community is a game design that fosters that kind of environment. I mean if you had matchmaking and respawn only in Socom I don't think the community aspect we know of now ever would have happened.

Gary Riccio

Feb 28 2014: "The games nowadays have respawn so being social and forming strategies isn't as important when you have unlimited lives to compensate for mistakes or "lone wolfing it" without your team. Games nowadays use the quick match system instead of the traditional lobbies so you don't go back to the same rooms and run into all the regulars from that room to form those close relationships."

Thanks Dan. This is very helpful. One-life and lobbies seem to be the key. So the question, I guess, is whether developer and publishers are out of touch with the market or sub-optimizing on one market segment no matter how large. Do you think these trends are market driven or do they have something to do with the cost of developing games that are strategically interesting enough to make time in lobbies or strategic planning sufficiently interesting? Or does the new generation of game designers even know the art of the possible exemplified by earlier games?

- Troy Mills

5 days ago: I have always had my suspicions that Respawn is one of the main problems in Online Multiplayer Gaming. The number of behavioral changes that have resulted in the players being subjected to the spoils of respawn are numerous. I will only elaborate on my own observations as to the changes I went through, though I will bring to light an online article I found on the subject.

Study: Too much TV, games for kids = shorter attention span by Sheryl Ubelacker <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/study-too-much-tv-games-for-kids-shorter-attention-span/article560503/>

When I went from Socom Navy Seals, a mainly One-Life style game to Call of Duty Black Ops a mainly respawn style game, which was the first "COD" game that I purchased I underwent several changes. I spent approximately two years playing COD "BO and BO2" after which I returned to Socom. Some of these

changes only came to light when I went back to playing *Socom Confrontation* on the PS3.

Respawn is basically non-stop playing, giving constant action with little to no waiting time between lives. The player loses feeling of significance in their character life, as well as any accountability in decision making at both mission critical and non-critical times. My Kill to Death ratio or KDR suffered drastically because I never had to "live/die" with the consequences of irresponsible or reckless behavior. I could always count on the next life.

Players that valued their lives and did everything that they could to not die, as well as camped or were not impetuous with their actions were called "try hards". This was meant as a derogatory statement, and such behavior should be discouraged. I can't imagine the affect a community fostering such values will have on future generations.

Abandoning my morals in the name of achievement hunting was another problem.

There are many other behaviors that have resulted not just from the Respawn but the sickening mindset the games like COD instill in players, some for life.

[Justin Bastian](#)

16 hours ago: Dan, I whole heartedly agree with your position on SOCOM and the value of David's game design. In 2002, game design was really our only construct for rich online interaction.

Today, using interactive tools such as console networks, STEAM, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, Twitch, YouTube, Instagram, etc. in, around and outside of gameplay to stay connected creates a continuous stream of engagement unlike anything we have experienced to date. And, it's only growing.

Our ecosystem has evolved. Now, I believe a game's community is as important as its design. I think Gary really nails this in his open letter explaining the relationship between games Dev, community and science >>

<http://www.thedivisionigr.com/triad.html>

[Gary Riccio](#)

7 hours ago: Wow Troy. This is pretty powerful testimony about the distinction between one-life and respawning. I imagine there will always be a market for the simple thrills of respawning just as there always have been for arcade games or carnival games.

A big question that has emerged in this TED Conversation is not so whether existing online games will change or be replaced but whether new products and services will emerge in the online game space to fill needs that aren't being addressed adequately or at all by extant online games.

My assumption from my observations of gamers has been that community experiences are a relatively neglected need. It will be interesting to see if that assumption is validated by the development and success of offerings that provide deeper and more meaningful community experiences

[Justin Bastian](#)

14 hours ago: What an awesome community snapshot Luke!

"I learned that my time spent with specific online games was just an extension of real life like my cell phone. Except we were doing something really fun together as a team while we talked."

Man, isn't that the truth. Even though our interactive ecosystem has exploded over the past decade, no other social platform ties it together quite like games.

Thank you for joining the conversation. Great share.

[Gary Riccio](#)

6 hours ago: "we were doing something really fun together as a team while we talked"

Talk is different and it becomes more meaningful when it refers to concurrent collaboration and shared experience because it connects us, together, with our respective personal histories and future personal consequences. It gives us visibility and opportunities for influence on each other and, eventually, inescapable accountability for it. Collaborative reflection on shared experience thus "weaves a tight social fabric" from individual threads.

http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 24 2014: @ Fritzie Yes, thank you. I grabbed a different link and edited my post. I was not able to rely to your comment. I left the content as it's still relevant.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 24 2014: TED Conversations only go three layers deep on replies (see e.g., gray arrow to the left of the reply). Scott's earlier post was 14 hours before my

reply here. You can scroll down to see it or search for the following link that Scott provided in that post:

<http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp>

Thanks Scott!

- [David Brendel](#)

Feb 23 2014: I approach this topic as a psychiatrist who believes gaming holds huge untapped potential for good in my profession. The online game SPARX has been shown to help depressed adolescents achieve remission at a higher rate than standard, evidence-based cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). The remission rate for the game was 43% versus 26% for face to face CBT. However, we are not yet to the point where there is widespread community acceptance or discussion about the SPARX phenomenon.

For the purpose of this discussion about community interactions around online games, I will share some thoughts arising from the SPARX experience.

For games like SPARX to have a major societal impact, people must be aware of its existence and benefits. It needs to be part of the therapeutic culture. Up to now, gaming has been denigrated by many who believe kids and many adults spend too much time on games. In many camps, there is a knee-jerk assumption that gaming may be fun but must be bad for the brain and for society. Some academics are working to stand this assumption on its head -- see American Psychologist article on brain benefits of gaming: <http://bit.ly/1k2tBVi>

As more research on gaming becomes available, we could see a "tipping point" toward widespread community discussion on the benefits of well-designed games. Mental health professionals will have to move past old assumptions, professional "ego", and financial/guild concerns to embrace the fact that gaming may serve a role in clinical treatment. Parents and teachers will need to discuss which games kids should be encouraged to play -- not whether they should be playing at all (what a waste of time when gaming is already enshrined as part of their everyday experience"). Kids will talk with their friends about how cool SPARX is and how to win it. Maybe they'll play it together. When community discussion on "therapeutic gaming" is lit on fire, we could see SPARX and other games transform our world and promote mental health.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 23 2014: Has the game SPARX been evaluated as yet by anyone who is not one of the game's developers or connected to them? I went to the site and found published research only from researchers personally connected to the game. Is it a multiplayer game in which depressive kids are protected from trolling and so forth, or is it controlled from the start in terms of who can play with whom and what they can do?

It is quite believable to me that various sorts of games might help young people deal with a challenge like depression. If therapies like psychodrama help some people, and if kids are so drawn to fantasy novels, why not games with imaginary quests in which they can participate?

- [David Brendel](#)

Feb 24 2014: SPARX has been studied primarily by its developers in New Zealand, spearheaded by Sally Merry. It was their impressive results that were published in the British Medical Journal. Part of the core mission of LinkedWellness is to further study and develop SPARX and similar games. There are ongoing studies of SPARX at this time, including a U.S.-based study of the effects of SPARX on functional MRI scans of the brain. We hope that this and future studies like it will enhance the evidence base for SPARX and suggest new directions for developing the game. SPARX will be strictly controlled from the start to avoid trolling and other problems. We believe it will be best for there to be some monitoring of how players are doing clinically, so that they can be referred to other forms of treatment and care if necessary. The efficacy of SPARX has been validated in adolescents with mild to moderate depression, and we need to be cautious in the approach to individuals with severe illness like suicidality and psychosis. It is quite likely, however, that SPARX and other well-designed online games could be a component of the care of people even with more severe depression or other psychiatric conditions.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 24 2014: Thank you, David, for revealing this exciting extrapolation of our interest in prosocial gaming! We have some colleagues who are pursuing game-based interventions to help veterans with post-traumatic stress, both rehabilitation and growth, and other colleagues who are developing games for rehabilitation of veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury (see links below). We believe online games can begin to erase the problematic boundaries between self help and managed care, especially through a broader definition of community and collective endeavor (e.g., overcoming the false dichotomy of talking and doing, together).

To be sure, we have different motivations and breadth of agendas. More importantly, there is a common commitment to developing and promulgating broader approaches to wellness and, with existential sensibilities, to help consumers and providers have greater choice and responsibility both individually and together. We agree with your optimism about transforming the world through collective endeavors at the level of socio-technical ecosystems instead of compartmentalized supply and demand, for example through community, disintermediation, open innovation, brand activation, engagement marketing, or the delight in collaborative play.

We are thrown into the world together, and together we must make meaning of it.

<http://www.aptima.com/capabilities/gaming-analytics/using-games-cognitive-rehabilitation-soldiers-traumatic-brain-injury>

<http://www.prlog.org/12272030-vital-warriors-founder-mikal-vega-to-receive-prestigious-humanitarian-award.html>

- **David Brendel**

Feb 24 2014: Gary, Thanks so much for sharing these thoughts about games to help with PTSD and TBI, both of which often don't respond adequately to the conventional medical treatments involving psychotropic medications. The medication approach is so passive in many ways -- take a pill and wait to see if it will make things better. Even when the medications help to reduce the severity and intensity of symptoms, something more is necessary. Here is where I find your remarks about "existential sensibilities" and "choice and responsibility" so important and enlightening. The community of clinicians (and many others) serve people with PTSD and TBI best when we engage with them as active co-participants in recovery and wellness, rather than simply treat "patients" as bundles of neurons waiting to be passively modulated by drugs (even though the drugs may be helpful in settling the nervous system enough so that people can assert themselves as individuals with choice and responsibility). The right kind of games invite people to proactively take control of and shape their mental lives. We are in rudimentary phases of developing optimal games for people with neuropsychiatric challenges, but the existential and choice-based philosophy you articulate will help to drive the field forward toward novel, unforeseen options for human community and wellness.

Gary Riccio

Feb 24 2014: Our existential sensibilities were invigorated recently in our work on leadership, education, training, and service "in extremis" (actually in "trans-extremis" conditions) outside of online games but the relevance has been obvious to us throughout our participatory journalism with online game communities.

See the [links to our prior work](#) in which we had to develop a transdisciplinary meta-theory, that was empirically viable, to cross boundaries between theory and praxis.

Thank you, David!

Justin Bastian

16 hours ago: It's amazing to have discovered SPARX and your games initiative David. Thank you for joining us! Because we share a similar purpose and as I read your post, I read the following quote (paraphrased) like this:

"As more research on gaming becomes available, we will see a "tipping point" toward widespread community discussion on the benefits of well-designed games and the communities they orchestrate. Games professionals will have to move past old assumptions, professional "ego", and financial/guild concerns to embrace the fact that gaming can serve a transformative role in our world. Parents and teachers will need to discuss which games and communities kids should be encouraged to engage -- not whether they should be playing at all."

If a persistent game of sheep's knuckles was able to save the Kingdom of Lydia, video games and organized communities might be our best approach to a number of significant problems in our society.

Keep fighting the good fight sir!

[Gary Riccio](#)

6 hours ago: Dr. Brendel was interviewed on Science in the Wild yesterday. The interviews will be posted by the end of the week at <http://urbusinessnetwork.com/category/science-in-the-wild-radio-show-and-podcast-with-host-gary-riccio/>

In the interviews, David made several references to the prior interview with Justin. <http://urbusinessnetwork.com/unleashing-power-community-play-civil-hacking-online-games/>

It appears that there are very deep connections between "Linked Wellness" and online game communities with respect to the transformative power of prosocial behavior and communication about it.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 23 2014: The value and limitations of behavioral economics in the context of community are apparent in one the TED Talks that is relevant to this conversation: http://new.ted.com/talks/daniel_goldstein_the_battle_between_your_present_and_future_self

Goldstein's work is important and valuable, to a point. It also is important to note that, with respect to almost all work in behavioral economics, the apparent biases or foibles of individuals are trumped by collective endeavor (collaborative engagement and occasional selflessness), and they can even have an essential positive contribution to it (collective intelligence and crystallization). Online games provide a vast natural laboratory within which to explore "leveling of the playing field between present and future" (inter-temporal reasoning) in terms of commitment to others (I-thou) vice "commitment devices" (I-It).

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 22 2014: Weekly Curation: To facilitate participation of visitors to this conversation, I will highlight key words one can find using one's browser (not the search utility in the panel at the upper left of this page). The key words will direct visitors to important topics

from the first week of this conversation. Visitors can then reply to the relevant post or write an "original post" (OP).

- * raw as in "raw person" or "raw individual"
- * identity or persona or self
- * leadership
- * engagement
- * communication
- * second-person standpoint
- * communities or commitment

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: SPARX, The Video Game That Treats Depression is a finalist in the Scattergood Innovation Awards. See <http://scattergoodfoundation.org/innovideas/linkedwellness-llc#.UwjVYFO6Au0>

Perhaps interesting extensions await for game-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in groups building on the foundation of clinical research outside of games combined with a better understanding of online game communities.

Arch, J. J., Ayers, C. R., Baker, A., Almklov, E., Dean, D. J., & Craske, M. G. (2013). Randomized clinical trial of adapted mindfulness-based stress reduction versus group cognitive behavioral therapy for heterogeneous anxiety disorders. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 51(4), 185-196.

Barrera, T. L., Mott, J. M., Hofstein, R. F., & Teng, E. J. (2013). A meta-analytic review of exposure in group cognitive behavioral therapy for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Clinical psychology review*, 33(1), 24-32.

Watkins, K. E., Hunter, S. B., Hepner, K. A., Paddock, S. M., de la Cruz, E., Zhou, A. J., & Gilmore, J. (2011). An effectiveness trial of group cognitive behavioral therapy for patients with persistent depressive symptoms in substance abuse treatment. *Archives of general psychiatry*, 68(6), 577-584.

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: Interesting article in Forbes earlier this month was re-posted today in the Facebook feed for "Conscious Capitalism." See <http://www.forbes.com/sites/travisbradberry/2014/02/06/how-successful-people-stay-calm/>

Note, you don't have to go off-line to go off-line. Online with your "support system" is a very effective way to stay off-line from your work. Note also how many of the recommendations in this article relate to the experiences of online games, again "blissful productivity, urgent optimism, epic meaning, and weaving a tight social fabric."

Gary Riccio

Feb 21 2014: There is an interesting article in Gamasutra today by Tanya X Short on "Indies, Collectives, and an Underdog Manifesto" <http://ubm.io/NhNnxQ>

Gamer communities are an important piece to evolution of this ecosystem, empowerment of creative people, and innovation in the experience economy. To the extent this claim is true, there are interesting connections between this article by Tanya and Mike Rose's article on Feb 10 about videogames and violence:

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/210322/video_games_and_gun_violence_a.php

One of the many quotes from Mike Rose's article that are instructive for this continuing public discussion is "It's now about moving past that, into studying it on a much more phenomenological basis -- more of a motivational basis," he tells me. "What is it about video games that attracts people? Why do they play them? What do they get out of it? How is the user a much more important part of that process?" (quoting Ferguson).

Instead of focusing on violence, our TED conversation is addressing questions like Ferguson's by exploring the community context for gamers within which relationships and interpersonal behavior are visible and have meaning, why gamers play online games. This is a context for open innovation with gamers and game developers. Citizen game developers?

Justin Bastian

Feb 21 2014: Citizen game developers. I love it. I used to ask my self often why publishers, across the board, don't encourage this type of open innovation between creatives and their fans. Why they don't invest in infrastructure that facilitates this type of collaborative partnership. There isn't a more loyal customer base than the one who influences the design and application of the products they use. David Sears answered this question for me during a keynote presentation he delivered at MIGS 2012, "Machiavelli, the Marquis de Sade, & Me" (video from CGS: <http://youtu.be/K3Rgldbi0eY>).

The truth is, lots of publishers view this type of relationship as a threat to their "state" power. If tens of thousands of gamers develop relationships with a creative team and its processes, it becomes much more difficult to control or eliminate creatives from that team, especially the creative director. This process empowers games creatives that are, in many cases, subject to a dominate producer authority. In a citizen game development ecosystem, controlling producers are not welcome.

I love the underdog and I love seeing them win. My hope is that many more creatives will join the indie games movement and experience the wonderful rewards of collaborating with the gamers who support their art.

"Viva la Revolution!"

Gary Riccio

Feb 21 2014: Ahhh, David Sears is on another level, partly because of his intelligence but also because he listens to gamers. Here is an interview with him back in 2011 that shows his depth:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmP3mmxq8u0>

I have extracted a few comments that I find especially intriguing with respect to perspective taking, an important characteristic of emotional intelligence and collective intelligence (more on that later):

(1:09) "difficult ethical decisions or dilemmas that we think people are going find really really resonant"

(1:23) "really important that you understand the motivations of all the characters whether they were your enemies or your allies or innocent bystanders"

(1:50) "you can see that they are always trying to actually achieve some sort of significant outcome... every character is human whether they are the good guys or the bad guys"

(4:34) "how important it is to experience terrorist event from any perspective... so we wanted to give you the ability to understand what terrorism was like if you're a civilian or a first responder... or even the terrorist himself"

(5:14) "sometimes when you switch perspectives you suddenly understand how terrifying these events really are... you don't have to empathize with their [terrorists] motivations but you will at least understand where they're coming from as people"

Gary Riccio

Feb 20 2014: The link below is to an interesting student paper written by Troy Mills back in 2011, "Linguistic Anthropology: The use of Communication in Call of Duty Black Ops Video Game." It would be great if Troy or friends in his game community could comment on any of the specific details he addresses in that paper. In any case, it is a nice window into gameplay and the mind of gamers:

<http://community.thedivisionigr.com/index.php?/topic/121-linguistic-anthropology-study-for-call-of-duty-black-ops/>

Justin Bastian

Feb 21 2014: Troy wrote: "For every brilliant person that shows real creativity, there are ten others that just use the medium to spread hatred, and poison the online gaming experience."

True, and it is also true that one persona virtuoso can transform the antisocial persona of ten (example:

<http://community.thedivisionigr.com/index.php?/topic/63-persona-virtuoso-example-of-a-prosocial-affect/#entry210>)

The game Troy referenced wasn't designed to support a team-first approach to multiplayer gameplay. The bi-product of which is a general and pervasive narcissism in its multiplayer community. Though, one could argue that it is less about game design and more about the existing, real life attitudes of the people playing the game.

In my experience, the challenges of competitive team-first gameplay requires a measurable level of civility to be successful at. Having to rely on others to succeed, no matter how well YOU play, exposes players to a unique set of interpersonal challenges not generally found in me-first communities.

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: There are two interesting aspects of Troy's paper. First, he shows some of the ways players communicate with other above and beyond their character's behavior in gameplay, including verbal and symbolic communication. Second, he laments abuses of other people when there is no accountability for actions, especially none beyond an isolated event.

There are two inter-related implications of these observations. First, the role of community is to provide a persistent context of relationships within which there is accountability for actions, naive or intentional, toward others. Second, there is regulation of communication, verbal or symbolic, that can be observed easily by participants ("the second-person standpoint") and by third parties (e.g., with "legitimate peripheral participation" as observers). We addresses some of this briefly in prior posts that included citations to the scientific literature.

These two implications are inseparable, for example, in very concrete aspects of interpersonal interactions such as "turn taking" during verbal communication that can be negotiated before, during, and after conversation. This can be measured by scientists in situations that would surprise many people, and the development of such measures can facilitate negotiation and leader development (see e.g., <http://bit.ly/MhxlmN>).

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 20 2014: Just for context, are all the substantive comments from gamers in the comments below from people in thedivisionigr?

Gary Riccio

Feb 20 2014: Many of them so far, yes, Fritzie. The reason for the initial response from the authentic Division IGR is that it is the community with which I have been engaged, in essence, as an anthropologist but with a much broader trans-disciplinary focus. In this TED conversation we are utilizing an emerging form of "participatory journalism" in which the journalist tries to strike a balance between observation and influence on what is observed. My hope is that this will provide rich stories on which many more people outside this particular gamer community can comment.

In the form of participatory journalism we are exploring here, I believe it is quite important to have inescapable accountability for the influence of one's observations and opinions, especially public ones. A particularly effective way to do this is to ground dialogue in a contemporaneous activity of a community that the dialogue both reflects and influences. Even with the troll that is repeatedly violating TED's terms of use, we are witnessing the life of a community unfold before our eyes, "the good, the bad, and the ugly."

I believe that this sort of dialogue represents a different model for what blogging can be on the internet where it otherwise is mostly about people talking at each other without any awareness of the impact and thus no progress in understanding over time. Of course, we are guilty of that to some extent in this conversation. It is difficult to avoid entirely, and perhaps one shouldn't try to avoid it entirely. But I believe we are taking a step forward by blending commentary with concurrent reality.

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 20 2014: Thank you for your response. I know well that position of seeking to observe and to facilitate without undue influence, either as part of a situated research undertaking or in learning community..

I look forward to seeing participation of a broader cross-section of the community under study.

As an aside, the administrators on TED who monitor for trolling and other violations of terms of use (I am not one of these- my role is different) typically try to work with people privately to move behavior in a more productive direction before taking more decisive action. You will occasionally see a troll, or someone who may not think of his/her behavior as trolling, appear and reappear a few times, while the admins try to work with that person off-screen. People who are accustomed to a

different style of engagement in other settings do not always acclimate instantly and sometimes do end up departing the site.

Gary Riccio

Feb 21 2014: "I know well that position of seeking to observe and to facilitate without undue influence, either as part of a situated research undertaking or in learning community." (Fritzie)

I like the connection Fritzie makes with a learning community, with respect to my comment about "balance between observation and influence," especially to the extent that people think that education is all about (first hand) influence. My interpretation of Fritzie's connection is that sometimes a leader and influencer must find the "tactical patience" to observe and wait to intervene or, more interestingly, to guide the mutual influence among others (e.g., among students).

In my own experience, the most sophisticated examples of this were with middle school teachers with whom I worked on the parent council, most notably around the thorny issues of bullying. Some of these women and men had developed a way to be influential in the student community, outside the context of their teaching, without being (perceived as) intrusive. They came to be perceived as respectful of students, without being indiscriminately so, and to be a safe haven for them.

I believe this is a good model for those of us who want to understand more about what is happening in at least some online gamer communities. Those of us in their broader network of relationships have to earn their trust before we can expect them to share what I believe are deeply personal and meaningful experiences.

Interestingly, this is exactly what some of my scientific colleagues achieved within certain military communities to come to a deeper understanding of military training, education, and leader development, to become trusted advisers, and to have an impact for which they were inescapably accountable. See e.g., <http://bit.ly/1gRsnJw>

Thanks again, Fritzie, for making this connection.

Justin Bastian

Feb 20 2014: Hey Fritzie. Our goal for this conversation is to share with the TED community and world at large what is actually happening inside our gaming environments. My hope is that many gamers and gaming communities are represented here before the conversation closes. Not all who have commented here are actual Members of my gaming clan, but all (excluding the troll) are friends. :)

Fritzie - 200+**Host**

Feb 20 2014: I think that goal is clear and valuable, Justin, given the popularity of gaming.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: More evidence why we may be approaching a sea change in the demand for online games that reveal and foster prosocial sensibilities in places where we might not expect them...

"MTV and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a national survey of 1,297 teens and young adults between the ages of 14 and 24 to gain a fresh look at digital use and abuse among young people in the United States...

Nearly three quarters of young people say digital abuse, such as harassing people online or via cell phone, is a big problem for society that needs to be addressed."

Tompson, T., Benz, J., & Agiesta, J. (2103). The digital abuse study: Experiences of teens and young adults. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. <http://j.mp/1eTsn6G>

Justin Bastian

Feb 21 2014: Gary wrote: "MTV and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted a national survey of 1,297 teens and young adults between the ages of 14 and 24"

And 72% say antisocial behavior online must go.

Fritzie - 200+**Host**

Feb 19 2014: As there have been references in the thread to the development of leadership in gaming communities, today's TED talk about the attributes of successful 21st century leaders may be of interest.

http://www.ted.com/speakers/roselinde_torres.html

- o **Daniel Christensen**

Feb 20 2014: Roselinde's presentation on great leadership was extremely fun to watch. The three questions worth asking:

"Are you looking to anticipate change?"

"What is the diversity measure of your work?"

"Are you courageous enough to abandon the past?"

And how do you think that applies to our TED conversation?

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 20 2014: These questions might be reasonable to ask for their applicability, or their exercise, in a gaming context as part of developing leaders.

For example, how does the game context model shifting parameters of a sort that would provide exercise in leading in anticipation of structural change?

Does the game community reflect a broad demographic diversity of the sort she supports and that parallels arenas of outside application?

And so forth.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 20 2014: Thank you, Daniel. The "three questions" relate to a phenomenon of adaptive leadership we have observed outside of games and broader issues we discussed in our group Skype chat this evening. In particular, there is something we have come to call a "period of mourning" we commonly observe during leader development. What is this?

Well, imagine a situation in which one is led to appreciate a very different way to approach people or situations that can make one much more effective. Mindful leaders are momentarily torn between two emotions. There is an exhilaration in realizing how much more effective or influential one can be with this new insight. There also is the realization that one could have been much more effective in prior situations, situations one has carried in memory as unmitigated successes, sometimes involving significant emotional experiences that had an existential impact on others.

The realization that one might have done things much better in the past almost always leads to a shocking sadness in reappraisal of apparent success in one's past, in the sense of self efficacy, in one's image of oneself, the impact one has had on others, and the accountability one has in a community of practice. The best leaders, in our experience, take this as a serious blow that can take months to overcome. It seems to have many of the characteristics of grief and loss (death?) of a prior sense of self.

Fortunately, in every case we have observed, leaders emerge from this period changed fundamentally about the continuous learning that is required of them when put in the most challenging situations, actually most situations in the current age.

A gamer community can foster this kind of leader development if gamers experience mutual caring and challenge that is very different from, and not inconsistent with, what they expected when joining the community for different reasons, such as having fun or developing gaming skills.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Gary wrote: "Well, imagine a situation in which one is led to appreciate a very different way to approach people or situations that can make one much more effective. Mindful leaders are momentarily torn between two emotions. There is an exhilaration in realizing how much more effective or influential one can be with this new insight. There also is the realization that one could have been much more effective in prior situations, situations one has carried in memory as unmitigated successes, sometimes involving significant emotional experiences that had an existential impact on others."

Wow.

So here is an example of one such experience. In 2010, Daniel wrote what he thought was his resignation letter to our gaming community. I'll never forget reading it. It was full of painful critiques supported by examples for why our community could be so much more than it was. This letter struck me to my core because as I read it, I knew everything he was expressing was true. I knew that I had been wrong in not investing more time and energy into the truths he revealed through his experience. As the community's Sr. leader, I went through exactly what Gary described above. I also watched others experience the same.

Turns out, Daniel's resignation letter was really a vision statement about our future. Immediately after reading his letter I contacted him and explained why he mustn't leave, that there was great work to be done. As a result of his letter and the new relationship that would follow, me self and my leadership style (games and RL) and the character and leadership style of our gaming community changed. We have never been the same since. Today, this experience marks a definitive turning point in our community's evolution. Transcendence: <http://youtu.be/aFZxm09G87E>

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: I have heard testimonials like this many times but I understand that it always takes extraordinary courage. Transcendence indeed! This kind of disclosure, witnessing really, is the path to leadership. The people who have shared such stories with me are sought out as elite advisers on leadership, from the Army Special Operations

community to Harvard Business School. Welcome to the surprising, perhaps shocking, world of online game communities.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: That ^^ is incredible insight.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: At the outset, I had a hunch that this conversation might develop a dual purpose. The primary purpose, as stated, is to have a conversation that is edifying about communities that form around games. In addition, the conversation seems to be turning into a sort of an experiment to the extent that, in a very small way, a community may be organizing around this conversation. Actions and interactions are not limited to this forum (e.g., because of TED's Terms of Use), and coalitions may emerge from the conversations. It is a bit early to say but it will be fun to watch.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: As I read this reply I thought, "How does one develop a successful community around a game or multiple games, without leveraging profit motives?" This is something I have often marveled at over the years because building, managing and growing a successful gaming community is real work. It requires real commitment with real sacrifices and no one can do it alone. How do you influence scores of others in multiplayer environments to engage in this type of effort?

I would say the three keys needed to organizing a sustainable community in games is executable vision, passion and strong leadership. From this comes shared values, prosocial or antisocial. From shared values comes fellowship. From fellowship comes willingness. From willingness comes the ability to lead the desire of many into strategic action. From the strategic actions of many comes community organization.

Interestingly, these are the same keys needed to entrepreneur a premonney a start-up.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: We have been focusing on prosocial behavior in gaming communities because, in first-person shooter games, it is counter-intuitive to outsiders. We also have addressed antisocial behavior because it also is present in online communities just as in physical communities.

There are a wide variety of trolls, and to understand them we must be careful not to paint with a broad brush. So, for example, I would *not* label a teenage troller a sociopath or "horrible person" because many teenagers are just too inexperienced to even know themselves, and some desperately may be counter-attacking bullies.

Adult trolls, on the other hand and as the research shows, clearly are sociopaths (<http://slate.me/1bCDVke>). Also, within the sub-population of trolls just as in the sub-population of gangs in the physical world, there are a variety of personality types and tactics. They can range from explicitly and actively aggressive, with the intent of immediate disruption in the activities of others, to passive aggression and even sophistry (in the derogatory modern use of the term) that undermines rather than immediately disrupts, for example, "concerned trolls" (<http://bit.ly/1d3ZFQR>).

The sophistry tactic is interesting because the intent and the occasional result is to distract or engage others, to co-opt their free will. In my experience, even if that initially is a successful tactic, it is sort of "fool me once, shame on you... fool me twice, shame on me." Again, the strategy of experienced people online and occasionally the law enforcement community is to track, ignore, and contain.

For public forums that are general in nature and that have a vast and loose audience, the best practice is to have clearly articulated "terms of use," as in the TED conversations (see links at bottom of the page), and to enforce them.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Gary wrote: "I would *not* label a teenage troller a sociopath or "horrible person" because many teenagers are just too inexperienced to even know themselves, and some desperately may be counter-attacking bullies."

That is great insight. I've never thought of it like that.

Gary wrote: "even sophistry (in the derogatory modern use of the term) that undermines rather than immediately disrupts... The sophistry tactic is interesting because the intent and the occasional result is to distract or engage others, to co-opt their free will."

Interesting fact, there is a common sophistry tactic in games called "concern trolling" (see: http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/concern_troll) In my experience, this is a tactic used by internal invaders to co-opt a clan or guild community away from its leader(s).

The good news for 72% of gamers is that the US and UK governments and companies such as YouTube, Google, and Popular Science are now cracking down on antisocial behavior. I suspect this will only grow in industries supported by online communities.

“[Trolls] type threats on their keyboard that they would never utter in person. Social networks have a duty to identify internet bullies who cower behind anonymity. As victims repeatedly fight back, we can hope to see a culture shift.”
- Louise Mensch

References:

U.S. House cracks down on patent trolls as Cincinnati companies are targeted:
<http://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2013/12/05/us-house-cracks-down-on-patent.html?page=all>

(UK) New legislation may virtually end the age of the internet troll:
<http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6256308>

More companies cracking down on online comments (Google/Popular Science):
http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/More_companies_cracking_down_on_online_comments_15298.aspx

Uh-Oh: YouTube Cracks Down on Trolls In Its Comments Section:
<http://www.kulturekritic.com/2012/06/news/uh-oh-youtube-cracks-down-trolls-in-its-comments-section/>

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 24 2014: Justin you brought up some excellent points and observation as well as Danial's accounts on the "mask" of identity which provides "raw" emotional input from individuals.

Some of the abusive or exploitative behavior can be attributed to younger less mature players but not all. Given the fact that the average age of a gamer is around 30 last I checked statistically the average abusive individual would also not deviate very far from this demographic.

<http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp>

http://www.theesa.com/facts/pdfs/esa_ef_2013.pdf

The aspect of anonymity for online interactions was desired by many for privacy. It's this anonymity in the community that also allows for many to behave abusively and destructively. As a former moderator for the Playstation forums I witnessed on a daily basis the abusive behavior of adult seemingly normal people. It's not unreasonable to surmise that many of these people have well paying jobs, live in a home, and interact more acceptably in social society because they have the means to buy the systems and games as well as pay for broadband internet.

Sony and Playstation has been actively trying to deal with this abuse and one aspect they are working with on the Playstation 4 is the option to share your real name and by connecting your account to other social accounts like facebook. Part of this is to incentivate people to be less abusive and more socially responsible by removing the "mask".

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 24 2014: The report you cited says that the average game purchaser is 35, not the average game player. This could be a 35

year old parent purchasing for a twelve or fifteen year old, right? Did you mean to link to something different that shows players by age? Or did I miss the page that shows the average age?

[Mike Legacy](#)

Feb 18 2014: An entire book could be written about gaming communities and the effects they have on human interpersonal interactions. Overall, I think Tom Chatfield hits the nail on the head in his comment about how we need to look at the general effect that ANY group has on the human psyche and the implications of that group/community on the individual involved.

On a large scale, community-driven engagement in the digital realm has essentially turned normal human conversation and perception on its axis. Human conversation has been altered in obvious ways. The internet blossomed, and with that came less personal interaction, and more in the digital space. Today, it's gotten to the point where a lot of companies are opting to install social platforms for workflow within their corporate structures (Jive, Yammer, etc.). This has obvious advantages, such as creating a searchable index of all internal conversation for quick and easy review, but the disadvantages include less personal interaction.

I work at a company with 80 people. We use Jive for workflow and indexing, and it works quite well. At the same time, out of 80 people, I've probably PERSONALLY worked face-to-face with only 20 or so. That is a 100% shift from previous generations, whose only line of efficient communication came through personal interaction. Before social platforms and the digital revolution, you didn't post a job-related article/material on a social site for the client to review, you PRESENTED the item to them. This is only one small case, but sheds a huge light on the darkness that social platforms have created in the realm of actual personal interaction today....

This is continued at the link below, because of the character limit....

<http://community.thedivisionigr.com/index.php/?topic/105-we-have-a-ted-conversation/?p=196>

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 18 2014: One can as a research problem pursue the question either way or both ways. Some aspects of group interaction may be the same across a variety of settings, including online gaming communities and their forums, and some may be unique to online games and their forums.

I interpret the question as looking to do a case study of the issues of developing leadership and so forth specifically in online gaming communities, even if the same dynamics and results are typical of other sorts of online communities. From there one might ask whether there are some features unique to gaming communities and what about the fact that the focus is a multi-player game creates the difference.

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 18 2014: The unique aspect of using games in this fashion is the mask given by the separation of identity. That separation allows players to have more choice with his/her persona, since there are less punitive repercussions of his/her behavior. As a result, that sort of mask gives what I'm going to term a more "raw" individual, since the player's free-will has a stronger impact on his choices, whether he chooses to be a jerk when playing or he chooses to be a jolly fun guy.

How that "raw individual" is managed is where you will find the specialty of community-development within gaming. If you ask me, I believe this dynamic gives the unique opportunity for players in gaming to address the more "raw person" and as a result tackle more deeply ingrained characteristics, for better or for worse.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 18 2014: But people use pseudonyms in online forums unrelated to gaming as well. I think most people on the TED forum, for example use pseudonyms.

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 19 2014: Sure, and I'm very sure that forums provide the same mask through those pseudonyms. To a point, I think a similar effect can be made within forums also. However, gaming includes not only the collaboration but a challenge, done in real time communication. I believe that environment provides features that better facilitate the "raw person".

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 19 2014: I think that you are right that having an ongoing collaborative project/challenge binds people in a way that is not a feature on most forums. Where there is not a community undertaking that is itself compelling to participants, people often leave when too many people get too annoying rather than trying to work through whatever the obstacles are to productive discourse.

Another scenario is that people can ignore problems when they do not need to rely on each other for anything.

In project teams, live or virtual, one has to figure out how to collaborate to make things happen that need to happen.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: There is an important distinction here, I think, between talking and doing, even in a virtual environment. In this regard, I think the notion of the "raw individual" is fascinating. It is the difference perhaps between the healthy and adaptive multiple identities we all can have concurrently in our interactions with different communities versus the pathological manifestations of multiple personality in neurotic disorders.

So one question here is whether the "split second decision making" required in some game genres, such as first-person shooter games, is more difficult to fake or contrive than the more deliberative personas that one might craft in a slowly evolving text dialog or slowly evolving game.

- ### Daniel Christensen

Feb 19 2014: That's an easy question to answer, i think. The more time you are able to invest in something, the more you have the opportunity to shape it, which means you can spin the idea into more of what you want it to look it. The events that require instant, knee-jerk reactions reveal something more "raw", as I have put it. The idea is, if you can improve the raw person, you're improving something that is more real to the player, even if they aren't fully aware of what it is that is being improved.

Here's a very basic scenario. In gaming, there is a typical issue of players that care more about their individual statistics than actually playing to win. This means that, when you're in the game, their main objective is to get a high score in the game, instead of actually working with their teammates in order to complete the objective. This can make the player's knee-jerk reaction to hide from in-game conflict to survive, and as a result leave your teammates hanging.

If this person was within our community, our ideal response would be to work with the player to put more value in the overall success of the team, which would solve the issue. Other communities might simply condition the player to not run away from conflict, which would also solve the issue, but wouldn't address the raw characteristic.

I may be leading the discussion in an inappropriate direction, but that aspect is very translatable to people in general. There are "root causes" to actions, and the better you are at addressing those root causes, the better you can be at dealing with people.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)[Host](#)

Feb 19 2014: I appreciate your explanation. I would not have known there are individual scores independent of the team's score or progress toward an objective. For me this characteristic of the task/arena is essential in understanding what is being negotiated within gaming communities.

Thank you for explaining.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 19 2014: This is a perfectly appropriate direction and, again, it provides enough detail for the reader to imagine being in the situation. That's what I am looking for. And...

"Other communities might simply condition the player to not run away from conflict, which would also solve the issue, but wouldn't address the raw characteristic."

This is a deeply insightful observation about practices of true leadership. My colleagues and I observed the ways the military came to understand more deeply and educate leaders about "something more raw" (see e.g., <http://www.scribd.com/doc/40649283>). Conflicts in the 21st century cannot be addressed with conditioning. It requires self awareness and collective understanding, essentially knowing one's capabilities to adapt to the unknown with critical thinking.

Now corporations are trying to figure out these new lessons learned from the military which require that they unlearn old lessons learned from the military.

Thanks Daniel!!!

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 18 2014: That's an inspiring viewpoint: Taking the adventure of the digital age and capitalizing on it with the video gaming industry. We can work really hard to talk about the science reinforcing gaming into the bigger-picture of community-development, but with that take on it the power behind gaming is almost obvious, at least the way you described it.

That transitions very well into what I think Tom was interested in poking at, which is taking the power of an "online community" and referring it to a bigger-picture, being community building in general. Specifically within The Division IGR, the programs set in place may be game-specific, but require skill sets that can easily translate into any form of community building.

For example, lets talk about The Division IGR's development of it's Constitution, a complex system of policies, rights, and systems set in place to logically push the community 'toward effective levels of continued success'. Building that style of document is very useful for a community, and figuring out how to write something like that requires different levels of problem evaluation, technical writing, idea development, segmentation and targeting (what I mean by that is defining and refining your community's audience), system development, and plenty of other things.

Being a part of that process is a great exercise for working on those 'skill sets', and is just one of many examples, some more tangible, some less so. But regardless, these are the sort of things that apply to community development as a whole, where gaming communities are included.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 19 2014: It would be fascinating to read some stories about the deliberations involved in the "development of it's Constitution." Even just little vignettes would help link meaningful values-based debate and conversation to gameplay in groups. It would help us understand the juxtaposition of personal and the persona.

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 19 2014: Well here's an example, then.

Our community was originally functioning on one game: SOCOM. With this, our Constitution has systems and processes that only applied to SOCOM, which meant, when our community started playing game like Call of Duty and Battlefield, there were parts of our Constitution that were not applicable. For instance, in our Constitution we had established Domains, modes of operations (like recruiting members, building in-game strategies, recording team statistics) that were built around specific features provided in SOCOM. When we started playing other games, the way those domains functioned were unusable, which made the Constitution less valuable. We worked with the document, and redesigned the structure of our "Domain" so it was more abstract, and more applicable to all gaming titles. We had to redesign the idea, put the idea into words, and write it in a professional format that was readable to our audience.

That's just one example of many, but it's a long and involved thought process, and knowing that intricacies of that thought process is invaluable to anyone who wants to be able to develop ideas.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: "What mass social networks lack in actually creating organic personal relationships, gaming communities make up for. I understand that not everyone is into gaming, and that's okay. I actually believe new-age gaming communities are setting the stage for a second digital revolution that reintegrates the old with the new. In doing so, we could create a digital world that inspires personal interactions that feel authentic, rather than counterfeit." (Mr. Legacy)

Fascinating post, Mr. Legacy! Thank you. I believe you may be right about a second digital revolution. In business, for example, the conversation is changing to things like "engagement marketing" and "brand activation" in which producers and consumers have shared awareness and opportunities for influence with accountability for new developments in products and services even including their impact on an ecosystem of people and businesses who don't use them. Business are struggling to get to the details of the "experience economy" and finding that experience is inescapably social, collaborative, and proactive. This may be a bit different from where you were headed in your post but I believe it reflects the broader changes to which you referred.

- **Comment deleted**

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: "A union of diversity" ...Let that ring in your mind.

And this is why "At their technological limit, games will subsume all other media." - Jesse Schell

Business is spending many many many millions of dollars to figure out how to engage and delight consumers through various media, especially digital social media. Well...

Social + Engagement + Delight = Games (and it always has)

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Legacy wrote: "To me, social gaming communities are the savior of this story, and are excelling at integrating classic personal interaction, with new-age digital communication. What mass social networks lack in actually creating organic personal relationships, gaming communities make up for. I understand that not everyone is into gaming, and that's okay. I actually believe new-age gaming communities are setting the stage for a second digital revolution that reintegrates the old with the new. In doing so, we could create a digital world that inspires personal interactions that feel authentic, rather than counterfeit."

So this is amazing to think about Mike.

Some from our community and affiliate communities, and our professional colleagues have only ever met each other through social technology such as PSN,

Skype and FB and real relationships have developed. Real constructive collaboration is happening and it doesn't feel much like work at all. Actually, it feels more like blasting off on Starship Enterprise. The ability to connect with conscious personas from all over the world and from all walks of life, to organize successfully around missions, in and out of games, also sometimes with bedhead, is transformative. A union of diversity.

"I'm just one lion, Voltron needed five." - Jay Floyd

Also, I think you're right about the second digital revolution.

"At their technological limit, games will subsume all other media." - Jesse Schell

"Digital tribalism is the new order." - Andrew Melchior

Justin Bastian

Feb 18 2014: Persona Virtuoso: Example of a Prosocial Affect

The other night, as we were wrapping up a gaming session, 4 known hackers entered our game lobby. As we continued our conversation from the game prior, these hackers (all adults) queued the mic and began spewing their usual gutter snipes. In our virtual world, hackers represent the extreme in antisocial behavior.

Before long, 4 more hackers entered the room, and 4 more with them. They tend to run in packs. Quickly, we became the focus of their negative attention. What ensued next was a battle between prosocial and antisocial mindsets. For over an hour we contended values over our headsets.

Then something interesting happened. One by one the hackers began to let down their guard and moderate their behavior from belligerent to snarky. Some of them even began visiting our community website and asking content specific questions.

In total, this lobby interaction lasted just over 2 hours. In the end, the power of prosocial won the room. Our last 45 minutes were spent discussing, constructively, a community approach to fostering positive gaming environments. The hackers, now 14 strong, openly conceded that a prosocial movement in games, could in fact, create an ultimate experience. They even shared their ideas about what it could achieve.

Two days later, I logged online to join my clanmates and one of those hackers was playing with our community. Because of our long-standing anti-hack position, I immediately understood what this meant. Through proceeding conversation, the hacker eventually shared with us why he decided to press pause on the antisocial lifestyle and play with us for a while.

This experience is a micro example of a much bigger potential which, to us, proves that a prosocial gaming is the supreme experience of choice when available. It can and does transform persona and in a way where all involved tend to win.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 18 2014: Communities have beneficial effects one person at a time, one idea at a time, in meaningful interpersonal interaction that is as much about patient listening and principled tolerance as it is about an agenda of persuasion.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)[Host](#)

Feb 18 2014: That's interesting that hackers run in packs. In internet forums, I have not typically noticed that to be true, though one troll might well operate under several pseudonyms for whatever satisfaction his/her antisocial actions give him/her. It's not really team trolling or a merry band of trolls.

Maybe in explicitly win-lose settings, which a gaming environment is and a discussion forum typically isn't, the underlying psychology is different. From your description hacking has a gang feel in gaming.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 19 2014: I would modify this conclusion to "hacking [can have] a gang feel in gaming" because there is no reason to believe that is always the case of necessity. As in physical communities, gangs can exist in gaming. After all, gangs are just one form of community. We may judge them as sociopaths or simply as "horrible people" but that is another issue as is how the larger more-sustainable community deals with such disruption.

I think what we are seeing here is that game communities are as richly diverse as physical communities. We can talk in generalities about the similarities and differences but, for the purposes of this conversation about community in online games, that is only as useful as our understanding of the physical communities with which we are comparing them (which I suspect for most is only at the level of generalities). This is why I am asking gamers also to tell us specific stories of interaction in gamer communities.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)[Host](#)

Feb 19 2014: "We may judge them as sociopaths or simply as "horrible people" but that is another issue as is how the larger more-sustainable community deals with such disruption. "

This is why I found interesting Justin's elaboration above of how his community dealt with the disruption of a group of hackers, which he described as "tend[ing] to run in packs." To me his use of the word "pack" suggested a non-temporary connection

among them.

I don't doubt that his observation, general as it might be in that respect, was, in fact, part of what helped him and his community manage that negotiation of views. In groups it can make a difference whether people are behaving only as solitary individuals or as a sort of sub-community, in my observation, research, and practice.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: What I like most about your comment, Justin, is the detail of who said or did what to whom about what and what transpired as a result for better or for worse. It is enough detail for me to imagine having been there, as in any good story. This is the piece we are missing so far in the broader conversation that has been both edifying and interesting.

Your brief vignette is the next best thing to actually witnessing community interactions. I know you are not saying that dealing with hackers is the typical or most important interaction that occurs in gaming communities but the level of detail is a good model for stories that can be told about more common interactions, micro-experiences that dominate our conscious experience of the world inside or outside of online games.

Gary Riccio

Feb 17 2014: Questions for gamers:

Can you give us examples of flip-flops in authority from moment to moment in games based on special knowledge that a teammate might have, in the moment, and how that influences tactical coordination in games? How do you know when to cede power to a teammate or when you should try to persuade a teammate to do something different? What does this persuasion look like? How much of it is based on things explicitly spoken to one another, and how much of it doesn't require words because you can tell from the situation who should have the momentary standing of leadership?

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: In competitive team-based shooter games, this ebb and flow of power happens in a variety of ways.

Macro: Most organized communities (clans) have a rank structure of some sort external from the game design and adhered to by its members. This establishes a primary or default order that is generally present in all that the clan does in and outside of game lobbies. Generally, clans produce one of four basic community themes: casual/social, casual/competitive, competitive/social and competitive/non-social.

Micro: Some clans recognize a chain of command in-game and some don't. Both styles can be very good with the right players. Generally speaking, clans that

acknowledge a ranking structure tend to domino to the next rank in line if a commanding officer goes down during live gameplay. In terms of those crunch situations in-game where a split decision needs to be made, rank takes a back seat.

When a player is active in their clan, they are going to be familiar with their teammates strengths and weaknesses. For example, say I'm leading a fireteam of two gunners and a sniper across the map to recon the bomb plant and we get pinned down from a distance. If our sniper is able to get a read on the enemy after we take cover, the team is now taking orders from our sniper's scope. While seeking his shot he will indicate where the enemy is, whether they are attacking or defending, and/or where we need to flank to eliminate the threat. At that point only the most relevant communication NOT from the snipers mic hits the air waves. Little is able to be said in the heat of the moment. This is where training and instinct takes over.

The most successful shooter gameplay I have ever experienced consistently produced 6 and 0 sweeps in best of eleven matches against other competitive clans without anyone from our team speaking a single word over the microphone. Flawless flow.

Gary Riccio

Feb 17 2014: Fritzie asks "I imagine there is a significant literature about the building of leadership and collaborative skills through participation in team sports and communities attached to team sports."

Yes, there is a large literature in sports psychology, sports sociology, and pedagogical kinesiology that addresses this (often at cross purposes). The results are mixed. Sport certainly can have prosocial effects but it also can have antisocial effects, in the latter case especially for those who are excluded for one reason or another (e.g., real-world dominance hierarchies) or in the consequences of physical violence in occasional situations when it is poorly regulated in sports such as football, soccer, rugby, basketball, hockey, boxing, wrestling. And, of course, the sport communities that are accessible to people at any age, and in which one can have legitimate peripheral participation, are much more limited than in online social games.

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Coakley, J. J., & Pike, E. (1998). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (pp. 438-445). Boston, MA: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.

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Mahoney, J. L., Larson, R. W., Eccles, J. S., & Lord, H. (2005). Organized activities as developmental contexts for ch

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 17 2014: "Sport certainly can have prosocial effects but it also can have antisocial effects." This is not surprising. I expect the same will be true of online games, though the element of possible physical injury will not be present.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: As a general statement, yes it isn't surprising. There are insights and nuances in that body of work, however, that make it worthwhile even for nonscientists (practitioners) who have an abundance of experience with activities that are the subject of investigation. That is a whole other conversation.

In this conversation, we would like to understand the factors that influence prosocial outcomes vs antisocial outcomes, specifically in inter-personal interactions in online games. There probably is some transfer from lessons learned in sport science. My guess is that ethnographic research is where the connections are most useful. I believe we need to get into deeply personal levels of meaning and engagement with others to understand even what the ethnographic research should look like. Philosophy can help here.

Darwall, S. L. (2006). *The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability*. Harvard University Press.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: My review of Darwall's book: "Call the second-person standpoint the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another's conduct and will... whether explicit and voiced... or only implicit and felt... the I-you-me structure of reciprocal address runs throughout thought and speech from the second-person point of view." (Darwall, 2006, p. 3)

I would merely add that the nuanced differences between this project and other philosophical arguments that are highlighted throughout this book can be viewed in quite a different light by considering shared experience of persons that is grounded in an intersubjectively verifiable reality. This is shared reality in which persons are meaningfully engaged together over time. It is a common ground in which their respective conduct and

will is constrained, and reciprocally interdependent, in ways that are observable. It is a source of inescapable accountability that is not speculative and not authentically negotiable.

Whether or not there is explicit reciprocity in communication about a shared experience, collaborative reflection should be approached with the assumption of reciprocity. The "authority" or momentary "standing" that is assumed and acknowledged in the second-person perspective is the privilege of a different perspective that is inaccessible to the addressee, even if only momentarily. More broadly, given the assumptions of crystallization, all parties in collaborative reflection can have authority at the same time albeit different kinds of authority deriving from complementary perspectives (i.e., propositions that are not logically inconsistent). From a realist perspective, such complementarity is verifiable over time in a shared experience.

I believe the existential philosophy of Martin Buber also can be instructive here:

Buber, M. (1958). The I-thou theme, contemporary psychotherapy, and psychodrama. *Pastoral Psychology*, 9(5), 57-58.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: For me, being apart of a competitive gaming clan is the same as being on a sports team. I like to use football as the analogy for our genre of choice, tactical team-based shooters. You have ownership or clan founder(s), general management or the clan's Sr. leadership, the coaching staff or sergeants, the QB or in-game team leader, the lineman or perimeter--mobile or stationary, the RB's or offensive rushers, the WR or snipers and special teams or your explosive ordinance carriers.

At the very least, prosocial behavior among teammates is required to be competitive.

Gary Riccio

Feb 22 2014: In today's world, concurrent participation in gamer communities and sport communities is the rule rather than the exception. This doesn't mean there are interactions but I would be quite surprised if there aren't any.

It would be nice if we could get some gamers to contribute stories about the way online game communities influence one's attitude toward sports, both teammates and competitors, their behavior toward these others (e.g., the second-person standpoint to which I referred earlier), and the success the outcomes they experienced in sports.

- [Daniel Christensen](#)

Feb 17 2014: Very cool conversation. A lot of people I talk to in real life don't entertain the impact a "gaming community" can have, mainly because it isn't physical. But the reality is, relationships develop regardless of the medium, so long as the environment they develop within is designed for collaboration and challenge.

Obviously relationships are powerful things, and its existence goes far beyond online games, but games are still a fully functional medium relationships can be built in. SOCOM was my game growing up on, and I have built a lot of great relationships throughout the franchise. Even if I lose contact with other players, I might run into them 5 years down the road, and when we meet again online it's like we're best buds. My relationships with people online, even though I can't pin a face on them or shake their hand, are still very real.

My community is also very real. I have spent the past 4-5 years of my life in a clan (video game community) that originally played SOCOM, and have also moved to other titles. Through our environment, the game, we all work really hard to build our community and constantly improve in the game in order to win. Here, we have our collaboration and our challenge, which can be used not only to build our community, but also to build ourselves, as people. Even though it's virtual, this level of community development within games is hard work, and it builds your character.

I've touched on a dynamic on our community here:

<http://www.thedivisiongr.com/about.html> , which is very specific to our experience. Our clan has worked extremely hard to take our gaming environment and even refine it, so that we can hopefully give an even fuller experience to the player.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: "Even though it's virtual, this level of community development within games is hard work, and it builds your character."

There is a large body of social psychological research that backs up Daniel's experience, in particular, the role of arduous work in development of one's understanding (or beliefs) about one's capabilities, alone or in combination with others.

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American psychologist*, 37(2), 122.

Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current directions in psychological science*, 9(3), 75-78.

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 22 2014: Daniel wrote: "I have built a lot of great relationships throughout the franchise. Even if I lose contact with other players, I might run into them 5 years down the road, and when we meet again online it's like we're best buds. My relationships with people online, even though I can't pin a face on them or shake

their hand, are still very real."

Per usual, Daniel nails it. This is the heart of our community experience. Similarly, when you meet someone in real life, say at work, and discover their a gamer too, or better yet that they play the same games as you, an immediate camaraderie occurs. It's like your apart of the same fraternity. It's a very cool thing when this happens.

Gary Riccio

Feb 17 2014: Fritzie asked an interesting question that some might have missed because it was in a reply to a reply to an earlier comment. Here it is:

"There are forums that are basically about chat in which people may see a forum as support for reflections on their lives or the world around them. There are DIY forums in which people use the forum for technical support on individual projects. There are forums that are more wiki-like in which people who are working together exchange ideas and information pertinent to their common undertaking, like a wiki for docents at a particular museum. There are venues like Wetcanvas for artists, which are a hybrid of supporting individuals in individual projects, loosely connected group projects, chat about ideas, and discourse about matters of the day, with participants participating in some aspects but not others. Why would a gamers forum offer different opportunity to develop the skills that interest you than these other types?"

I replied in the string where Fritzie's reply appeared. Basically, I emphasized the number of people involved in online social games and the amount of time they devote to online gameplay rather than what may be unique about games. I will leave the latter issue to gamers for their comments. Note, however, I suspect the answers will relate to attributes on which Jane McGonigal and others have expounded, such as "blissful productivity, urgent optimism, epic meaning, and weaving a tight social fabric." Typically these attributes are addressed in terms of game mechanics. It would be edifying to read what gamers have to say about these attributes in terms of the community interactions that spontaneously emerge around games.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Fritzie wrote: "There are forums that are basically about chat in which people may see a forum as support for reflections on their lives or the world around them. There are DIY forums in which people use the forum for technical support on individual projects. There are forums that are more wiki-like in which people who are working together exchange ideas and information pertinent to their common undertaking, like a wiki for docents at a particular museum. There are venues like Wetcanvas for artists, which are a hybrid of supporting individuals in individual projects, loosely connected group projects, chat about ideas, and discourse about matters of the day, with participants participating in some aspects but not others. Why would a gamers forum offer different opportunity to develop the skills that interest you than these other types?"

An organized gaming community's fora can be all of the things you mentioned

above Fritzie and often is. But the fora is really just the central hub of community communication. Think head of an octopus. Connected to that head are tentacles or communication cables streaming behind the scenes via communication networks such as the PlayStation Network, Skype, Google docs, FB, direct dial, etc. My community has an infrastructure which supports each of the things you quoted above for various strategic and social reasons.

One of the awesome benefits of being apart of an organized gaming community supporting members in various time zones around the world, is that I can tap into any one of our communication cables and get an almost immediate response from someone I know--twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. No matter the idea or problem I'm working on, whether it is focused in, around, or outside of gameplay one of my comrades is ALWAYS there to hear me and in a lot of cases, teach me something valuable I didn't know.

UBUNTU

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 22 2014: Thank you for this contribution, Justin. I think one of the subtle important aspects of gaming community, unlike "connections" many people have with "friends" spread widely across time zones, is that you are *engaged* with your mates in a collective activity in which there is the opportunity to learn deeply about their manner and back stories. This is a very different notion of connection, existential versus merely demographic, meaningful rather than superficial.

Returning to the genre of first-person shooter games, counter-intuitively, it is my opinion that the rapid decision-making in public view over and over leads to a much more authentic persona, the "raw person" to which Daniel Christensen referred. A more authentic persona enables more authentic relationships, and authentic relationships are the foundation for trustworthy interactions and reciprocal influence for which one is inescapably accountable.

[Matthew Mondero](#)

Feb 17 2014: Thank you Dr. Riccio for sparking discussion on such and interesting and long overlooked topic

In my personal experience with online communities I've seen some of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. These titles do lead one to infer the characteristics of the persona portrayed within each community, however what I hope is not overshadowed is the fact that they all have a role to play in the bigger picture. Were it not for an opposition to clash against a pursuit there would be less emphasis on evolution and improvement within a community. Without the proverbial villain, the hero has nothing to draw stark contrast to his principles, and the color he imparts on this world would not shine so vividly for all to see. It is in this way that we don't chastise those who do not yet see the light, but hope that they may some day come to see what we see.

The "Ugly" as I candidly refer to it, is derived of ego driven self indulgent communities who serve only to prosper themselves through online interaction. The antisocial behavior they engage in is used to prop themselves up and to promote their strengths. Generally speaking, these communities are not interested in the spread of their ideals as much as reaching desired levels of self satisfaction and reaching short term goals. In my experience they are actually not really a community as much as loosely tied individuals who come together only when strength in numbers or some form of group consciousness will help each individual reach a desired outcome. In the broader economic sense this can be attributed to each individual acting rationally to reach his or her outcomes with no regard for the greater well being of others. This form of community is fleeting and typically short lived. As motivations are not driven by ideals and are more or less associated with in game goals.

The "Bad"

Due to character limit, comment continued at:

<http://community.thedivisionigr.com/index.php/?topic/105-we-have-a-ted-conversation/?p=179>

Gary Riccio

Feb 17 2014: I am speechless, Matthew, and that doesn't happen very often (smile). Thank you so much for this framework in helping us understand nested communities, insurgent groups that aren't communities but pass through them online just as in the real world, and individual development within a "tight social fabric."

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 17 2014: I went to your link, which taught me another thing that would not have occurred to me. Please correct me if I misunderstood this.

I had assumed that communities surround a single game, such that there might be a community of people devoted to Game x or Game y.

From reading your statement of clan history (forgive any misuse of the vocabulary of your organization- I think you understand me anyway), your group moves about and plays a variety of different online games. It's as if rather than being a soccer team or a basketball team or a tennis team, you are a team that plays all sorts of online games.

Or did I misunderstand that and some of you specialize?

Forgive me these questions. I am of a generation and gender that doesn't know.

[Matthew Mondero](#)

Feb 19 2014: Fritzie-, very astute observation. I believe you are in fact right that the majority of communities focus their attention on one game, but generally speaking it's one franchise such that they move on to the newest version of the game. I think that's fairly common in the business world, where most companies focus on one product or product line. Companies who do grow out to support multiple products or industries likely started small and had to work their way there. We have done much the same as you will find in our history. The bonds that form by those familiar with the product that initially spawned our community help create a bond in spirit.

We grew out of necessity and a desire by our collective to have some variety and choice. In the end it proved to be a valuable learning experience. We continue to recognize differences amongst different franchises about who plays what and why. One of the biggest revelations in this process was that our formula absolutely translates outside of its origins. Through this realization and the bonds created by our members we have survived the seemingly absolute death of the franchise this community was founded around. We have taken our Constitution and made it applicable on a broader stage. This has taken considerable time and effort, but the rewards greatly exceed the cost in providing a firm foundation for us to continue to build upon.

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 22 2014: Silver wrote: "In my interactions thought the community spaces online I have searched to be a part of the latter. I believe that standing on principle and interacting through Pro-Social engagement that communities can have a meaningful and lasting impact on the world. I believe I have found that opportunity in the Community I am glad to call myself a Member of. I can only hope that as we strive to improve the world for others that they in turn will begin working to do the same."

Your breakdown of the Good, the Bad and the Ugly was both potent and spot on Silver. Amazing articulation.

- [Brad Keddy](#)

Feb 17 2014: People I have never even seen face to face transferred perfectly into my sports and even my school work. Life is not something that is meant to be handled alone. the US NAVY SEALS call these teammates their swim buddy and their outlook on different objectives are brilliant! Im proud to be a gamer. Im proud to call my community my family! I know any issue I come by there are my brothers (who live in a different country entirely) will always stand by me and help me through anything. Community is the key to survival in this cruel world whether it be online or real life everybody needs it.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: "I know any issue I come by there are my brothers (who live in a different country entirely) will always stand by me and help me through anything."

"Who live in a different country"!!! What was even remotely close to this in bygone times? The most elite and privileged of society, for example, from the 17th to 19th centuries, sent their children abroad to experience the world (i.e., individuals elsewhere in the world) and become leaders later in their adulthood. With the internet, the playing field is leveled.

By way of analogy, see also:

McCullough, D. (2012). *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Shorto, R. (2005). *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America*. New York: Vintage.

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 22 2014: Brad wrote: "Life is not something that is meant to be handled alone."

Herein lies the power of multiplayer games and the digital tribes that inhabit them.

Awesome reply Brad!

- [Brad Keddy](#)

Feb 17 2014: First I'd like to start out with a HUGE thank you. This conversation is greatly appreciated and long sought after by my gaming community.

I'm a young man only 21 years old so I'm pretty fresh out of school, with out my community (The Division IGR) I would've never turned into the young man I man today. I believe that online gameplay and online interaction with individuals that may not even so much as look at in what we call "RL" has a major impact on ones life. For instance walking down the street and you see a man wearing a long dark trench coat long dark hair and black makeup all over his face. Most people will do their very best to avoid this person. However this man might be the nicest person in the world, and just have different beliefs than you do. But nobody will give him the time of day.

In online gameplay you will talk to anybody that will communicate with you, we as gamers feed off that teamwork. In junior high school I was transferred into a new school, as the new kid rumours spread around and I was constantly bullied. Everyday I tried to come up with an excuse to avoid going back. When I got my first PS3 it was like an escape from reality for me until I met my brothers in The Division. My community helped me through the thick and thin, they helped me realize that education was

important and to ignore the negativity. It was hard but it was my online community that got me through my teenage years. The teamwork the trust and the commitment I learned from

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: Wow! Thank you for sharing this experience, Brad. Can you tell us about the forums where you really got to know your "brothers in the Division." To what extent was it in audio during the game, and to what extent was it through other social media related to the game or not? Wow!

- [Brad Keddy](#)

Feb 23 2014: Honestly, during gameplay was not when you would talk to somebody about your day to day lives. We ran a pretty tight crew when the game started. However a vast majority of our community if not everyone connects on a whole other level via skype, facebook, twitter, phone calls etc.

To answer your question I'm not oblivious to the fact that the shooters i play are virtual and not reality, I'm more concerned with how somebody and their family are doing. Even more interested in their new car then I am about how the last couple games went. These guys are amazing and I'd do anything for them! The game is just something for us to bond over at this point to me. Something to do in the background while we get caught up.

I think this is about to change seeing as the competitive nature is coming back. We might need to save the chit chat for skype boys!!!

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 22 2014: Brad wrote: "In online gameplay you will talk to anybody that will communicate with you, we as gamers feed off that teamwork. In junior high school I was transferred into a new school, as the new kid rumours spread around and I was constantly bullied. Everyday I tried to come up with an excuse to avoid going back. When I got my first PS3 it was like an escape from reality for me until I met my brothers in The Division. My community helped me through the thick and thin, they helped me realize that education was important and to ignore the negativity. It was hard but it was my online community that got me through my teenage years. The teamwork the trust and the commitment I learned from."

This is deeply moving to read Brad. Thank you for sharing it.

At first, the game was an escape from reality. Then an organized community came along and transformed depth of meaning. Provided fellowship with peers and mentorship from adults. Supported persona development. Fostered leadership through accountability. Empowered personal drive to transcend.

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 17 2014: By chatter I mean when the social unrelated communication becomes more pervasive than the focused collaborative game play communication. Many team based co-operative or competitive games have an "open mic" or text box so you can communicate with your team co-op players and some allow communication with the opposing team in some form but those are more limited.

Some social banter is encouraged. When it becomes intrusive to the objectives of the game its disruptive and causes frustration and discourse for a group. Engagement, entertainment and enrichment are part of the experience but the goals and objectives are the reason for playing.

People will and do use other communication methods in an exploitative way. Some games allow you to spectate game play and people will communicate information about the game like what the opposition is doing. The anonymity of the internet and exploitative nature of people is an entirely different discussion.

It's like any social gathering focused around an entertaining event like cards or sports.

Many people will first be introduced to the community when searching for help about a game or game platform. There is an active incentive to improve your team or collaborative members because it makes for a better experience for everyone. They are looking for information but this can transition into a sharing of experiences and active participation with the community as they interact and engage with others. It expands on the experience and on it's own provides the engagement, entertainment and enrichment.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: "Some social banter is encouraged. When it becomes intrusive to the objectives of the game its disruptive and causes frustration and discourse for a group. Engagement, entertainment and enrichment are part of the experience but the goals and objectives are the reason for playing."

It sounds like there is a kind of an etiquette or rules of engagement that one must learn and adapt to the situation at hand. Understanding the difference between the banter that is encouraged and that which is disruptive must require social sensibilities that most people would associate with a well functioning community.

I honestly don't think the general public understands very much about this kind of social sophistication in online games. I will be interested to hear what others think or have experienced.

Thanks Scott!

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 22 2014: Scott wrote: "There is an active incentive to improve your team or collaborative members because it makes for a better experience for everyone."

They are looking for information but this can transition into a sharing of experiences and active participation with the community as they interact and engage with others. It expands on the experience and on its own provides the engagement, entertainment and enrichment."

Perfectly stated Scott. This is why I love competitive, team-based games. The organized community becomes an experience unto its own which for some, is greater than the actual games we play.

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 16 2014: The game medium is an engineered and structured environment so the intrinsic nature of the people who seek to get the most out of the experience can have similar personal traits and skills suited for the complex and organized structure required to build them.

The ones that stand out are the ones who have attracted the people with these common interests, skill sets and have formed the bonds to invest in and find value in the experience.

A relative example I feel that directly relates to these complex communities are the ones that formed from military experience, the bonds that were formed among the veterans and the organizations that were built from the participants. The AMVETS (American Veterans) and VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) are examples.

The aspect of community is the natural progression of sharing of experience and the desire to expand and grow. Gaming is simply the medium in relative context to the discussion.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: "natural progression of sharing of experience and the desire to expand and grow."

It seems to me that this is a pretty deep observation about the meaning of community.

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 16 2014: There are varying aspects to the "social gamer" and I would like to address some of my personal experiences related to the communities that have formed around the medium.

People tend to focus on certain aspects of gaming and have associated gaming behaviors based on game content when it has more to do with aspects of the game design, its mechanics and control inputs. Rather than think of it as containing "violent content" or not gamers think of it in terms of the game play objectives, goals and the competitive and or the collaborative nature of the type of game play. The game mechanics based around the control input suit the varying personal player's desired style of game play. The content as an influence in the forming of a community relates to the nature of the players

rather than the nature of the content.

Communication in the game forms out of collaboration to overcome obstacles, opposition and information on inputs and mechanics. Through the collaborative effort other communications are initiated by the social gamer and additional bonds are formed through interaction and discovery of common interests. The gaming environment however can limit the non-gaming related communication because of the desire to focus more on the goals in collaborative play where too much chatter will impact the success and the results.

The social gamer seeks the personal interactions with relation to the game and with the common interests of the people they have formed these bonds with. The community is formed to continue the communication and collaboration outside of the direct communication within the gaming environment as well as the additional common interests and sharing of experiences both game related and personal.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: Thank you, Scott, for sharing your experience. One thing that might help people outside of gamer communities is for gamers to write about various online gathering places, some that may be related directly to gameplay and others that may not have an immediate relationship to gameplay.

So, for example, where do gamers congregate to do collaborative reflection on a plan or after action, and how commonly does this occur? What kind of conversation happens in these forums, for example, is there hierarchical structure or can anymore more or less have a momentary standing, as a teacher so to speak, in a dialogue based on their unique experience?

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 16 2014: Back when the gaming community was a new thing clans and guilds were formed on the original BBS sites. These were shared within the games themselves and at tech hosted events like the computer trade shows, spread word of mouth at business trade shows with people within the computer industry and by the early independent game developers through the distribution centers that sold their games.

When the online gaming community began to form and the internet became more available more resources were available to use and new and better tools were created. The desire and motivation for self propagation. The "I want this so I will build this" and the common traits of others to also want to share in "this".

As the internet and tech grew so did the services that supported these aspects of communities. BBS grew into forums and professionals in the industry explored ways to simplify the process to make it more accessible to the masses.

As the task of creation, networking and sharing has improved so has the community expanded. Since social media has exploded driven by peoples desire to expand on and share personal experiences the community has filtered down to lower levels of specific skills required to enter the space and engage with others.

So my history has a storied past from my desire to use the tools of computing, to learning how to build them because of the cost. The sharing of knowledge with personal communication at these trade shows to BBS sites. I then moved on to game network web sites and communication tools like Roger Wilco and Team speak.

Then games began to incorporate communication within the games. Game developers and network sites began hosting their own forums for related communication and these spawned the independent user created forums.

The social medium has provided other sites and many paths to community like Myspace, Facebook, Skype, twitter, YouTube and Twitch TV. The social community communicatio is spread out across many areas these days

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 17 2014: I don't really like to put labels like this but there is often the terms casual and hardcore gamers. There are a vast majority of gamers who don't interact very much beyond the game space. They don't go on forums or become involved with the community. They play the games and the experience ends there.

There are some like myself who by nature become more involved in the experience and gaming is more of a hobby than an activity. With some of my friends it's a means of an income and a career providing content for the gaming industry or as part of the entertainment surrounding the gaming industry.

I participate in many of these community spaces about the games and the gaming industry. I'm directly involved and an active member in relation to my hobby.

Popular games based on collaborative play will have many organised groups who actively meet, plan and train to be more competitive. Some are more extended social spaces to share experiences. What ever level you want to be involved with there is a place for you to do so. The impact you have on the space you participate in can affect how others perceive you. Some people are natural leaders other are support, some can be disruptions. It's as diverse as people are by nature.

Some communities are very organised and have some form of ranks and a structure. These are built by the people who value the need for this in relation to the members and activity.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 16 2014: You mention "chatter." Do members of a game collaboration have ways of communicating with each other during play in a way that only collaborators can see but that other players cannot see?

Here are examples of what I mean. If two teams are playing Cranium, they can whisper to each other. If two players are playing bridge, they cannot whisper to each other during the game but they can communicate at home about what their signals will mean. In sports the team has plenty of time for conference during practice, in the game they communicate with each other through signals whose meanings they negotiated in advance, and during play if they need to talk further, they have to take a time out.

I am asking this only because I had assumed what people learn about others in online gaming is determined inductively by observing only each others play. Now I am getting the impression players communicate with members of their own team or maybe even with opponents also in narrative posts, either within the game or separately in some sort of forum.

I ask these questions to better follow your discussion here of how relationships are formed.

[Matthew Mondero](#)

Feb 17 2014: You bring up a great question Fritzie-. "Chatter" can occur in a variety of ways, the most impactful and meaningful chatter typically occurs as a collaborative used by groups in the effort of achieving a desired outcome. This can take form through text driven interactions in real time or through VOIP technology in supporting mediums.

Most current multiplayer games allow for voice communication in real time in which some or all of your group can hear you. In some cases the discussion is split up between active participants, and participants in a standby mode, where each group has direct communication with the members of the same group. The goal in this scenario is to split the chatter between engaged "players" and those not engaged for a variety of reasons, the most predominant being that through the process of being phased out of the scenario a player may have gained knowledge that could aid the players still engaged. The end result being a focus on "fair play" similar to charades where the person who selected the action to be performed wouldn't want to share the knowledge of the word with their team.

The alternate interactions are those of opponents. Within a community a variety of forms of sharing of information can occur (e.g., leaderboards, chat rooms, forums, lobbies) in which dialogue and information about performance can spark rivalries, feuds, and friendships. The result is that this information is used by opponents to gain insight about abilities, tendencies, and even persona. The more passive the form of data the less likely an opponent is to actually gain an understanding of the opposition. In some cases this is the desired result as the following quote from "Ender's Game" may imply.

"In the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to defeat him, then in that very moment I also love him."

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Scott wrote: "The social gamer seeks the personal interactions with relation to the game and with the common interests of the people they have formed these bonds with. The community is formed to continue the communication and collaboration outside of the direct communication within the gaming environment as well as the additional common interests and sharing of experiences both game related and personal."

Drops mic.

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 16 2014: If I might throw in another question only for your consideration, to what extent do these communities of online gamers extend outside of online to offline relationships among those same players and to what extent is there overlap between adult players of online games and adult players of the sort of live role playing games on sees meeting regularly in a local park? I don't know the term-of-art for those, but, for example, there are communities in which organization of various kinds may be online but groups of 25-50 people appear on a regular basis in the local park clad in costumes that look somewhere between medieval knights and Robin Hood and take posts under trees and so forth and move about negotiating with each other about alliances and sometimes practicing dueling. Do these draw a different interest group? Is the mutual development of narrative and character-building similar or different?

A second issue unrelated to the first- in online communities unrelated to gaming, such as discussion forums or communities of practice, there will tend to be a small group of regulars which changes slowly over time and a much larger group of people who move in for a taste, stay briefly, and then move on. Is this also true in online gaming communities, or is the proportion of participants in a year who are regulars higher for gamers?

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: Hi Fritzie,

I don't know about role playing games or say re-enactments outside of games but it is an interesting question. I am more interested in the effect of relationships formed in gamer communities on activities in life beyond games that don't involve play per se, such as work and family life. Actually your question gets me thinking about gathering places in online communities analogous to the large variety of gathering places in a physical community. It would be interesting to hear gamers comment on that.

Your other point "communities of practice, there will tend to be a small group of regulars which changes slowly over time." Definitely yes in my observations, there is something like the "legitimate peripheral participation" that Etienne Wenger so eloquently emphasized in other contexts (e.g., work) in the 1990s.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: The other thing I would point out is that online communities, even ones that form around particular games, can be as diverse as physical communities. Different online communities can make some of the expedient comparisons that neighboring communities make about one another, for better or for worse, and for the sake of self definition and a kind of cohesion (us versus them).

There also are sociopaths in online communities just as their are in physical communities, and they are as inevitable here as they have been elsewhere throughout recorded history. The circumstances that enable one to recognize good strangers versus bad strangers, for example, is as important in online communities as it was in the design of the Greek City States of antiquity (see e.g., Aristotle, ca. 330 B.C.E.). .

The most recognizable sociopath in online communities is referred to as a "troll" (see e.g., <http://slate.me/1bCDVke> for a recent study of this phenomenon). Trolls are pathologically proud of their identity as such. They are mostly just a nuisance but they can cross the border into criminal activity. So they generally are tracked, ignored, and contained analogous to the treatment of sociopaths in physical communities.

Fortunately, according to the recent study, "only 5.6 percent of survey respondents actually specified that they enjoyed "trolling." By contrast, 41.3 percent of Internet users were "non-commenters," meaning they didn't like

engaging online at all. So trolls are, as has often been suspected, a minority of online commenters, and an even smaller minority of overall Internet users."

Aristotle (ca. 330 B.C.E.). The politics. In: Brockway, W. (Exec. Ed.), Adler, M.J. (Assoc. Ed.), Jowett, B. (Translator). The Works of Aristotle (pp. 445-548). Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. (1952).

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 16 2014: I do know what a troll is from internet forums. I don't know what a troll would look like during a game. If people are playing a board game, as a parallel example, I suppose someone could run in, grab the draw pile and run away. In games involving building towers, someone could come in and shake the table. In card play, someone could peek into someones hand and go public with the cards he holds. In a forum someone can come in and just harass people verbally to make their lives in the forum unpleasant and eventually cause reasonable, thoughtful people to depart the forum..

What is trolling in an online game?

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 17 2014: My experience is it's people's inability to deal with their own personal frustrations and they are acting out in a disruptive way to get attention. In parallel to your examples it would be the 5 year old child who isn't winning the game so they knock the game pieces off the board.

It comes back to human nature, when someone does not get the positive attention they seek they will seek out negative attention to cause an effect in order to have some form of impact on the situation.

Some of these games are based on competitive play and the value people place on "winning" or being thought of as a "winner" can play on peoples egos.

Some things people will do is play music or make lots of noises over the mic, people will whistle or talk insolently about nonsense or be outright vulgar and insulting to others.

Other forms involve the game play itself by killing or interfering with members of your own team, failing objectives intentional, and other disruptive activities.

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: There are a wide variety of trolls, and to understand them, we must be careful not to paint with a broad brush. So, for example, I would *not* label a teenage troller a sociopath or "horrible person" because many teenagers are just too inexperienced to even know themselves and some desperately may be counter-attacking bullies.

Adult trolls, on the other hand and as the research shows, clearly are sociopaths. Also, within the sub-population of sociopaths just as in the sub-population of gangs in the physical world, you have a variety of personality types and tactics. They can range from explicitly and actively aggressive, with the intent of immediate disruption in the activities of others, to passive aggression and even sophistry that undermines rather than immediately disrupts.

The sophistry tactic is interesting because the intent, often the result, is to distract or engage others, to co-opt their free will. In my experience, even if that is initially a successful tactic, it is sort of "fool me once, shame on you... fool me twice, shame on me." Again, the strategy of experienced people online and occasionally the law enforcement community is to track, ignore, and contain.

For public forums that are general in nature and that have a vast and loose audience, the best practice is to have clearly articulated "terms of use," as in the TED conversations (see links at bottom of the page), and to enforce them.

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 19 2014: Yes, in another couple of posts on the thread, there is a interesting discussion started of a Constitution, which may have some of the function of a Terms of Use, except that it sounds like it is for a group of players rather than an entire game, perhaps. I will learn further as that subthread unfolds.

My son has used the word "pranking," which I think captures nicely that some perhaps inconvenient play is intended to be playful rather than "horrible."

Gary Riccio

Feb 19 2014: The Constitution to which they refer is interesting because it is something developed by the community and by which behavior is appraised in the community. You are right, Fritzie, it is not limited to a particular game, and it does serve as

a kind of "Terms of Use." Interestingly, though, it is not just about what not to do, actions for which there would be prescribed repercussions. The focus actually is good behavior and ideals with respect to which gamers in the associated community are rewarded and recognized by the community for their behavior in the community.

A constitution and bill of rights in a game community may be unusual, but I suspect there are unwritten rules of engagement in all communities that become clear and undeniable because of the way people in the community react to what they perceive as good or bad behavior. It would be interesting and edifying to hear stories of such shaping interactions among gamers (with "names changed to protect the innocent" [smile]).

- [Scott Woodbury](#)

Feb 17 2014: The activity you were speaking on is called larping, it stands for live action roll playing.

There has always been some personal interaction associated with gaming. The first way to play some of these games together was through a LAN or local area network connection where the game platforms were wired together on a network hub. LAN parties are still popular and people still participate in them.

The gaps in personal connections began when online play and the internet became wide spread and more people became involved. People still seek out these personal connections outside of the gaming experience.

Many adult gamers who have the means to travel to gatherings often do to meet friends in real life. E3 in LA and PAX are massive examples of how people will gather and there are smaller organizations solely focused on one game type like Quake-con.

I have meet many of the people I know from the online space. These casual experiences can transition into meaningful relationships with others.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 17 2014: Scott, in reference to your reply above, I did not realize until someone told me elsewhere in this thread that there are microphones through which people actually talk with each other during the game.

Now I can see how disruptive someone can be who has access to the same speaking-space.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Scott wrote: "Some of these games are based on competitive play and the value people place on "winning" or being thought of as a "winner" can play on peoples egos." This is the number one offender in online shooters and no game produces it more than Call of Duty.

To combat this persona, my community has developed a series of process for breaking down a player's selfie ego and then rebuilding it into a community pride. This is what we call "hurt work" and for many, it's the the beginning of real personal development. Many who come to us with monster egos change and this change doesn't just effect they way they interact with others online. It changes the way they interact with their parents, friends, girlfriend, wife, kids, employers and themselves. There is nothing better than watching this transformation happen and then seeing that gamer begin leading others down the same path. It's an amazing experience to be apart of.

Fritzie - 200+**Host**

Feb 22 2014: You are right that that is a worthwhile and often necessary activity in communities of all kinds and often easier in "live" communities, such as schools, community organizations, and workplaces than online.

Congratulations on being able to manage this issue in your setting.

○ **Troy Mills**

5 days ago: Building friendships in an online community is much easier than in real life. To begin with you already have at least one thing in common. This is a solid block to build off of that can lead to the discovery that you have much more in common. In real life you run the risk of never fitting in because there will not always be people that like the same stuff you do. Online you can control what everyone else knows about you, and keep secret all of the stuff that you don't want them to know. In real life this is much harder to do because you can't always control what people will learn about you unless you are the only one that knows you in that area. Family and friends that you have already shown your true colors are more likely to fill in the blanks for any new person that wants to be your friend. Chances are something embarrassing will become known. Online you can take people as deep as you want into who you are, or never even scratch the surface and hide behind your avatar.

Fritzie - 200+**Host**

5 days ago: Thanks, Troy. Yes, I know many people find great value in their online communities. I have seen this particularly when people are

isolated by illness or simply live in a place in which others do not share their interests or when their schedules are not in sync with others with whom they might otherwise interact.. I understand too that anonymity and the ability to control the image one projects make the terms of online relationships different than offline.

o [Troy Mills](#)

5 days ago: When you find out that someone is a gamer, especially one that enjoys the same type of games that you do, it unlocks another level of communication. This is similar to being able to speak Klingon with another Trekkie, you can speak in references and acronyms specific to gaming genres. Trials and tribulations of past accomplishments or failures are mutually shared. There is an understanding if not compassion for undergoing and completing difficult gaming challenges. Respect and admirations are shared for displays of skill. In Call of Duty Black Ops 2 there was a player card that you could unlock for throwing a Tomahawk across the majority of the map and getting a kill with it. People that had that card were recognized either for being skillful, lucky, or boosting. (Having other people help you to achieve goals by allowing themselves to be killed to improve the other persons stats) I think this is easier because playing the game there is always a meta-game and a mentality that is shared through experience. I cannot say the same in real life, if someone has a bowling trophy I am less likely to be able to share in their triumph even if I myself bowl. There are certain rights of passage in gaming that create deeper bonds between people; these are more present in games than they are in real life because more people are willing to take on challenges while gaming than in real life. Games are about trials and tribulations, and senses of self-accomplishment. In real life you have to search for challenges, they aren't just built in.

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 16 2014: Thank you for creating this conversation Gary. So, I think it's important to scope a playing field for reference:

- ★ Global gaming community: All games and gaming communities
- ★ At-large gaming community: All gaming communities within a specific game genre
- ★ Game community: All gaming communities within a specific game
- ★ Clan/Guild/Tournament community: Organized gaming communities that play games together
- ★ A Team: A small number of organized gamers
- ★ A Gamer/Player: Me

"We would like to begin a conversation about the role of community not only in online gameplay itself but in the development of relationships and character."

Relationships are central to my 10-year experience developing and leading community organization in games. These relationships are why I still pick up the headset and get

after it with my clan a decade forward. They are what fuel my passion to develop relationships and ideas through the collaborate environments of online games. In a community where authentic persona is empowered, my experience is that there is no difference between befriending a gamer in the ether and befriending someone in the flesh. Books could be written with the stories of people who would not usually mix teaming up in and out of games to accomplish amazing things together (see <http://bit.ly/1eD0IMw>). Lives are transformed through our community medium every day and mine is no exception.

But, the relationships I've developed through my gaming community are only as strong as the shared values that define them. Where I come from, we operate first to uphold and protect a community constitution and Gamer Bill of Rights, no matter what game (or RL) situation we engage. If scaled, personal relationships are ultimately secondary to the preservation and protection of our shared values. I think this dynamic ties into one of the ways in which an online community can facilitate the development of character.

Due to character limit, reply continued at: <http://j.mp/1dVoFcH>

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: Thank you, Justin. The gamer bill of rights and constitution in your community strikes me as an example of the self organization that Tom Chatfield described in his TED talk ("7 ways games reward the brain") in the context of a currency created by and for gamers.

Most gamer communities won't have something so explicit as these statements of shared value(s). I'll bet they are implicit, though, in the behavior in many gamer communities. In [our research with the Army](#), we worked with instructors (also instructional designers and developers) to identify specific observable behavior that reflected core values of their community (over 100 of them). I will give some examples in future posts, although this research did not extend to observable behavior in the community outside the context of formal programs of training and education.

It would be interesting to see what gamers in your community can post about specific behavior in and around your games that is either consistent or inconsistent with your statements of shared values. I suspect that level of detail will be more general to other gamers and gaming communities.

Thanks again for the time and care you took in writing your post to this conversation!

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: I believe there may be a convergence between what my colleagues and I are observing in online game communities and what Tom Chatfield discusses in his TED talk in terms of dynamic reward schedules and the engagement that they both reflect and influence.

Every time someone opens a discussion in a forum or Skype chat associated with

a game they are playing, for example, it may be like “opening the boxes” that Tom mentioned in his talk. Something happens motivationally. It doesn’t happen all the time, not even most of the time, but often enough there is a significant emotional event that may be something learned or something as simple as not as not feeling alone in the moment (respectfully in disagreement with Sherry Turkle, in “Alone Together,” at least partially).

An I-Thou mindset (in the sense of Martin Buber, as opposed to I-It) may be analogous to the currency that gamers develop on their own initiative within a community. As such, the currency is more than about transactions between people. It is about identifying and developing a common system of value(s) with respect to which transactions can be organized and executed, a framework within which value can be realized and exchanged.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Gary wrote: "Something happens motivationally. It doesn't happen all the time, not even most of the time, but often enough there is a significant emotional event that may be something learned or something as simple as not as not feeling alone in the moment."

When you come home from your normal day, fire up your PC or game console and connect with your team of power personas via Skype or in-game and get at it, it feels like your blasting off on a rocket. Like you can achieve anything, like no matter what, your clanmates have your back. You feel as if there is no challenge in, around or outside of gameplay that you and your team can't tackle. This experience is second to none.

Gary wrote: "An I-Thou mindset (in the sense of Martin Buber, as opposed to I-It) may be analogous to the currency that gamers develop on their own initiative within a community. As such, the currency is more than about transactions between people. It is about identifying and developing a common system of value(s) with respect to which transactions can be organized and executed, a framework within which value can be realized and exchanged."

Bingo. And trust is not transactional:

<http://community.thedivisionigr.com/index.php/?topic/32-forbes-seeking-better-returns-staying-true-to-corporate-character-means-realizing-that-trust-is-not-transactional/>

Fritzie - 200+

Host

Feb 15 2014: Your question and Tom's comment launch what promises to be an eye-opening thread for the many who have little familiarity with the culture of online gaming and make assumptions without such understanding.

I hope those who do have such familiarity will continue share their thoughts here.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Thank you Fritzie. :)

Tom Chatfield 50+**TED Speaker**

Feb 15 2014: I think this is a great topic, and would like to suggest the importance of grounding it in larger conversations about communities, rather than implicitly treating games as so exceptional that they need to be addressed from scratch.

We already have plenty of research about the generic qualities of many successful communities, in terms of human capital, cohesion and mutual acceptance; and plenty of research about what facilitates these virtues in different kinds of digital environments (how trolling is handled; how shared standards and aspirations are developed and enshrined, or not; how 'virtue' is rewarded).

I suspect that the important business of addressing precisely what happens within player communities will be best-rooted in these general principles - and in not simply treating games as implacable engines determining certain behaviors.

As to how far these virtues may be detachable from the context of a game - and enforceable or enhanceable by external framing - I don't know. But I do think it's interesting to compare, for example, efforts to reward positive community-enhancing behavior (and penalize trolling) in the "meta" aspects of games like League of Legends - and how far such efforts come up against limitations embodied in game mechanics themselves.

It depends in part how you define community, of course. Some of the most enhancing gaming experiences I've had have been courtesy of the small "communities" of four or five close friends playing a great game at the same time as me, and the way in which we've dissected its mechanics, bonded, and used play as a bridge to other interactions. Perhaps we need to categorize communities as well as games - by size, by scope and cohesion - if we want to have the best possible conversation here?

Gary Riccio

Feb 15 2014: Thank you, Tom. I love your idea. In fact, I think it is central to the question we are asking. I would love to hear more about your personal experiences in this regard. So far, I have been writing in generalities. I will try to get into a bit more detail about personal experience. I think some of my colleagues in the world of games are planning to write about their experiences that are unfolding as we have this TED conversation over the next month.

Your idea is important to me because, based on my personal experience and the psychological literature (e.g, work in the 1980s and 1990s by one of my mentors, Ulric Neisser, on the self), I believe we have multiple identities associated with

the nested communities to which we all belong (e.g., significant other, nuclear family, extended family, friends, colleagues). Experiences in growth with one of these identities certainly can influence our other identities (see also the more recent work of Herminia Ibarra on identify at work).

In my work with Army training and education for example, we frequently heard stories about how someone had been changed by significant emotional events and developmental experiences within a formal setting for learning in ways that changed their behavior and manifestation of values outside that context, in the person's life more broadly. I have been hearing the same thing from the gaming community with which I have been interacting over the last couple of years. We will try to have some of the gamers comment here about such experiences.

I don't pretend that this is a great insight. We hear stories all the time about these sorts of cross-fertilizing influences in other aspects of life outside of games or education. I think what will be interesting is to see if we can elicit stories at the level of detail of a good novel so we can understand what specific things people do in interactions that one would characterize as prosocial or otherwise existentially influential.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 15 2014: I agree with you that the idea that we bring experiences from one interactive setting to another is not novel. What interests me in the discussion is that people very quickly make assumptions about interactive or learning settings of which they are not a current part, in fact dismissing environments that may have positive potential.

I will follow your thread with interest even as my inexperience with gaming leaves me little to add. I think that we will increasingly interact with and work with those engaged in gaming, and so it is useful from that perspective to have a picture of the most common cultures in those communities.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 15 2014: We are interested in hearing from people who are "inexperienced with gaming" as well. Why? If you have a gamer in your life whose online experiences you are curious about, we are interested in hearing about your third-party questions and conjectures.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 15 2014: I don't have a gamer in my life in the sense of a child, parent, or friend involved in gaming, but any teacher is likely involved

every day with many students who are.

Further, there is another thread on TED Conversations about the effect of game-playing on aging, and in that thread there is some discussion of whether games are "artificial" and therefore not conducive to cognitive health.

I hope some of the participants in that thread will notice yours here and that you will take a look at that parallel thread.

Gary Riccio

Feb 15 2014: The TED conversation that Fritzie mentioned can be found at http://www.ted.com/conversations/22866/are_cognitive_games_such_as_r.html

Gary Riccio

Feb 16 2014: In my reply to you (Tom Chatfield), I emphasized the importance of nested communities, identity, and notions of self. Here are references to some of the work of Neisser and Ibarra to which I referred.

Ibarra, H. (2004). Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Ibarra, H., & Hunter, M. (2007). How leaders create and use networks. Harvard Business Review, 85(1), 40–7.

Neisser, U. (Ed.) (1996). The perceived self: ecological and interpersonal sources of self knowledge. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Neisser, U., & Fivush, R. (Ed.) (1994). The remembering self: construction and accuracy in the self narrative. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Neisser, U., & Jopling, D.A. (Eds.) (1997). The conceptual self in context. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Other relevant research is that of Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer on "small wins" at work.

Amabile, T. M., and Kramer, S. J. (2011). Meeting the challenges of a person-centric work psychology. Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 4, 116-121.

Amabile, T. M., and Kramer, S. J. (2011). The power of small wins. Harvard Business Review, 89 (5), 70-80.

This corresponds to what my colleagues and I refer to as developmentally influential "micro-experiences." It also connects with essential aspects of the gaming experience to which Jane McGonigal and others refer, such as "blissful

productivity" and its relation to "urgent optimism, epic meaning, and weaving a tight social fabric," or what you (Tom Chatfield) discuss in terms of dynamic reward schedules both as a reflection of and impact on engagement.

[Matthew Mondero](#)

Feb 17 2014: Tom, I believe you bring up a valuable assertion that this conversation would be better suited as a discussion about community interaction as opposed to meandering through the differences in each genre. While that is inherently the focus of this discussion, what is not widely understood is that within each game category (e.g., MMORPG, FPS, Simulation) varying levels of community engagement will either be encouraged or deterred through the functions of the game, regardless of category. Such that the classification of game type actually has less impact on the community than the tools or strategies applied in a given game. I do believe it has an underlying influence on this discussion, however I do agree it should not be a main point of conjecture as we should assume in the broader sense that we are more concerned with how these functioning communities impact it's collective and individual members, not how the games impact the community.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: Thanks Matthew for this emphasis. From my perspective, I think "how these functioning communities impact it's collective and individual member" should include some details about the interactions as much as the outcomes of the interactions so that our audience can come to understand both the realities and the possibilities for online gamer communities.

Commenters are beginning to describe the places (e.g., forums) where the interactions occur and where the back stories of relationships develop. Without giving up privacy, it would be nice to have some examples such as... "in this particular situation, I talked with... about... because..." and "the intent and tone of the conversation was..." and "I learned... and taught..." and "together, we came to know..."

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 17 2014: I think if most of what you are studying is relationship-building in forums, it is important to articulate why relationship-building in forums attached to games would be different than those not attached to games. The demographic is surely different. But what else?

There are forums that are basically about chat in which people may see a forum as support for reflections on their lives or the world around them. There are DIY forums in which people use the forum for technical support on individual projects. There are

forums that are more wiki-like in which people who are working together exchange ideas and information pertinent to their common undertaking, like a wiki for docents at a particular museum. There are venues like Wetcanvas for artists, which are a hybrid of supporting individuals in individual projects, loosely connected group projects, chat about ideas, and discourse about matters of the day, with participants participating in some aspects but not others.

Why would a gamers forum offer different opportunity to develop the skills that interest you than these other types?

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 17 2014: Fritzie asks more great questions here. I will be interested in reading what the gamers have to say. For me, as I indicated before, it is the split-second decision making that is required in some game genres, especially one-lifers versus respawners. It would be good to read more from gamers on this distinction.

Another important driver for me is the sheer amount of time that gamers spend playing games together, in this form of collective endeavor, and the arguably unprecedented size of the population of people involved in online social games. Even if there were nothing special about the relationship-building in games, these numbers would be enough to warrant special attention to online social games.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 17 2014: I should have mentioned too, then, the parallel to, or contrast with, relationship-building in the context of sports played physically, where one also makes split-second decisions with consequences.

I imagine there is a significant literature about the building of leadership and collaborative skills through participation in team sports and communities attached to team sports.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 22 2014: After the first week of conversation, I think I can provide an answer to Tom's question about community size. I believe we are talking about gameplay that, at any one time, involves fewer than ten teammates but within a much larger community from which this team can be drawn and, to some extent, to which the team's behavior and performance is accountable. In addition, we seem to be focusing on games that require something like real-time decision-making and

action. Much of this discussion has been around first-person shooter games but these criteria are much broader.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: In our world, team sizes are 4, 8 or 16 gamers. We prefer 8 man teams. It limits gameplay lag and still allows us to break down into various units as needed in game such as two teams of 4, four teams of 2 or two teams of three and one rover (usually a sniper).

I too would love to see other gamers from other game genres that support community comment here. I feel like there is a lot I could learn from it.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Tom wrote: "As to how far these virtues may be detachable from the context of a game - and enforceable or enhanceable by external framing - I don't know."

Very far. We practice our virtues in all that we do in, around and outside of gameplay. Even though being a member of our gaming community is a lot of fun, becoming a ranked member is more a right of passage than a recreational activity. Earning rank (external from the games we play) in our community requires a player to focus both on the quality of their gameplay and the quality of their persona, or the development of. To become a leader in our community most gamers we encounter will have to engage in various degrees of "hurt work" to earn and then move up in rank. Our experience has been that this process changes people for the better and in all that they do.

Tom wrote: "Some of the most enhancing gaming experiences I've had have been courtesy of the small "communities" of four or five close friends playing a great game at the same time as me..."

You said "great game." So, one of the motivations in creating our gaming clan 10 years ago was so that we could experience great games all the time. To us, a great game is when all the players on your team work together successfully to complete the objective(s) of a match. Without a clan, you might go weeks without experiencing a good game. With a clan, you have great games on tap.

Tom Wrote: "Perhaps we need to categorize communities as well as games - by size, by scope and cohesion - if we want to have the best possible conversation here?"

Here is a general frame:

- ★ Global gaming community: All games and gaming communities
- ★ At-large gaming community: All gaming communities within a specific game genre
- ★ Game community: All gaming communities within a specific game

- ★ Clan/Guild/Tournament community: Organized gaming communities that play games together
- ★ A Team: A small number of organized gamers
- ★ A Gamer/Player: Me

Hope that helps Tom. Thanks for engaging!

Gary Riccio

Feb 14 2014: Thanks Martin. My colleagues and I will check it out. I suspect I will be more interested in the "back-room good ole boys clubs" because I have been more interested in gamer-to-gamer interactions that happen around roles played in the game, whether those roles are antisocial or prosocial. In other words, I am interested in the person behind the role as well as the gameplay and the relationships behind the interpersonal interactions in the game.

I come to this interest from work in military training and education where we focused on the influence learners have on one another, and that teachers and learners have on each other, outside the script for a formal learning event. Those influences can happen before, during, and after the event. If during the event, it can be in activity or conversations while people are waiting for their turn. We could tell what people were learning and about their motivation by paying attention to what happens in these white spaces.

Surprisingly, we found that teachers can have some of their most significant influence outside of formal learning events or outside of the plan even during the event. It is where leadership is developed because it is where a leader can model the values that guide their reaction to a situation and their interactions with others. There are many kinds of leadership. In our experience, servant leadership clearly can be developed. It is about the inseparability of choice and responsibility, initiative and accountability, autonomy and relatedness; and those attributes can be observed in the details of common behavior in relatively mundane situations (what we call "micro-experiences").

See our work in military [training and education](#) that we now are pursuing in the context of videogames.

Justin Bastian

Feb 22 2014: Gary wrote: "Surprisingly, we found that teachers can have some of their most significant influence outside of formal learning events or outside of the plan even during the event. It is where leadership is developed because it is where a leader can model the values that guide their reaction to a situation and their interactions with others. "

Well this is awesome to know. The enduring leadership in our community is the type that is dynamic and happens when playing in game, when faced with an unexpected event, when engaging an AAR with subordinates, peers or seniors, when working together on a community project, when taking a call from a clanmate who has to get things off his chest or who wants to share an exciting event in their lives. I am consistently learning new things from my clanmates

about them, myself. Through this, my approach to leadership is consistently evolving. I am no where near the same type of leader I was 8, 5, 2, even 1 year ago.

Gary wrote: "There are many kinds of leadership. In our experience, servant leadership clearly can be developed. It is about the inseparability of choice and responsibility, initiative and accountability, autonomy and relatedness; and those attributes can be observed in the details of common behavior in relatively mundane situations (what we call "micro-experiences")."

Servant leadership is definitely our core philosophy and in my opinion, the very best form of leadership. Thank you for sharing this Gary.

- [Martin Sotnik](#)

Feb 14 2014: If you want to see a very focused and strong gaming community, check out Eve-Online. There are tremendous amounts of organization, leadership, personalities and back-room 'good ole boys clubs.' Nothing like it in any other game I've seen.

I actually tried to increase my Leadership abilities within that game. I was fascinated by individuals able to motivate large groups to risk assets in pursuit of a goal (In Eve you actually LOSE stuff if you fail.) Out of 400,000 players, only a handful had what it took to be a great Fleet Commander - and none of it was in-game items. It was all about personality, voice, confidence and risk-taking. I thought I could 'learn' to be a great leader, but I don't believe that anymore. You can increase your skills and decision-making, learn to avoid pitfalls, etc. but a true Leader seems to be born more than made.

Anti-social activities are actually ENCOURAGED in Eve. Thieves, Spies, Traitors and Pirates make some of the best gameplay possible and they are both celebrated and hated for their actions. You also have Bounty Hunters who are 'good guys' that counter those groups. The freedom to choose your path, ignore morality and laws, in a Sandbox where anything is possible, creates quite a varied World. It sounds perfect for the type of research you are attempting.

[Justin Bastian](#)

Feb 15 2014: Eve is no doubt an awesome community Martin. Your description of it reminds me a lot of the old SOCOM community. We also had heroes, thieves, spies, traitors and pirates via single player and independently in the online community. Though, the antisocial behavior was not generally encouraged in our community and a greater risk was taken by willfully assuming some of those antisocial personas online. A sanbox indeed.

"It was all about personality, voice, confidence." Yep. My experience is that leadership can be taught. My gaming experience is that it can be developed, gamer-to-gamer, via community play. My genre of choice, team-based shooters, fosters ripe environments for leadership and character development, which almost always leads to development of personal relationships.

Over the past decade, most of the things I have learned working gamer-to-gamer

to develop our online community are 100% convertible to RL. A huge portion of my life today, personally and professionally, is a direct result of "growing up" within an online gaming community. Tuned leadership skills is definitely one of the many benefits I've gained.

[Fritzie - 200+](#)

[Host](#)

Feb 15 2014: For those who are following without personal familiarity with online gaming, could you comment on how the fact that the functional focus is "team-based shooting" in your preferred genre affects what you learn from playing? For example, do you conceive of problems outside the game too as problems of aggression or defeating or subduing someone?

Do you feel that the roles you assume in the game format parallel the most useful roles to take in problem-solving in an outside-of-game context?

Does the difference between the demographics of your game community and the communities you engage with to solve problems outside affect how well you can extrapolate what you learn about coordination, cooperation, and leadership strategies from the game?

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 16 2014: These are really good questions Fritzie. Thank you for paying such close attention to the details of our claims and interests to detect dissonance with stereotypes.

From my perspective, both outside and inside gaming, there is something unique about split-second or time-critical decision making in the context of collective activity (e.g., shooter games) that requires a kind of preparation that gives one a higher level of confidence in predicting how a team member will respond.

This preparation is fostered by communication and mutual learning in activities that do not themselves involve split-second decision making, for example, that have nothing to do with first-person shooter gaming. Is the other person a "troll," someone who has troubling influences or interactions in their life that would compromise their trustworthiness, or are they merely unpredictable for reasons that cannot be ascertained?

It is not about what others say or even what they do. It is about understanding their context of influence that helps one understand their trustworthiness.

- [Darrell Shimel Jr.](#)

Feb 18 2014: EVE is a pretty interesting game in that it does not have to be about "blowing stuff up".

It is a "virtual spaceships" game.

Sure, the driver of demand is conflict. Without spaceships aggressively exchanging ammunition causing BOOM, there would be no demand for new ships and equipment.

But, it takes a surprisingly low percentage of the population engaged in BOOM to create demand for a full economy supplied by carebears (a term intended to be derogatory to people that avoid conflict, but the taken and owned by the more "risk-averse" players).

There are huge numbers of players that do nothing but pilot industrial ships, mine asteroids, build spaceships and equipment, play the virtual markets (buying low and selling high), transport goods from place to place, operate space stations. etc.

Some people mine, while others haul the ore, while others act as lookouts. We pool our resources, use them to build spaceships, not to fly into combat, but simply to sell to those that do like to fight.

I played for several years. I could go many months at a time without seeing ANY fighting. If someone came around looking for a fight, I would just run and hide and wait for them to go away.

[Gary Riccio](#)

Feb 19 2014: Thank you for this detail, Darrell. One purpose of this conversation is to give people outside of gaming or who are not involved with particular games, such as EVE, a bit of a window into what goes on in particular multi-player games. The division of labor you describe is essential to any community that is trying to achieve a complex objective. I would like to hear more about the ways you have found personal motivation in your tasks in EVE by understanding how it fits into the larger objective of the EVE community. Thanks again.

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