

**(Im)Material Worlds:
An Exploration of the Discursive Construction of the Materialities of Fictional Worlds
through Information-in-Social-Practice**

by

Robyn E. Stobbs

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In Human Ecology and Library and Information Studies
University of Alberta

© Robyn E. Stobbs, 2023

Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore how fictional worlds are constructed and engaged with in tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs). The research is interdisciplinary in nature, situated in the fields of human ecology and library and information studies to study an everyday life leisure activity. I draw on conceptualizations of materiality from material culture studies and conceptualizations of information and studies of information practices and behaviour from library and information studies as a foundation for this research. The methodological underpinnings of this research are grounded in ethnomethodology, and I used a big and small stories approach, with a focus on small stories, and an analytic lens derived from conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. Data collection occurred at three sites to enable in-depth analysis of three groups of gamers. With three groups of participants there was a total of 17 participants in this study. Natural language data was collected by video recording live games, and an interview was conducted for each group (with either the game master or the group as a whole, depending on the game type). The data analysis focused on three areas:

- 1) ways that players orient themselves in relation to identities, actions, locations, and objects, with particular attention to how these orientations are discursively formulated and used to inform understandings of the fictional world in unfolding gameplay;
- 2) ways that roles and rights to know about the world and gameplay influence the ways the fictional world is built and engaged with; and
- 3) ways that (im)materialities are discursively created and informed by the players through references to previous experiences and other works (also referred to as intertextuality).

The findings of this research demonstrate ways that TRPG players construct and orient to the (im)material worlds of games through their talk, how epistemic asymmetries and ecologies are

implicated in interaction, and how the continuous and intertextual nature of experience is made relevant and informative to the creation of shared understandings. The micro-information behaviours examined in this research demonstrate ways that fiction and reality inform one another in the everyday activity of TRPG play. The research contributes to discussions of immateriality in material culture studies by examining fictional environments in talk, as well as to scholarship on everyday information behaviour in library and information studies by examining the particularities of orally based information creation and use in the specific context of TRPGs.

Preface

This dissertation is an original work by Robyn E. Stobbs. The research design included video recording of live games-in-play and interviews. A pilot study was conducted that influenced the overall research design; it is described in Appendix A. The pilot study received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Board, Project Name: “Fictional Worlds and Making: Exploring Narrative Inquiry Methods in Material Culture and Library and Information Studies,” No. Pro00077794, January 23, 2018. The approval was renewed annually until a report on the larger study was sent to all interested participants. The main study reported in this document received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Board, Project Name: “(Im)Material Worlds: An Exploration of Information and Material in World-Building for Tabletop Roleplaying Games,” No. Pro00087672, January 22, 2019. It had an amendment approved June 1, 2019, and the approval was renewed annually until a report on the larger study was sent to all interested participants. Approval letters are included in Appendix B.

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for their on-going support throughout the process of completing this research project.

To Alanna Marie Scott, you invited me to join my first ever game of *Dungeons & Dragons* back in 2016. You have provided endless hours of enjoyment over the past several years, and I cannot thank-you enough! I would not have had the idea for this research if it was not for you.

To the R.E.S.T., my current *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign party members, our adventures were both a welcome break from, and inspiration for, this work.

To everyone who participated in my study, this endeavour would not have been possible without your willingness to share your experiences. Thank-you for sharing your games with me.

To my family and friends, thank-you for supporting my pursuit of this degree and understanding when I always had some more work to do. I know I have disappeared a lot in the past few years as I pursued this research.

To my co-supervisors, Dr. Arlene Oak and Dr. Dinesh Rathi, thank-you for your unfailing support and advice throughout this process. I appreciate all your time and guidance.

To the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Tami Oliphant and Dr. Margaret Mackey, thank-you for your questions, recommendations, and on-going support.

To my writing buddies and fellow PhD students, Sharon Farnel and Karly Coleman, thank-you for all the time spent reading and writing together. Your ideas and dedication have been a constant inspiration!

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
PREFACE	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF FIGURES.....	X
LIST OF EXCERPTS.....	XI
GLOSSARY	XII
PART I: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 <i>Research Questions.....</i>	<i>3</i>
1.2 <i>Key Concepts</i>	<i>5</i>
1.3 <i>Interdisciplinary Foundations</i>	<i>10</i>
1.3.1 <i>Human Ecology.....</i>	<i>11</i>
1.3.2 <i>Library and Information Studies</i>	<i>14</i>
1.4 <i>Research Approach.....</i>	<i>16</i>
1.5 <i>Purpose and Contributions of Study.....</i>	<i>18</i>
1.6 <i>Structure of the Dissertation.....</i>	<i>20</i>
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	23
2.1 <i>Focusing on Fictional Worlds</i>	<i>23</i>
2.2 <i>Situating the Research</i>	<i>26</i>
2.2.1 <i>Studying Materiality – Drawing on Material Culture Studies</i>	<i>27</i>
2.2.1.1 <i>Immateriality.....</i>	<i>29</i>
2.2.1.2 <i>Materiality and Discourse</i>	<i>31</i>
2.2.2 <i>Studying Information Practices – Drawing on Library and Information Studies.....</i>	<i>35</i>
2.2.2.1 <i>Leisure and the Everyday in Information Behaviour Research</i>	<i>38</i>
2.2.2.2 <i>Information in Practice and Discourse</i>	<i>41</i>
2.2.2.3 <i>Studies of Fiction and Games in LIS.....</i>	<i>45</i>
2.2.3 <i>Materiality and Information Behaviour</i>	<i>48</i>
2.3 <i>Research on Gaming.....</i>	<i>50</i>
2.3.1 <i>Examining Gaming in Possible and Imaginary Worlds.....</i>	<i>50</i>
2.3.2 <i>Studying Gameplay and Players.....</i>	<i>53</i>
2.4 <i>Summary</i>	<i>55</i>
PART II: RESEARCH DESIGN	57
CHAPTER 3: PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY.....	58
3.1 <i>Personal Perspective and Rationale for this Study.....</i>	<i>58</i>
3.1.1 <i>Influence of the Pilot Study.....</i>	<i>59</i>
3.1.2 <i>My Role in the Research</i>	<i>60</i>
3.2 <i>Methodology</i>	<i>62</i>
3.2.1 <i>Ethnomethodological Underpinnings.....</i>	<i>62</i>
3.2.2 <i>Conversation Analysis.....</i>	<i>71</i>
3.2.2.1 <i>Institutional Talk.....</i>	<i>72</i>
3.2.3 <i>Membership Categorization Analysis.....</i>	<i>74</i>
3.2.4 <i>Big and Small Stories.....</i>	<i>76</i>
3.3 <i>Summary</i>	<i>79</i>
CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND SITE PROFILES.....	81
4.1 <i>Recruitment and Sites of the Research.....</i>	<i>81</i>
4.1.1 <i>Rationale for Accessing Sites and Importance of Natural Language.....</i>	<i>84</i>
4.1.2 <i>Recruitment Method.....</i>	<i>85</i>

4.1.2.1 Recruitment Challenges	85
4.1.3 Ethics Approval for Human Participant Research	87
4.2 <i>Data Collection and Data Types</i>	87
4.2.1 Video Recorded Games-in-play	88
4.2.2 Video Recorded Interviews	89
4.2.3 Objects, Documents, and Other Data Sources	91
4.3 <i>Approach to the Analysis</i>	92
4.3.1 Transcription	92
4.3.2 Early Analysis and Selection of Excerpts	95
4.3.2.1 Marking up Data and Selecting Excerpts for Further Analysis	96
4.3.2.2 Refining the Focus of the Research Based on Early Analysis	98
4.4 <i>Site Profiles</i>	99
4.4.1 Group 1: Slugblaster	100
4.4.2 Group 2: Storm King’s Thunder (Dungeons & Dragons, Fifth Edition)	109
4.4.3 Group 3: Gloomhaven	113
A Continuum of Play	116
4.5 <i>Summary</i>	117
PART III: ANALYSIS	119
CHAPTER 5: CONTEXTURES AND COMMON GROUND – ESTABLISHING THE (IM)MATERIAL WORLD OF GAMEPLAY THROUGH THE ORDERLINESS OF INTERACTION	120
5.1 <i>Framing the Analysis</i>	121
5.1.1 Common Ground	122
5.1.2 Frames and Footing	123
5.2 <i>Beginning Play: Establishing Common Ground in Place and Time</i>	125
5.2.1 Getting on the Same Page	126
5.2.2 Looking Forward, Looking Backward	131
5.2.2.1 Frame Shifts and Recaps – Group 1 Slugblaster	132
5.2.2.1.1 Adding a Player / Character	132
5.2.2.1.2 “Opening Credits”	134
5.2.2.1.3 Getting Situated -- Small Shifts in Talk	137
5.2.2.2 Frame Shifts and Recaps – Group 2 Storm King’s Thunder	139
5.2.2.2.1 Recaps and Collaborative Evaluation	139
5.2.2.2.2 “Did we speak friend?” – Retelling and Locating Selves through References	142
5.3 <i>Setting the Scene: World-building Through Deciding Where to Go Next</i>	145
5.3.1 Communicating Options, Choosing a Path	146
5.3.2 Preference and Assessing the Options	150
5.3.3 (Im)Material Constraints on Decisions	151
5.4 <i>Discussion</i>	154
5.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	157
CHAPTER 6: INSTITUTIONS AND IMPROVISATION – ROLES, RIGHTS, AND AUTHORITY	159
6.1 <i>Framing the Analysis</i>	160
6.1.1 Institutional Talk	160
6.1.2 Epistemic Asymmetries	163
6.1.3 Epistemic Ecologies	165
6.2 <i>Epistemic Ecologies – Group 1 Slugblaster</i>	167
6.2.1 Incorporating a New Player / Character	168
6.2.1.1 Impacts on the Imagined World	170
6.2.2 Brooz’s Closet – Building Character Owned Spaces and Objects	174
6.2.3 Authority of Roles and Game Materials	177
6.3 <i>Epistemic Ecologies – Group 2 Storm King’s Thunder</i>	179
6.3.1 Negotiating In-Character and Out-of-Character Knowledge	182
6.3.2 Authority to Access Game Materials and Shape Encounters	184
6.3.3 Agency of Intertwined (Im)Materialities	187
6.4 <i>Discussion</i>	188
6.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	191
CHAPTER 7: INFORMING INTERACTION – INTERTEXTUALITY, REAL AND IMAGINED	193
7.1 <i>Framing the Analysis</i>	195
7.1.1 Sequentiality in Interaction	195

7.1.2 Shared Small Stories	196
7.1.3 Intertextuality	197
7.2 <i>Collaborative Category Work</i>	201
7.2.1 “Sick tricks” and “Parkour” – Defining Teenagers’ Actions and Explorations	204
7.2.2 “Stuff,” “Like,” and “Sort of” – Suggesting Types of Activity	207
7.2.3 “Touchstones” – Building Types.....	208
7.2.3.1 Occasioned Use of Scripted Lists.....	209
7.2.3.2 Examples and Economy of Reference.....	212
7.3 <i>Laminations and Embeddedness</i>	214
7.3.1 “Suit-jamas” – Intertextuality in Imagined Near Environments	216
7.3.2 “A Shrubbery” -- “Great” References and Repeated Tellings	218
7.3.3 The Burlap Sack – Projecting and Retelling through References.....	221
7.3.4 “Sodium Extremist” – Real and Fictional Salt	224
7.4 <i>Discussion</i>	228
7.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	231
PART IV: CONCLUSION	233
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION.....	234
8.1 <i>Summary of Findings</i>	236
8.2 <i>Scholarly Contributions</i>	238
8.2.1 Contributions to Material Culture Studies and Human Ecology	239
8.2.2 Contributions to Information Behaviour Research in LIS	241
8.3 <i>Challenges and Limitations</i>	244
8.3.1 Scope and Approach.....	244
8.3.2 Complexity of Context and Insider Knowledge	246
8.3.3 Generalizability versus Possibilities and Theoretical Contribution	247
8.4 <i>Future Avenues of Research</i>	248
8.5 <i>A Last Word</i>	249
REFERENCES	250
APPENDICES	292
APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION OF MY PILOT STUDY	293
APPENDIX B: ETHICS APPROVALS	297
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS.....	299
<i>Appendix C.1: Poster / Image Used in Email Communications</i>	299
<i>Appendix C.2: Sample Email Script</i>	300
APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPTION NOTATION	301
APPENDIX E: EXTENDED EXCERPTS.....	302
<i>Appendix E.1 Introductory Portion of Slugblaster</i>	302
<i>Appendix E.2 Techno-Fantasy, Interview with Mikey</i>	308
<i>Appendix E.3 Emulating Genre Tropes</i>	309
<i>Appendix E.4 Cinematic Storytelling, Interview with Mikey</i>	310
<i>Appendix E.5 Opening Credits</i>	312
<i>Appendix E.6 Opportunity Ideas</i>	314
<i>Appendix E.7 Brooz’s Closet</i>	316
<i>Appendix E.8 Salt and Science</i>	319

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Summary of Video Recorded Games in Play	88
Table 4.2: Summary of Video Recorded Interviews	90

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Close Up of Excerpts in Scapple.....	97
Figure 4.2 Excerpts in Scapple, Zoomed Out.....	98
Figure 4.3 <i>Slugblaster</i> Playbook, Side 1, Rules	102
Figure 4.4 <i>Slugblaster</i> Playbook, Side 2, Character Details.....	103
Figure 4.5 Sticky Note with Countdown Clock.....	103
Figure 4.6 <i>Slugblaster</i> Map of the Multiverse Dimensions.....	104
Figure 4.7 Transcript Excerpts (L) and In-game Plot Events (R) of <i>Slugblaster</i> , Game 1, Run 1.....	108
Figure 4.8 Character Sheet, Misery, Side 1	110
Figure 4.9 Character Sheet, Misery Side 2	111
Figure 4.10 <i>Gloomhaven</i> Scenario Map and Pieces	114
Figure 4.11 <i>Gloomhaven</i> Character Sheet, Magnus	114
Figure 5.1 <i>Slugblaster</i> Group Seated at Their Table	127
Figure 5.2 <i>Slugblaster</i> Game Map (Triangle Version Used in Game 1).....	152
Figure 6.1 Close Up of a Playbook with “Something Else” Options Circled	178
Figure 6.2 Jo Consulting the Map Behind His Screen.....	185

List of Excerpts

Excerpt 5.1 All on the Same Page	128
Excerpt 5.2 Ordinary Talk Shift to Adding a Player / Character	133
Excerpt 5.3 Opening Credits	135
Excerpt 5.4 Small Shifts.....	138
Excerpt 5.5 “I don’t like the appears part”	140
Excerpt 5.6 “So we’ll pick up now?”	141
Excerpt 5.7 “Did we speak friend?”	143
Excerpt 5.8 Opportunity Ideas.....	148
Excerpt 5.9 “Spitting out ideas”	153
Excerpt 6.1 “I’m chill”	162
Excerpt 6.2 Ordinary Talk Shift to Adding a Player / Character	169
Excerpt 6.3 Sam’s War Hammer.....	171
Excerpt 6.4 Brooz’s Closet.....	175
Excerpt 6.5 “Not rope”	181
Excerpt 7.1 All on the Same Page	202
Excerpt 7.2 Cinnamon Challenge and Parkour.....	205
Excerpt 7.3 Touchstones	210
Excerpt 7.4 Suit-jamas	217
Excerpt 7.5 “A Shrubbery”	218
Excerpt 7.6 “A Shrubbery” Again.....	220
Excerpt 7.7 <i>Scooby-Do</i>	222
Excerpt 7.8 Salt and Science	225

Glossary

absence: implies a lack of presence or form; however, it can be performative wherein something that is absent can have agency and be “made present through talk and texts, through thoughts and things” (Meyer, 2012, p. 104) as something that is absent is oriented to.

agency: refers to the ability to make a difference or have an effect (Latour, 2005, p. 72).

big stories: larger-scale narratives, such as life histories or reflections on identity that are elucidated in researcher-generated interviews (Freeman, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2015).

category work* or *categorization work: are terms for the methods “members”¹ use in conversation to create, formulate, refer to, and imply categories as a part of ordering their interactions.

category bound actions: (also called category bound activities) are actions (typically verbs) that are linked to category membership in MCA (Lepper, 2000; Reynolds & Fitzgerald, 2015).

category resonance: is a resource for creating understandings that are shared, and that may act as bridges of meaning to new concepts. Category resonance is also a resource for creating shared understandings that are flexible in that categories and their bound actions are not always explicit, thereby leaving room for interpretation (Schegloff, 2007b; Stokoe, 2012).

common ground: shared presumption that fuels inference in communication (Enfield, 2006, p. 399). It consists of an informational imperative (to cooperate in maintaining common understanding) and an affiliational imperative (to maintain a common degree of affiliation appropriate to the status of the relationship(s) of interactants) (Enfield, 2006, p. 399-400). As individuals interact, they draw upon presumed common ground to be understood.

¹ “Members” refers to members of the group being studied or the members of a membership category.

common-sense geography: Schegloff (1972) uses the term *common-sense geography* to refer to a shared sense of geography assumed by interactants in conversation.

conversation analysis (CA): is a research approach suited to understanding the structural underpinnings of conversation; it assumes that conversation is ordered, and the analytic focus is on the methods, practices and reasoning people use in sequential turns of talk (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2). CA has roots in ethnomethodology and its beginnings are typically traced to the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013; Sacks et al., 1974).

culture-in-action: an ethnomethodological concept that frames culture as an “accomplishment of talk and action” rather than “a determinant of it” (Francis & Hester, 2004, p. 11).

definition of the situation: is a concept arising from Goffman (1959) and is described by Housley and Smith (2011, p. 701) as providing for conditions and interactional coordination of social action as well as requirements to account for action, selves, and places. It is tied to Garfinkel’s (1967) concept of *documentary interpretation*, in which expectations based on patterns of previous experience are used to understand events and actions (see Potter, 1996, pp. 49–52; McHoul & Watson, 1984, pp. 291–292).

discourse: spoken interactions and written texts (see Tuominen & Savolainen, 1997).

discursive action: discourse analytic approaches to the study of information approach information as discursive action, or how it is used in discourse to organize and produce reality in interaction (see Tuominen & Savolainen, 1997).

document: an item that has been processed, that has materiality, that has been intended as evidence, and is perceived to be a document (Buckland, 1997).

documentary interpretation: an ethnomethodological concept developed by Garfinkel (1967) in which expectations based on patterns of previous experience are used to understand events and actions (see Potter, 1996, pp. 49–52; McHoul & Watson, 1984, pp. 291–292).

doing being: a term used in ethnomethodological studies that recognizes that norms are enacted and constituted in the moment. As Sacks (1984) describes in a seminal work on being ordinary, a person does not happen to do things that are considered ordinary; they also know what typical action is. Examining how those norms are enacted in the moment is the study of doing being ordinary.

dungeon master: see game master.

Dungeons & Dragons: a tabletop roleplaying game produced by Wizards of the Coast. Fifth edition is the most current version. For greater detail see the rulebooks for the game, including the *Player's Handbook* (Wizards of the Coast, 2014b) and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (Wizards of the Coast, 2014a).

embodiment: refers to dealing with the human body in situated actions and “bodily being-in-the-world” (A. Harris, 2016, n.p.), which is distinct from use of the term to refer to something immaterial, like a thought, being embodied in a physical form (“Embodiment | Imbodiment, n.,” 2022).

enchrony: a term used by Enfield (2011) to encompass sequential and temporal aspects of behaviour and discursive action: enchrony is “a primal driving force for the ever-forward progression of social interactions” (p. 285).

epistemic asymmetries: unequal distributions of rights to know and share information in a conversation. Drew and Heritage (1992, p. 49) give examples of epistemic asymmetries in

interaction as with doctors and patients or any context with a question / answer structure where one participant is asking and the other is answering.

epistemic ecologies: a concept that addresses critiques that research on epistemics in conversation tends to focus on dyadic relationships. It is important to consider communities, and Goodwin's (1994, 1997, 2010) established work on the archaeological community encompasses objects and material environments in practice in the concept as well.

epistemic stance: "by contrast [to epistemic status] concerns the moment-by-moment expression of these relationships, as managed through the design of turns-at-talk" (p. 377).

epistemic status: "involves the parties' joint recognition of their comparative access, knowledgeableability, and rights relative to some domain of knowledge as a matter of more or less established fact;" it encompasses what is known, how a person knows it, and their rights and obligations to know it (Heritage, 2013a, pp. 376–377).

ethnomethodology: a research approach that treats language, knowledge, meaning, and order not as social structures or cognitive or behavioural mechanisms but as "situated accomplishments by the parties whose local practices 'assemble' the recurrent scenes of action that make up a stable society" (Lynch, 2001, p. 140). It can be understood as a micro-sociological approach to research that originates in the work of Harold Garfinkel (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992).

everyday information behaviour: encompasses all aspects of information behaviour in everyday life (Ocepek, 2018b), and I adopt that term here in contrast to ELIS as it places less emphasis on seeking as the primary mode of interacting with and using information.

everyday life information seeking (ELIS): is an area of research within the broader area of information seeking or information behaviour research in LIS. It is focused on information use in non-work contexts. The concept was developed by Savolainen (1995, 2008).

fictional worlds are imagined worlds, the settings where stories take place, and where fictional characters reside. Shrier, Torner, and Hammer (2018) define them as “an internally consistent world, either an alternate version of our own or otherwise, that has been imagined for the purposes of fictional storytelling [or play]” (p. 351).

footing: Gordon (2015) explains that “as people create frames, they also construct footings, or alignments between one another as well as between themselves and what is said” (p. 325). Footing is useful for considering how speakers (animators, authors) and hearers shift their actions and perceptions of what is going on in conversation.

frames: Goffman (1974, pp. 10–11) describes frames as built up “definitions of the situation.” The frame refers to how the activity is organized, so what is real, a game, or a joke, may all have different (or layered) frames.

game master: the person who runs a TRPG, is in charge of the setting, and plays the non-player characters (Cover, 2010). They may also be referred to as a referee (Fine, 1983; Zagal & Deterding, 2018). In *Dungeons & Dragons*, the term *dungeon master* is used for this role. The game master engages with, and in many cases may create, a fictional world as a part of their gaming practice.

gestalt contexture: a term used to describe the situated accomplishment of action in context and its kaleidoscopic nature. The elements of a gestalt contexture “exist through each other” and have a local, occasioned coherence in which the elements construct one another (Watson, 2015, “A Praxiological Solution,” para. 16).

human ecology: the study of humans and their relations to their environments. A focus of human ecological perspectives is on the person or the family, situated within their environment in order to address concerns that could contribute to quality of life and the actualization of the potential of human beings (Westney et al., 1988).

(im)material: is a term used throughout this dissertation to refer to the simultaneously real material and also the imagined and immaterial nature of fictional worlds. The materiality of fictional spaces and places can be understood through, and layered with, the materialities we experience in the real world. There is also an immaterial aspect to fictional worlds as they do not exist physically and are substantiated through imaginative practices. However, they can also be represented materially through inscriptions and objects (e.g., books, written descriptions, maps, miniature figures, etc.).

information: there is no singular agreed upon definition of the term *information* in LIS (Bates, 2017a). A broad definition as “a *difference which makes a difference*” (Bateson, 1972, p. 453, emphasis in original) encompasses the variety of ways information has been conceptualized and is suitable for this research project.

information behaviour: has been described as “...the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use” (Wilson, 2000, p. 49), or as “how people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different contexts” (Fisher et al., 2005a, p. xix).

information-in-social-practice: an approach to information research that is not restricted to information seeking activities or activities that primarily involve information. It is an approach that takes a broad view of information activities as “woven through all social practices” (Cox, 2012, p. 185).

information practice: has been defined by Savolainen (2008) as “a set of socially and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share” (p. 2) information that are often habitual.

institutional talk: is a concept from CA. It is studied in contrast with, or in addition to, ordinary talk. In a CA approach to institutional talk, interactions are examined “for how specific practices of talk embody or connect with specific identities[, goals,] and institutional tasks” (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, Chapter 2, “Institutional CA,” para 2).

interdisciplinarity is a term used to describe research that integrates, blends, or interacts with approaches from different disciplines (Klein, 2010). It is sometimes contrasted with multidisciplinary, which juxtaposes disciplines, and transdisciplinarity, which is a “descriptor of broad fields and synoptic disciplines” (Klein, 2010, p. 24).

intertextual media reference: as references to other identifiable works (i.e., works of fiction, of literature, etc.) in various media, which includes works that span media types (e.g., Star Wars as movies, books, television, toys, etc.).

intertextuality: is repetition in discourse (defined broadly here to include spoken and written discourse), including repeated words or phrases, retellings, etc. Discourse and conversation analytic approaches to studying intertextuality in interaction have demonstrated intertextuality in repeated sections of talk (e.g., Gordon, 2009 on intertextuality in family discourse) and in the use intertextual media references (e.g., Sierra, 2016, 2021 on intertextual references amongst friends).

lamination: a “rekeying” of frames that adds a layer(s) to the situation (Goffman, 1974, p. 82).

leisure: has been defined by Stebbins (2007) as activities people want to do that are satisfying and/or fulfilling; they are engaged in during free time and are not coerced (p. 4). He clarifies that free time is time away from “unpleasant obligation,” and he specifically ties leisure to a positive state (Stebbins, 2007, p. 4-5).

magic circle: the frame of reality in which a game is played; it is the “special place in time and space created by a game” (“boundaries,” Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Salen and Zimmerman (2004) describe the circle as a boundary; it is an enclosed space and therefore separate from the real world, and it is a space where the rules of the game exist.

making and taking (of information): a “means to talk about different senses of information and informing as being given, constructed, thing, and process in one elementary [conceptual] apparatus” (Huvila, 2022, p. 537).

material culture studies (MCS): the study of culture through the study of objects and the material dimensions of phenomena as these relate to human experience. MCS can be approached through a variety of disciplinary perspectives, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, etc., and a variety of theoretical lenses, including socio-material approaches such as those used in the social studies of science (e.g., Latour’s (2005) actor-network theory, Ingold’s (2011, 2012) meshwork theory, Hodder’s (2012) theory of entanglement, new materialism and posthumanism (Fox & Alldred, 2016), etc.).

materiality: is defined here as more than just the physical properties of objects. It encompasses social, cultural, and historical aspects and influences on the objects, and influences of the objects on people and environments.

membership categories: are “classifications or social types that may be used to describe persons” (Hester & Eglin, 1997a, p. 3). Talk (and text) is treated as culture-in-action, and

identities are discursively negotiated and attributed through the use of categories (see Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 38–39).

membership categorization analysis (MCA): is a CA-associated approach to discourse (talk and text) that arises from the work of Harvey Sacks. An MCA perspective is focused on analyzing the ways that people (“members”) describe their world through categories of person, action, etc., in ways that demonstrate their understanding of the world and common-sense workings of society (Stokoe, 2012).

membership categories: are “classifications or social types that may be used to describe persons” (Hester & Eglin, 1997a, p. 3). Talk (and text) is treated as culture-in-action, and identities are perceived of as discursively negotiated and attributed through the use of categories (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 38–39).

metagaming: when players use knowledge their characters would not have to affect the outcome within in the game.

micro-information behaviours: a term that focuses on small ways that people create, share, and orient to information in moment-by-moment situated action.

multimodality: studies that consider multimodality examine the different modes of communication and aspects of interaction (e.g., text, talk, gesture, image, use of objects, etc.).

narrative: a storied form of communication. Bruner (1986) highlights its ties to detail, action, and consequence dealing with the “particulars of the ordinary,” which is in contrast to the logico-scientific, paradigmatic mode used to test for scientific truth.

omnirelevant device or category: Fitzgerald et al. (2009) describe omnirelevant devices as having both categorial and sequential relevance; they can be used at any point in an interaction to accomplish an activity. Sacks (1995) describes them as “controlling” (p. 314). When

something happens that makes the device appropriate, it cannot be excluded; the device is oriented to, and in doing so, the members acknowledge its contextual relevance to the situation (Sacks, 1995).

ordinary conversation, ordinary talk: “a term that has come to denote forms of interaction that are not confined to specialized settings or to the execution of particular tasks” (Heritage, 2005, p. 104); it is contrasted to institutional talk in CA.

perspicuous case, perspicuous setting: an ethnomethodological concept that refers to “a setting that in its specificity and uniqueness allows us to highlight methodic and systematic features” (Mondada, 2007, p. 198). The specificities of local context and particular occasions of use as understood by those local to it are emphasized.

place: spaces become places through symbolic and social / cultural significance as in the naming of a place (Keating, 2015). Space and place are conceptualized differently in this research with spaces being more abstract and places being more concrete as they are described. Setting is a term that encompasses where a story takes place, including spaces and places. (See also *space* and *setting*).

playtesting: a process where a game (or a piece of a game, like a “home-brew,” game master created, item, feature, or new character type) is tested to see how it works in actual play. This process can be a way to test if the game (or new item, etc.) is balanced (e.g., can the players defeat enemies too easily with it, do the features make sense and work with the way people play?, etc.).

possible worlds theory: in this theory, a world represents a possibility; the theory is used for “problem solving in formal semantics that considers possibilities, imaginary objects, their

ontological status, and the relationship between fictional worlds and the actual world” (Wolf, 2012, p. 17).

predicates: is a similar MCA concept to category bound activities that refers to characteristics, qualities, rights, skills, etc. that are associated with a category (Hester & Eglin, 1997a, p. 5); generally, predicates are features of categories.

recaps: retellings of the previous game before new events in the narrative are roleplayed.

roleplaying games: involve players acting out a role as a particular character in a rule-structured fictional world (Zagal & Deterding, 2018). Both video games and tabletop games can be roleplaying games.

serious leisure: is defined by Stebbins (2007) “systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling,” (p. 5) so much so that they pursue a leisure career acquiring and expressing related skills and knowledge.

serious leisure perspective: an approach developed by Stebbins (2007) which defines three types of leisure: serious leisure, casual leisure, and project-based leisure.

setting: is a term used when discussing stories and narratives to encompass where a story takes place. Settings in conversational storytelling include more than geographic features of a physical location. Ochs and Capps (2001, p. 130) note that settings can provide circumstances, frames of mind, and background information as well as autobiographical or historical background. (See also *place* and *space*.)

shared stories: are stories that “are oriented to in interactions as familiar either because they have been told in the past or because the events reported in them are known to all or some

of the participants, regardless of whether they have been narrativized in the past or not” (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 50).

small stories: an approach to discourse analysis that considers the ways smaller narratives are used and negotiated during in-the-moment social action. It was developed in contrast to big story research that tends to use biographical, reflective narratives, such as those generated in oral-history or life-story interview research.

socio-materiality: is a term that recognizes how intertwined and co-constitutive the social and the material are. Materiality is social because it is created and used in social contexts and through social processes and because it enables social action (Leonardi, 2012, p. 32).

space: the term space refers to uses of areas that may be abstract or metaphoric or have some other meaning in interaction (e.g., use of space between people to convey meaning). Spaces become places through symbolic and social / cultural significance as in the naming of a place (Keating, 2015). (See also *place* and *setting*.)

subcreation: is a term used to describe world-building activities (Wolf, 2012). Wolf (2012) takes the term from Tolkien who uses it to capture the idea that imaginary worlds are not the actual world, or primary world (which Tolkien refers to as “God’s creation”), but are created based on, or in reference to, the primary world, thereby making them “secondary worlds” (p. 13-14).

tabletop games: refers to forms of gaming that are played by a group of people, typically seated around a table (e.g., board games, dice games, etc.). This definition is in contrast to video games that are played on some form of digital device.

tabletop roleplaying game (TRPG): a form of roleplaying game typically played seated around a table. Zagal and Deterding (2018) further outline that TRPG players each create and

control a fictional character in a shared game world, and a game master (referee) manages the game and the outcomes of actions through a combination of improvisation and game rules.

territory of information: encompasses “not only who knows what and in what way, but also who has rights to know it and express it” (Heritage, 2013a, p. 375), and the “information situation” in any particular interaction that could potentially be mapped on a continuum of relative closeness or nearness to each interactant—their relative closeness to the information at hand, i.e. how they know it and their right to know and express it is relative (Kamio, 1997, as cited in Heritage, 2013a, p. 375).

transmedia: refers to worlds and stories that span multiple media types.

virtual worlds: terminology often used for worlds in games that are played using digital technology. The fictional worlds in this type of literature are also sometimes termed synthetic worlds.

who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing: a concept from ethnomethodological literature that is used to draw attention to situated contexts and the ways in which members orient to those contexts as they are created in and through interaction (Butler & Fitzgerald, 2010, pp. 2471–2472).

world-building: refers to “the act of designing and constructing believable fictional universes” (Shrier et al., 2018, p. 349).

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1: Introduction

Fictional worlds occupy a liminal space between the imaginary and the actual, the material and the immaterial in that they use aspects of the real world to inform understandings and actions in imagined realms. The creation and sharing of fictional worlds occurs in physical (including visually represented) and imagined spaces. The discursive construction and management of those spaces to create imagined places, the objects within them, and the ways in which players transition between them are the focus of my research. I examine fictional worlds as they are constructed and engaged with in the social context of tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs). I take an interdisciplinary perspective to examine both the real material and the imagined immaterial nature of fictional worlds through bringing together aspects of a discursive approach to understanding material culture (informed by the field of human ecology) and an awareness of issues concerning information exchange (informed by library and information studies). In particular, I am interested in the ways in which information is created, shared, and used to constitute and interact within the materialities of the imagined worlds of play.

The TRPG context provides a unique window through which to study ways that fictional and actual materialities co-exist and constitute one another within talk as players interact with imaginary realms while co-located in an actual physical place. Gameplay is a social activity where group interaction with, and the construction of, fictional places and spaces and narratives can be observed because the game happens through collective action and communication. These social engagements with TRPG fictional worlds are more visible and ‘hearable’ to players and to outsiders than are personal engagements with fiction through, e.g., reading, viewing, or listening, which have more of an individual, internal (cognitive) engagement with information and creative processes. Aspects of TRPGs have been studied in a variety of fields, e.g., Fine’s (1983) seminal sociological work on roleplaying games as social worlds, Mizer’s (2015, 2019) recent

anthropological work on the experience of gaming, Cover's (2010) examination of narrative elements of gaming in rhetoric studies, Wolf's (2012) approach in media studies to understanding fictional worlds as transmedia entities and Baker's (2017) more specific examination of TRPG worlds in that vein, and Mackay's (2001) examination of roleplaying games as performing arts. However, my interdisciplinary approach differs from previous work on TRPGs by bringing together a concern for understanding the (im)material nature of the worlds (from material culture studies) with an interest in how information is created and used in practice (from library and information studies). My focus in this research is specifically on how the fictional worlds of TRPGs are created moment-by-moment through the discursive practices of gameplay. This introductory chapter presents initial background on my research, including the research questions and purpose of the study, definitions of key concepts used in this write up, the interdisciplinary foundations of my research, my methodological approach to undertaking this research, my study's significance and limitations, and an overview of the dissertation structure.

1.1 Research Questions

The research questions that frame this study are all driven by an interest in exploring relationships between real and imagined material culture, as these relationships are managed through social interaction, and an interest in exploring how information that is acquired in the real world becomes associated with aspects of fictional game play. While the discursive and fictional worlds of TRPGs have been studied in the past (e.g., Fine, 1983; Mizer, 2019), my research is unique in its focus on how information practices construct the fictional worlds of play and how material culture – objects and places – is a central aspect of gameplay. Below is the overarching research question that framed my study with its subquestions; each of the three main subquestions forms the basis of a data analysis chapter.

- How are fictional worlds constructed and interacted with in tabletop roleplaying games?
 - How are aspects of actual and fictional materiality managed discursively between game players to create intersubjective understandings?
 - How do players create and draw upon common ground to build an intersubjective understanding of the fictional world of play?
 - How do player / character and game master roles and their identity-tied rights to know affect how information is shared and used in the talk of gameplay that constructs fictional worlds moment-by-moment?
 - How is in-character and out-of-character knowledge negotiated in play?
 - How are objects, people, and places referred to and categorized in TRPG talk?
 - How do these formulations inform the materialities of play?
 - How do references to shared stories and intertextual media references impact the construction of fictional worlds?

These questions focus this inquiry on the discursive contexts of the TRPG games. That is, the games unfold through language-based contexts as players talk the game situations into being, and also reference documents, such as maps, player notes or scripts, rulebooks, etc. Players also at times engage with material objects, such as dice, plastic figurines, etc. (though players' use of such items is not substantially discussed here because my interest is in how materiality is referenced in talk). As such, the games are played through informational and material contexts, with my research considering how these informational and material contexts are intertwined (as I consider how players discursively engage with and use knowledge of real physical objects and settings in their play, and also how players negotiate imaginary objects and places as they build and act within the worlds of tabletop roleplaying games).

The research questions served as a guide and were further developed during the project's design, data collection, and analysis. Aspects of these questions are meaningful within the scholarly contexts of both material culture studies (from a human ecological perspective) and library and information studies (these areas are outlined and discussed below). In particular, by considering how real and imaginary material worlds intersect in TRPGs, I bring attention to a topic that has not been well considered, that is, how materiality is embedded in and made meaningful, not only in real circumstances of everyday life (a central topic of material culture studies), but also how materiality matters to imaginary worlds. Also, this study's interest in how information is cooperatively developed and exchanged within social practice, brings awareness to the field of library and information studies, particularly concerning how information behaviours seamlessly connect knowledge of the actual world, with its use in worlds of fantasy and make believe.

1.2 Key Concepts

Before moving forward, it is important to define some key terms and concepts used in this dissertation. Please note that because this is an interdisciplinary study of a specialist context, I have endeavoured to define both gaming-related and theoretical terms the first time they appear in the text to increase clarity for the reader. These terms are italicized when they are defined and are also listed alphabetically in the glossary in the front matter of this document. In this section, I define tabletop games, tabletop roleplaying games, the game master, space, place, setting, and fictional worlds. Other terms are defined as necessary throughout the text.

Tabletop games refers to forms of gaming that are played by a group of people, typically seated around a table (e.g., board games, dice games, etc.). This definition is in contrast to video games played on some form of digital device.

Roleplaying games involve players acting out a role as a particular character in a rule-structured fictional world (Zagal & Deterding, 2018). Both video games and tabletop games can be roleplaying games.

Tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs) are a form of roleplaying game typically played seated around a table. Zagal and Deterding (2018) further outline that TRPG players each create and control a fictional character in a shared game world, and a game master (referee) manages the game and the outcomes of actions through a combination of improvisation and game rules. In ongoing TRPGs, such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, a campaign may run over multiple gaming sessions, sometimes spanning years. A player can play the same character throughout the campaign, assuming the character is not permanently killed off in play. These types of tabletop roleplaying games (TRPGs) can involve a variety of physical components (e.g., miniature figures to represent players and monsters, grid battle mats, character sheets, rulebooks, specialized dice, constructed set pieces, etc.), but the extent to which these components are used can be dependent on the preferences of the game master and players. For example, grid game mats and miniatures for tracking movement in combat can be used in *Dungeons & Dragons*, but they are not a requirement for play.

The *game master* is the person who runs a TRPG, is in charge of the setting, and plays the non-player characters (Cover, 2010). They may also be referred to as a referee (Fine, 1983; Zagal & Deterding, 2018). In *Dungeons & Dragons*, the term *dungeon master* is used for this role. The game master engages with and, in many cases, may create a fictional world as a part of their gaming practice. They have knowledge that players do not have about the world, and they create encounters and situations to move a plot forward (whether that plot comes from the game

materials themselves or is of their own making). However, gaming is collaborative, and player actions also shape the game and world.

Space, place, and setting are important concepts throughout this research. Because I take a discursive approach, I consider how spaces, places, and settings are formulated in talk with attention to how terms are chosen and the consequences they have in interaction (as in Schegloff's "Notes on a conversational practice: Formulating place" (1972) where places are described in talk based on context, and Housley and Smith's (2011) examinations of how place and space are organized in talk). In this dissertation, *spaces* can be understood as meaning somewhat abstract, metaphoric, and / or unbounded areas, while *places* are more defined in terms of boundaries and / or identifiable as specific (although often imagined) locations. *Setting* is a term used when discussing stories and narratives to encompass where a story takes place. In this research, the fictional worlds of gameplay are the settings in which the stories of the games occur. These settings include both spaces and places. There are places that are named and described by the players as well as more generalized spaces (e.g., a multiverse of planes of existence of different types – a space for gameplay in which the particularities of places are defined and disclosed as play proceeds).

Fictional worlds are imagined worlds, the settings where stories take place, and where fictional characters reside. Wolf (2012) defines them as

all the surroundings and places experienced by a fictional character (or which could be experienced by one) that together constitute a unified sense of place which is ontologically different from the actual, material, and so-called "real" world. As "world" in this sense refers to an experiential realm, an imaginary world could be as large as a universe, or as small as an isolated town in which a character resides. (p. 377)

This definition implies that fictional worlds are separate from the actual or real world. However, part of the focus of this research is the ways in which fictional worlds are constructed and interacted with in the real world.

For this research, I argue that fictional worlds have material and immaterial dimensions. As entities, fictional worlds exist in the minds of people who engage with them and in the works that house them (e.g., novels, movies, artwork, etc.). Fictional worlds are shared and experienced between creators, fans, players, etc., making the worlds a social as well as individual, cognitive phenomenon. Fictional worlds are referenced in talk and materially represented in the media created about them and to substantiate them (e.g., in novels, game rulebooks, websites, works that expand on the world and its details, etc.). I further discuss fictional worlds and approaches to defining them in the literature review section titled “Focusing on Fictional Worlds.”

(Im)material is a term I use throughout this dissertation to make reference to both the real material and the imagined and therefore immaterial nature of fictional worlds. The term indicates the real, physical material world of objects and environments that game players have experienced or are aware of, a materiality that is spoken of and / or physically engaged with during gameplay (at times as real objects such as figurines or maps). Also, the term (im)material indicates that players are simultaneously engaged with the imagined and immaterial nature of the fictional worlds that comprise the game context. By conjoining the realm of the imaginary, indicated by “im,” with the reality suggested by the word, “material,” the term “(im)material” reminds the reader that aspects of both the real and the fictional world are concurrently encountered by game players.

Fictional worlds can be described as secondary, or as “subcreations,” because we understand them in relation to the primary (or real) world that we inhabit (Wolf, 2012, pp. 6, 12,

14). Taking this concept to refer to the material aspects of those fictional worlds, those imagined worlds can be understood through, and discursively linked with, the materialities we experience in the real world, i.e., knowledge of reality is imported into and used to construct fictional realms. In those fictional worlds of TRPGs, the imagined and immaterial aspects exist through collaborative practices. They are not literally substantial but are talked into being (such imaginative practices accomplished through talk have previously been examined in other contexts, e.g., Sidnell (2011) on children's play and Lystgaard Due (2018) on ideation in design). These made-up worlds can, however, have elements that are represented materially, for instance, through inscriptions and objects (e.g., books, written descriptions, maps, miniature figures, etc.), but the spatial, material, and behavioural complexity of these fictional places is created and negotiated jointly by participants in and through their talk-in-interaction. The terms (im)material and im(material) have been previously used by Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, and Rowsell (2014) in their research on literacy, particularly literacy and practices using digital texts and digital representations, which also have an (im)material quality. The intertwining of the concept of the physical world's materialities with the imaginary aspects of fiction, alongside Burnett et al.'s interest in literacy practices enables my use of the term "(im)material" to indicate the interdisciplinary qualities of my research.

Through examining the (im)materialities of fictional TRPG worlds, I explore information creation and sharing as an integral aspect of everyday life. The (im)material worlds of play are constituted through social action, demonstrating ways that the real world and imagined worlds can inform one another and be layered together in particular contexts. Although my focus in this research is on the moment-by-moment construction of fictional worlds in TRPG play and the information creation and exchange that occurs within those processes, the players themselves

play this type of game for a variety of reasons. The joy of shared play is observable in their interactions as they laugh and tell stories together. This collaborative nature of play and the social bonds that players build, both as players and as their roleplayed characters, are integral aspects of the game activities that are not necessarily information focused. Rather, these collective activities create and utilize information through play that has broader social meaning, joy, and pleasure for the players.

1.3 Interdisciplinary Foundations

This research is interdisciplinary in nature and is situated in the fields of human ecology and library and information studies (LIS) and their subsidiary areas of study that are concerned with everyday life, materiality, and information use. *Interdisciplinarity* describes research that integrates, blends, or interacts with approaches from different disciplines (Klein, 2010). It is sometimes contrasted with multidisciplinary, which juxtaposes disciplines, and transdisciplinarity, which is a “descriptor of broad fields and synoptic disciplines” (Klein, 2010, p. 24). Both human ecology and LIS are broad fields that can be approached in a variety of ways. For example, McGregor (2021) presents a transdisciplinary view of human ecology, and De Cunzo and Dann Roeber (2022b) discuss the variety of approaches that can be taken to examine material culture, including post-disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity as ways to focus on humans in their environments rather than disciplines. LIS is similarly varied in the approaches that can be taken as demonstrated by the different models of interdisciplinarity presented by Arafat et al (2014). In this research my interdisciplinary approach integrates aspects of material culture studies and library and information studies to provide insights into the phenomenon of fictional worlds.

The research reported here would not be the same if conducted within one discipline or the other; rather it integrates aspects of both to examine how fictional worlds are constructed. I use a concern for the materiality of space and place to bring together and examine object-based, discursive, and informational elements of world-building in the context of TRPGs, drawing on and combining social approaches to understanding interaction and communication in these fields. Bringing together perspectives from human ecology and material culture studies with theories of information and investigations of information behaviour in LIS allows me to examine the socio-materiality (i.e., the continuously entangled nature of human life with / in material contexts) of TRPGs and the ways in which information is created and exchanged at a micro-level, in moment-by-moment interaction, to shape a fictional world across time.

1.3.1 Human Ecology

The scholarly field of human ecology shares origins with home economics and is rooted in a concern for humans in their near social and material environments (with the “near” material environment including those products and places that we interact with in everyday life and the near social environment meaning the often co-present relationships of family and friends) (Richardson, 2002; McGregor, 2020). Ellen Swallow Richards, one of the founders of human ecology, originally conceived of the discipline as home oecology or Oekology, the science of normal life, which became home economics, and then human ecology (Bubolz & Sontag, 1988; Richardson, 2002; McGregor, 2020). According to Visvader (1986), “Human ecology can be generally understood then as a pluralistic approach to a series of nested, interrelated and overlapping questions concerning the relation between humans and their environment” (p. 125). Bubolz and Sontag (1988) define human ecology as “... the study of humans as social, physical, biological beings in interaction with each other and with their physical, socio-cultural, aesthetic,

and biological environments, and with the material and human resources of these environments” (p. 3). Their vision is for human ecology as an integrated discipline with various specialties that are all underpinned by a common philosophy that is concerned with the study of everyday life and the improvement of quality of life. This vision for human ecology has been revisited by McGregor (2011), who emphasizes the continued importance of the integrated perspective for home economics (and human ecology), and, further, for a transdisciplinary conception of human ecology (McGregor, 2021). Importantly for my research, the relationships between humans and their environment(s) includes the notion of feedback, or interaction, which is central to the approach of human ecology (Visvader, 1986; Westney et al., 1988). In this relational approach, humans and their environments influence each other. Defining *human ecology* as the study of humans and their relations to their environment is broad, but the focus of human ecological perspectives is on the person or the family, situated within their environment in order to address concerns that could contribute to quality of life and the actualization of the potential of human beings (Westney et al., 1988). This interdisciplinary approach underlies how human ecology is studied and practiced at the University of Alberta, where specialties include family sciences (family ecology, aging), clothing and textiles, or material culture studies (Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta, n.d.).

Human ecology is a field that appreciates the mutual interactions between humans and their environments, including the material dimensions of those environments, making it an ideal starting point for a study of people’s interactions with fictional worlds situated in the real material contexts of their everyday lives. I use a human ecological approach in this research, with a focus on perspectives from the associated field of material culture studies (MCS). *Material culture studies* refers to the study of culture through the study of objects as outlined in

Prown's (1982) seminal work; however, recent compilations of material culture studies demonstrate its multidisciplinary and more expansive definitions of what it encompasses (e.g., De Cunzo & Dann Roeber, 2022a). As Yates (2022) suggests, material cultures studies includes "the involutions of substance, ideas, belief, design, and form that produce a built world" (p. 29). MCS can be approached through a variety of disciplinary perspectives, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, etc., and a variety of theoretical lenses, including socio-material approaches such as those used in the social studies of science (e.g., Latour's (2005) actor-network theory, Ingold's (2011, 2012) meshwork theory, Hodder's (2012) theory of entanglement, new materialism and posthumanism (Fox & Alldred, 2016)). Other research, particularly in the area of material culture known as design studies, has considered how the material world is created and negotiated through face-to-face moments of social interaction (e.g., Murphy, 2005; Sandino, 2006; Oak, 2013; Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Nicholas & Oak, 2018; Lystgaard Due, 2018; Matthews et al., 2021). This area of MCS has particularly influenced the approach I have taken here as it acknowledges the ways in which material culture is closely bound up in social relations. It is the concern for the material aspects of the human environment evident in MCS combined with the concern for everyday life and material environments (from the larger umbrella discipline of human ecology) that I draw upon to situate this research. The relational approach that can be used in human ecology and MCS is where I begin to structure my research as I trace and explore the borders between real and imaginary worlds and objects as they are constituted in face-to-face interaction. This research examines how fictional and actual environments overlap and how they influence, and are influenced by, the individuals who create them and engage with them in in the specific, social contexts of TRPGs as these occur in everyday life.

1.3.2 Library and Information Studies

Coming from a background in LIS, I am also interested in the roles that information plays, the material forms it takes, and the materialities it informs. Within LIS, I draw on studies of information behaviour (e.g., Fisher et al., 2005b; Case & Given, 2016), and information practices (e.g., Savolainen, 2007; Olsson & Lloyd, 2017). *Information behaviour* has been described as “the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use” (Wilson, 2000, p. 49), or as “how people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different contexts” (Fisher et al., 2005a, p. xix). It has been approached from a wide variety of perspectives, theories, and paradigms (Case & Given, 2016; Fisher et al., 2005b; Heinström & Spink, 2011; Spink & Cole, 2006; Olsson, 2005). Information practice research is sometimes grouped with, and sometimes differentiated from, information behaviour research. The term *information practice* has been defined by Savolainen (2008):

Information practice may be understood as a set of socially and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources such as television, newspapers, and the Internet. These practices are often habitual and can be identified both in job-related and non-work contexts. (p. 2-3)

I understand TRPGs as locations wherein information practices occur, given that the players identify, seek, use, and share information in order to both move the game forward as a fictional story, and to maintain and move forward their social relationships with each other (both as characters in the game story and as real people with established connections to each other). Within scholarship on information behaviour and practice in LIS there are also bodies of work dealing with daily life (e.g., Savolainen, 2008; Ocepek, 2016, 2018b; Chabot, 2019) and

collectivist approaches (discussed herein on p. 37) that examine information use in group contexts (e.g., Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007; Given & Kelly, 2016), which are relevant to my work, particularly as it pertains to leisure activities and understanding information in social practices.

Studies of *everyday life information seeking (ELIS)* are specifically focused on information seeking outside of work contexts. This is a more specific definition than in human ecology, where work contexts could fall into everyday life depending upon the goals of a study. However, the concerns of both fields overlap through their objectives to understand commonplace practices and experiences. The non-work focus in everyday life information seeking in LIS is in part to address an area of information practices that had previously seen less attention; there has been a lot of focus on information seeking in work contexts and in the context of users and systems (Savolainen, 1995; Case & Given, 2016). This distinction has recently been problematized within information behaviour research (Dalmer & McKenzie, 2019), and a broader approach encompassing all aspects of life has been advocated for (Ocepek, 2018b). The concept of ELIS has been used in studies that model everyday practices and sources of information (e.g., Savolainen (2008) applies the concept in models of information practice, and in the context of mastery of life (Savolainen, 1995), both McKenzie (2003a) and Williamson (1998) have proposed models of everyday life and information seeking behaviour, McKenzie (2020) has examined informational boundary work in everyday life, McKenzie and Davies (2021) have examined documentation work in everyday life, Lee et al. (2021) examined information creation in everyday life, and Ocepek (2018b) has articulated a theory of the everyday for the study of information behaviour). The concept of everyday life has also been used in the study of hobbies and other leisure activities as well (e.g., Hartel, 2003; Cox et al.,

2017). For this research, I argue that engaging with fiction in some capacity is an aspect of many everyday activities, e.g., reading, gaming, television, daydreaming, etc., though I specifically focus on how these material engagements happen in TRPGs. My research is situated within this body of research on information use in everyday life, with a particular focus on information as it is used and created turn-by-turn in the talk and embodied action of gameplay.

1.4 Research Approach

As noted above, my approach to this research is shaped by understandings of information use from LIS and approaches to the study of materiality and environments from MCS within the wider context of human ecology. I bring these areas together to examine information, objects, and discourses in the material and immaterial spaces of fictional worlds as they are constituted in TRPG practices and as they are accounted for in the reflections of their creators. My research focuses on an in-depth examination of three game groups with attention primarily to the “small stories” (Bamberg, 2006b; Georgakopoulou, 2007) of gameplay, that is, those in-the-moment stories that occur as participants play the games. The concept of attending to *small stories* in data is associated with the study of “big and small stories” (Freeman, 2011; Oak, 2013; Sools, 2013); where the small stories are small narrative practices, such as giving accounts or referring to shared events within the moment-by-moment action of ordinary talk. In contrast are what is termed *big stories*, which are the post-hoc, overview reflections on past experience given by interviewees in response to questions posed by researchers in interviews (e.g., oral histories). Associated with a small stories approach is the investigation of these brief narratives within talk through methods associated with conversation analysis (CA), underpinned by the perspectives of ethnomethodology. By *narrative* in spoken discourse I mean modes of talk-based communication that include utterances that are “sequential, action-oriented, detail driven”

(Sools, 2013, p. 94). Ethnomethodological conversation analysis is a useful methodological approach because it draws attention to the practices that make interaction orderly; it examines the structures of talk and the shared methods used to construct meaning sequentially (Sidnell, 2016; Stivers & Sidnell, 2013). This approach is well suited to examining fictional worlds in TRPG play because the world is instantiated through the intersubjective talk-in-interaction of players. In particular, the lens that I bring to studying TRPGs is focused on discourse that implicates material objects and spatial landscapes as shifts between real and imagined situations occur within the talk of gameplay. In summary, the ways that information is exchanged through discursive action to construct the (im)material worlds of TRPG play is the focus of this research.

To study such discursive action in-depth, I recruited three groups of gamers (Group 1 played the TRPG *Slugblaster*; Group 2 played the TRPG *Storm King's Thunder*, a published *Dungeons & Dragons* module; and Group 3 played *Gloomhaven*, a legacy game). As I discuss in chapters three and four, I focused the analysis chapters of this dissertation on the data I collected from Group 1 and Group 2. Although Group 3 was the first group to volunteer to participate, I do not present examples from their gameplay in my analyses because the type of game they played was similar, but different, from the TRPGs that are my primary research interest. Group 3 played *Gloomhaven*, a 'legacy game'. A *legacy game* is a tabletop game that occurs over multiple sittings, but all of the materials and scenarios for the game are provided in the box, and the game materials are changed permanently over the course of several sessions. For example, stickers are applied, cards are torn, and items are marked up. These games can often only be played once because materials are destroyed during play (although some legacy games, like *Gloomhaven*, have the option of purchasing additional reusable stickers and pieces to allow the game to be replayed). In a legacy game, the variability of story development and the degree to which

participants can engage in roleplaying and imaginary world-building is constrained by what is provided by the game materials—what is provided needs to be followed for the game to work.

As noted above, I began my data collection with Group 3 because they were the first group to volunteer to participate in my research (and, by the time they agreed that I could attend and record their games, I had been searching for several months to find participant groups). They proposed the legacy game as an option when they responded to my call for participation. Later, after I had collected data of Group 3 playing the legacy game, the two other TRPG groups volunteered to be part of my study (these two TRPG groups are referred to in this dissertation as Group 1 and Group 2 because it is their data on which my analysis is based). As I discuss in Chapter 4, Group 3's legacy-game data provided early insights into the talk of gameplay and offered an interesting contrast to the other games. After conducting initial analysis of the collected data from all three groups, I decided not to focus on Group 3 in the write up in this dissertation. As the project progressed, an in-depth, CA-influenced analysis of the data from Group 1 and Group 2 allowed me to focus more closely on my research questions, which are centred on TRPGs. Nevertheless, despite my analytic focus on the TRPG groups rather than the legacy-game group, the data from all three groups influenced aspects of the early analysis, and so I have included information on all three groups in this dissertation.

1.5 Purpose and Contributions of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore ways in which imagined worlds are constructed in the discursive aspects of TRPG play. The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To describe some of the ways in which imagined worlds are created through interaction,
and

- 2) To describe some of the ways that information is created and used moment-by-moment in TRPGs.

This research is grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective, and the discourse-analytic approaches and methods used provide a novel avenue for examining the ways in which fiction is embedded in specific situations of everyday life through the turn-taking activities of moment-by-moment talk. The goal of the research is not to create or test a theory. That is, I neither offer generalized explanations for current action nor predict future behaviours of TRPG players based on my findings, but, rather, I aim to give an empirical, descriptive account and an in-depth, qualitative analysis of some of the ways that players reference materiality within the fictional worlds that are built in and through the intersubjective, sequential talk of gameplay. This undertaking is important because there is a paucity of research to date that has considered the entwined nature of the real and the fictional in TRPGs, and, in particular, it seems that no research has considered how experiences and knowledge of real material phenomena are drawn upon as relevant information within the fictional stories and social situations of TRPGs as a part of moment-by-moment play. References to material phenomena have implications for storytelling and the creation of settings in ongoing play; for understanding and enacting modes of authority, authorship, and participation within a game; and for the creation and maintenance of forms of social cohesion for participants (both within the game as characters and without it as peers).

Key contributions of this study are that it brings attention to the ways that references to real material, and fictional immaterial, objects and places are created and engaged with through discursive action (that may also include embodied engagement with material things such as books, maps, etc.), and that ethnomethodological CA, when used to consider talk that is centred

on objects, has potential for examining some of the complexities of everyday information behaviour in context (including ways in which the fictional and the real are discursively intertwined in daily life). In particular, through using the approach of ethnomethodological CA to consider how material phenomena are an important element of the intersubjective actions of collaborative game play, this research enables the consideration of how everyday information behaviour in specific contexts is often based on the nuances and shared understandings of materiality, whether these nuances and shared understandings are supporting knowledge of fictional or real worlds. This research contributes to conceptualizations of immateriality in MCS by examining imagined materialities and how they are intersubjectively constructed. My work also brings a concern for materiality to the examination of everyday information behaviour in LIS, with consideration for the micro-level creation and exchange of information through which fictional worlds are built in talk. This research draws attention to ways in which the fictional and the real are intertwined in daily life.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This research was designed to examine ways that fictional worlds are engaged with and constructed in TRPGs, with a focus on how that construction occurs through talk. To undertake this examination, I analyze the transcribed talk of moment-by-moment play, and I expand on that game-talk analysis with knowledge acquired through the interviews that I conducted with players, where they provided post-hoc reflections on their game-based experiences (though my research focus is on the live gameplay). The dissertation is in three parts. Part I includes this introductory chapter and Chapter 2, “Literature Review,” which situates the research through a focused discussion of key concepts from material culture studies (materiality, immateriality, studying materiality in discourse) and from library and information studies (information

behaviour and information practices), followed by a review of selected scholarship on games. This literature review provides background and is a foundation for the research presented herein. Part II, “Research Design,” is comprised of two chapters. The first of these is Chapter 3, “Perspective and Methodology,” which presents the methodological underpinnings of my research, including ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, membership categorization analysis, and big and small stories approaches, as these influenced my research design. This methodological framing is followed by Chapter 4, “Methods and Site Profiles,” in which I describe how I carried out the research and provide a rationale for the site-based research design and use of recorded natural language and researcher-generated interviews as data.

Part III of the dissertation is made up of the three data analysis chapters. Each of the three analysis chapters has a separate focus, with each chapter oriented towards answering one of the research questions outlined above, but all of the chapters are united by a close-grained study of the methods used by the game players as they create intersubjective understandings of the imagined, (im)material worlds in which the TRPGs take place. Chapter 5, “Contextures and Common Ground – Establishing the (Im)material World of Gameplay through the Orderliness of Interaction,” examines some of the ways that players orient themselves in relation to identities, actions, and material environments, with particular attention to how these orientations are formulated and used to inform understandings of the fictional world in the opening sequences of play and later as gameplay unfolds. Chapter 6, “Institutions and Improvisation – Roles, Rights, and Authority,” explores some of the ways that roles and rights to know about the world and gameplay influence the ways that fictional worlds are built and engaged with. The implications of who knows what and how that knowledge is negotiated in the turn-by-turn, intersubjective structure of spoken interaction is examined. The final analysis chapter is Chapter 7, “Informing

Interaction – Intertextuality, Real and Imagined,” which discusses some of the ways that (im)materialities are created and informed by the players through references to previous experiences and other narrative works (also referred to as the concept of “intertextuality” (Kristeva, 1986; Gordon, 2009; Sierra, 2016)). Throughout the games, knowledge of other works and previous experiences are recontextualized and used to inform the setting of current play. This chapter’s focus is on how, through talk that references real or imagined materialities experienced in the past, game play is connected to, and makes use of, a wide web of cultural knowledge. The three analysis chapters include a brief, concluding discussion of findings so that, rather than having a separate findings chapter, each analysis chapter’s findings are indicated, with a final summary of the relevance of the findings presented in Part IV.

Part IV includes a single chapter, Chapter 8, “Conclusion,” which, presents a final summary of the findings of this study and provides a discussion of challenges and limitations of this research, opportunities for future research, as well as the contributions of this work to existing scholarship in human ecology and LIS, particularly in the areas of MCS and the examination of information behaviour. Overall, this research presents an in-depth examination of the face-to-face interactions that constitute TRPG worlds, in order to explore ways that imagined materialities and real-world experiences and understandings of physical objects and places are layered to create and negotiate fictional worlds. This study provides insights into ways that fiction and reality are intertwined within specific contexts of everyday life as they to inform and underpin relationships and social practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with an overview of works that consider fictional worlds, in “Focusing on Fictional Worlds,” followed by two further sections. The first of those sections is titled “Situating the Research,” and in it I discuss the concepts from MCS and LIS that I am bringing together to study fictional worlds. From MCS, these concepts include materiality and immateriality as well as materiality as it is implicated in, and constituted through, discourse. From LIS these concepts include information, particularly intersubjective conceptualizations of information, and information behaviour and practices. The next section is titled “Research on Gaming,” wherein I have pulled together literature on games that has influenced me from various fields to demonstrate ways that fictional worlds have been conceptualized in previous research and how my scholarship differs from these past works. Larger bodies of research and theory on fictional worlds exist in the fields of literary criticism, media studies, fan studies, game studies, and sociology, amongst others. As examples of the diversity of approaches, studies of literature have explored fictional worlds using “possible worlds theory” (Pavel, 1986; Bell & Ryan, 2019), and research in games studies has explored virtual (digital) worlds of gaming (e.g., van Looy, 2005) and narrative in gaming (Cover, 2010; Frasca, 2003). Given that the very wide scope of research done on gaming and fictional worlds is beyond the scope of this research, and also given that Cover (2010) argues that TRPGs have received less scholarly focus than digital games, and that TRPGs provide a rich interactional context, my focus is on this type of game.

2.1 Focusing on Fictional Worlds

As noted above, the approach I use for this research primarily draws upon literature from the fields of MCS and LIS. However, the concept of fictional worlds has been approached in greater depth in other fields. The following portion of this literature review details fictional worlds as a concept and reviews some of the ways they have been studied. Fictional worlds can

be referred to by different terms, including, “imaginary worlds,” (Wolf, 2012). As already detailed in my introduction, Wolf (2012) defines *imaginary (i.e., fictional) worlds* as

all the surroundings and places experienced by a fictional character (or which could be experienced by one) that together constitute a unified sense of place which is ontologically different from the actual, material, and so-called “real” world. As “world” in this sense refers to an experiential realm, an imaginary world could be as large as a universe, or as small as an isolated town in which a character resides. (p. 377)

I adopt Wolf’s definition herein as fictional worlds and the world-building practices that constitute them are my focus for this research. *World-building* refers to “the act of designing and constructing believable fictional universes” (Shrier et al., 2018, p. 349). The term *subcreation* has also been used to describe world-building activities (Wolf, 2012). Wolf (2012) describes subcreation in reference to Tolkien who uses the concept to capture the idea that imaginary worlds are not the actual world, or primary world, but are created based on, or in reference to, the primary world, thereby making them “secondary worlds” (p. 13-14). Since it is these world-building activities in the context of TRPG play that I consider for this study, I draw on work that deals with fictional worlds more generally.

The concept of fictional or imaginary worlds has been examined using the theory of possible worlds. In *possible worlds theory*, a world represents a possibility; the theory is used for “problem solving in formal semantics that considers possibilities, imaginary objects, their ontological status, and the relationship between fictional worlds and the actual world” (Wolf, 2012, p. 17). For example, Wolf (2012) identifies the philosophy of possible worlds as a necessary starting point for examining imaginary worlds; however, he contends that “it tends to lean more towards the abstract and the conceptual nature of imaginary worlds than practical

particulars, and is more concerned with status and modes of being than with experience and design” (p. 19). Possible worlds philosophy has been applied to fictional worlds of literature in works by authors such as: Maitre (1983), Pavel (1986), Ryan (1991), Mackey (1995), Doležel (2010), Hart (2012), and Bell and Ryan (2019). I am acknowledging this work here as it underpins much of the work done on fictional worlds; however, my own approach is based more on examining the practices that constitute the world in the moment during play and reflections of people who are creating those worlds rather than the philosophy underlying their existence.

Wolf (2012) argues that fictional worlds should be studied for their own value rather than as background or as a subsidiary aspect of a particular story or medium. In his argument, fictional (imaginary) worlds should be a subject of study in media studies. In this vein, Wolf is the editor of two recent volumes that deal with fictional worlds: an anthology, *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology* (Wolf, 2017a), and a guide to research, *The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds* (Wolf, 2017b). Both volumes contain studies of a variety of worlds, and Wolf (2012) has produced a timeline, or proposed canon, of worlds. One early study of a fictional world in this sense is *Oz and Beyond: The Fantasy World of L. Frank Baum* (Riley, 1997), which details and interprets Baum’s world. Scholars have continued work with Oz, e.g., Riley (2017) examines Baum’s *A New Wonderland*, and Jenkins (2017) considers the expansiveness of Oz in light of *Oz the Great And Powerful*. Other worlds have been studied in a similar way, e.g., Konzack (2017) examines Tolkien’s Arda and transmedia culture, and Wolf (2011) examines the World of the D’ni from the video games *Myst* and *Riven*. There are bodies of work in media and literary studies that examine fictional worlds and worldbuilding: work that examines *transmedia* worldbuilding, or worlds across media, (e.g., the collected works in Boni, 2017; Fast & Örnebring, 2017); work that brings a critical lens to the study of worlds

and worldbuilding (Ekman & Taylor, 2016; Gunderman, 2020), and work that examines worldbuilding and speculative fiction (Roine, 2016; Zaidi, 2019). I briefly mention these examples to acknowledge that there is a breadth of emerging work on fictional worlds and world-building. However, for this research, my own focus is on the materiality of fictional worlds within discourse, and the information behaviours involved in their constitution, which is a different approach than that taken in media and literary studies of worlds. In the next section, I review key concepts from MCS and LIS that I draw on to study fictional worlds in this research.

2.2 Situating the Research

I draw on both MCS and LIS for this research to examine engagements with, and creation of (im)material worlds in TRPGs. This section is split into three subsections. The first, “Studying Materiality – Drawing on Material Culture Studies,” discusses the study of materiality in MCS with subsections that introduce the concept of immateriality and the study of materiality and imagination in discourse. The second subsection, “Studying Information Practices – Drawing on Library and Information Studies,” discusses the study of information and how I define it for this research, materiality as it pertains to information, and information practices and information behaviour (with a focus on approaches to the study of everyday behaviours and social practices). The third subsection, “Materiality and Information,” brings together the concepts discussed in the previous two sections to highlight the benefits of the interdisciplinary approach herein. By considering how information is used discursively in the material, actual spaces of TRPG play to constitute the fictional, immaterial spaces and places of the games, this research outlines how reality and fiction are seamlessly intertwined in the everyday life practices of the players.

2.2.1 Studying Materiality – Drawing on Material Culture Studies

In this research, I draw on material culture studies (MCS) specifically because of its emphasis on ways in which objects and material environments are manipulated by people. The study of objects and materiality can be approached from a variety of perspectives arising from different disciplines, e.g., Hodder's (2012; Hodder & Mol, 2016) theory of entanglement (arising from archaeology), Ingold's (2011, 2012) meshwork theory (arising from anthropology), Prown's (1982) object analysis (arising from art history), and Brown's (2001, 2003, 2015) thing theory (arising from English and literary studies). Furthermore, recent work has highlighted multi- and post- disciplinary approaches to the study of materiality and material culture, emphasizing the importance of shared topical interest across disciplines and critiquing the exclusionary approach that disciplines can impose (De Cunzo & Dann Roeber, 2022b). Given this breadth of the inter- (and post-) disciplinarity of MCS, I focus on scholarship that deals with the topic of immateriality in MCS and on scholarship (some of which has been written by authors who may not consider themselves to be working in the area of MCS) that considers the ways in which humans and objects are dynamically related in situated actions (e.g., Suchman, 2007). My work has been particularly influenced by those whose approaches emphasize the ways that the material world is created and negotiated through, intersubjective, discursive action (e.g., Sandino, 2006; Oak, 2013; Nicholas & Oak, 2018; Matthews et al., 2021). The common, MCS thread that runs through these diverse approaches is a concern with material things in relation to social contexts and / or behavioural practices. *Socio-materiality* is a term that recognizes how intertwined and co-constitutive the social and the material are. Materiality is social because it is created and used in social contexts and through social processes and because it enables social action (Leonardi, 2012, p. 32). In my research, I am interested in how imagined materialities are

created through the situated actions, including talk, of gameplay. The play occurs using actual, physical objects (such as plastic figures, rulebooks, etc.) in real material spaces (typically at a table with players seated around it), and through imaginative co-construction, stories, character actions, and worlds are constituted.

My interest in how real objects connect with the fictional immateriality of imagined worlds means that the material culture studies concept of materiality is important to my work. Yates (2022) describes *materiality* as encompassing a “back and forth” of two registers between material properties (“stuff”) and more immaterial shaping forcing as objects mediate our existence (p. 28-30). Materiality refers to more than only the physical properties of objects; it also encompasses the social, cultural, and historical aspects and influences on the objects, as well as the influences of objects on people and environments. Materiality can be defined as

the winking in and out of being of our awareness of the pull things have upon us, the ways in which what passes as media does more than mediate, and how differently configured and timed congelations of labor, practice, time, and energy press upon us, shaping our actions, perceptions, and feelings. (Yates, 2022, pp. 29–30)

In this way, the word materiality suggests a social, interactive, and dynamic relationship between people and things. While the value of the term has been contested within MCS, as in *Archaeological Dialogues* Volume 14, issue 1 (Ingold, 2007a, 2007b; Knappett, 2007; Miller, 2007; Nilsson, 2007; Tilley, 2007) and revisited by Watts (2018); nevertheless, the concept of materiality (as opposed to a word such as “object”) is useful in my work because it points to the relational interactions between people and their material environments. An awareness of materiality as indicating the social relations between people and things complements human ecology’s focus on the interrelationships between humans and their material environments and is

also in-keeping with the LIS-based concept of Buckland's (1991b) "information-as-thing" and work that considers information objects in everyday and embodied information practices (Ocepek, 2018b; Olsson & Lloyd, 2017). The materiality of fictional worlds is important in framing this research because objects and environments can both shape and be shaped by people. In the context of TRPGs, fictional worlds include layerings of real and imagined materialities, with real and fictional objects and places having relational properties that are constituted and treated as informative in the discursive practices of gameplaying.

2.2.1.1 Immateriality

While some aspects of my research consider the materiality of physical objects as people actually engage with them through gestures and other activities (e.g., opening and reading a book, manipulating a figurine), I am more particularly concerned with some of the ways in which objects and places are imagined and used within the discursive context of gameplay. Accordingly, I am considering ways in which real materiality overlaps with or connects to imagined materiality (or immateriality). Because of the imaginative nature of gameplay, TRPGs provide a rich context to examine the negotiation of real material and immaterial situations as they are constituted and engaged with through the social practices of play. In his introduction to his edited volume on materiality, Miller (2005) contends that immateriality is expressed through materiality: "the more humanity reaches toward the conception of the immaterial, the more important the specific form of materialization" (p. 28). He uses examples from art and religion to demonstrate the cultivation of immateriality through objectification. Miller (2005) argues that the more outside our understanding something is, the more value its performance has, e.g., in the case of religion, the more a deity is considered beyond conception, then the more important becomes the media through which it is objectified, such as prayer or sacrifice (p. 28). Miller's

arguments tie together the ethnographic work of Miyazaki (2005) on the materialization of finance theory and the ethnographic work of Engelke (2005) on material and immaterial tensions in African Christian healing. Such work in the field of MCS demonstrates ways in which immaterial concepts can be materially represented, and how immaterial entities can be a part of everyday practices, which is important for my own work since I deal with the everyday practices of gaming that create and engage with the immaterial worlds of TRPGs.

In a similar vein to Miller's discussion of immateriality and religion, Bille (2010) has examined immateriality and applying the word of God to things, and Buchli (2010) discusses degrees of nearness (propinquity) and the Christ prototype. Both Buchli (2010) and Bille (2010) relate immateriality to *absence*; a concept that Meyer (2012) has elucidated by describing absence as performative wherein something that is absent can have agency. As Meyer argues, "the absent is made present through talk and texts, through thoughts and things" (p. 104). In my work I draw on this conceptualization of absent and immaterial entities being made present through talk and texts. In TRPG play, the fictional world is not physically present as a real place that the players can physically enter, but it is made present for the players through their talk and the representations (e.g., maps, game instructions) used in gameplay. The imaginary world of the game is expressed and created discursively and materially through players' practices as the world is constituted moment-by-moment, as players draw on previous experiences and information and share relevant, intersubjective meaning in each moment. As explained in Chapter 1, I use the term *(im)materiality* in this document to acknowledge the overlap and layering between an immaterial fictional world and the ways in which it is represented, influenced by, and interacted within and through a setting for gameplay that includes real, material objects and spaces. My entry point into the (im)material worlds investigated in this research is through analyzing the

practices of game masters and their players during play, with a focus on the ways they construct those (im)materialities through their talk. The blurred borders between the fictional and real, physical material and imagined immaterial, and subject and object, come together in the complex material practices and discursive accounts that constitute gameplay.

Although not directly discussed as involving immateriality, fandom and the collection and making of material objects have also been studied within MCS. For example, Heljakka (2017) has examined the activity of collecting objects; Hale (2014) has examined intertextuality in cosplay (the creation and wearing of costumes); Rodrigues de Mello, Ordovás de Almeida, and Dalmoro (2021) examine cosplay and the experience of absence, and Hills (2014) has examined the creation of replicas. I do not engage extensively with this subset of MCS literature because my focus is on the creation of immaterial worlds through talk in social interaction rather than on collection of objects or creation of them. However, this body of work demonstrates that there is an interest in studying fans and fiction in MCS.

2.2.1.2 Materiality and Discourse

In this research, I consider some ways that the (im)material environments of fictional worlds are constructed through discursive social action. I accomplish this objective through adopting an approach that is influenced by the perspective of ethnomethodology (see Chapter 3) as I examine talk as action in live TRPG play. I draw on concepts explored in discursive approaches to material culture and design studies (e.g., Sandino, 2006; Oak, 2011, 2013; Nicholas & Oak, 2018; Matthews et al., 2021) and on objects and embodiment in interaction (e.g., the collected works in Nevile et al., 2014a; C. Goodwin, 2000; Mondada, 2019b) to understand how the agency of objects unfolds through and within discursive social action in specific contexts of situated practice. Such approaches consider how places and material objects

can be understood to have *agency*, in that they help to shape action and interaction while themselves being physically handled or while being part of utterances within interaction.

One important aspect of considering materiality and discourse is the concept of multimodality. *Multimodality* is “the diversity of resources that participants mobilize to produce and understand social interaction as publicly intelligible action, including language, gesture, gaze, body postures, movements, and embodied manipulations of objects” (Mondada, 2019b, p. 47). It is a relevant concept to mention in regard to this research, particularly as physical objects are used as a part of gameplay to represent aspects of the imagined fictional world and characters (e.g., maps, figurines). Alongside multimodality, the concept of *embodiment* is also relevant for analyzing discourse and situated action (e.g., Jewitt et al., 2016; C. Goodwin, 1994, 1997, 2010; Mondada, 2007, 2013, 2016, 2019b) because in TRPGs real people in their physical bodies interact with real objects, and through those interactions describe and construct fictional worlds. Embodiment here refers to dealing with the human body in situated actions and “bodily being-in-the-world” (A. Harris, 2016, n.p.), which is distinct from the use of the term to refer to something immaterial, like a thought, being embodied in a physical form (“Embodiment | Imbodiment, n.,” 2022). Embodiment has been analyzed in gameplay interactions of video games (Mondada, 2012), as players orient to the screen or to one another, and in tabletop games, particularly as embodiment relates to how players orient to pauses in interaction as indicative of thinking (Hofstetter, 2020). My research builds on this emerging area of scholarly work by analyzing how both real and imagined objects are oriented to in the embodied interactions of TRPG play that constitute fictional settings.

Objects play a role in moment-to-moment interaction, e.g., when establishing consensus in the collaborative creative practice of design (Nicholas & Oak, 2018). Further, Nevile et al. (2014b) argue that

researchers examining the various details of naturally occurring social interaction have increasingly been interested in issues of embodiment and materiality, but while objects often appear in data and analyses they are typically included as just one among many aspects of interaction, and so themselves are rarely the research focus. (p. 17)

There is an emerging body of work with a focus on “the interactional ecology of objects” wherein “objects feature dynamically in richly organised relationships with aspects of talk, embodied conduct, and features of the surrounding environment” and are used as resources in moment-to-moment social action (Nevile et al., 2014b, p. 17). In gameplay that occurs through talk, such an interactional ecology of objects is complicated by the fact that both real and imagined objects are implicated in the interactions of play. Objects may be imagined resources used in the actions of fictional characters that are described and accounted for through talk by the real people who roleplay those characters.

With the intertwining of the imagined actions of fictional characters and the real actions of players (e.g., rolling dice, consulting handwritten notes), in order to tell a story that is located in a fictional setting (e.g., traveling through different planes of existence in a multiverse), it is important to consider ways that places are categorized and formulated through talk (e.g., Housley & Smith, 2011; McCabe & Stokoe, 2004; McHoul & Watson, 1984; Schegloff, 1972) as players select the terminology they use to describe the fictional material environments of the imagined worlds and demonstrate their understandings of those worlds through sequential turns of talk. In a related vein, Mondada (2012) has described a “praxeological perspective on space” that

considers “the reflexive elaboration of situated action and of relevant spatial features” as the material surroundings of interaction are considered both constraints and resources for interaction (p. 234). Rintel (2015) takes a complementary approach in analyzing how technology can be oriented to as an omnirelevant feature that organizes interaction. This concept of the surrounding material environments functioning as both constraints and resources in interactions is particularly interesting when considering TRPGs where an imagined space, with imaginary resources for characters to interact with, must be described by players to create the fictional places of the gameplay setting, all while these players interact with each other in a real physical space.

There is a small body of literature on imagination in conversation (with multimodal considerations) that is also particularly relevant to my research and concern for the construction of imagined, immaterial spaces and places. One subset of that literature deals with children’s play (Nishizaka, 2003; Sidnell, 2011; Kinalzik & Heller, 2020; Younhee Kim & Crepaldi, 2021), and the other subset deals with adults, particularly in the context of design and ideation (Murphy, 2005; Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Lystgaard Due, 2018). A key aspect that these studies have in common is in how they examine imagination not as a function of individual cognition but as a co-constructed social practice. Examining the talk in-interaction through which the imagined spaces and places are constructed is a way to access and analyze the immaterial, imagined spaces and places as they are constructed and oriented to by the participants. A significant concept for my research, that relates to the analyses in some of this literature, is that of epistemic authority, or rights to know, assert knowledge, or control the interaction (as they are distributed and negotiated between the speakers).² Sidnell (2011) provides insights into more

² Epistemics in interaction is a broader area studied in conversation analytic research, not only as it relates to embodied and imagined resources in interaction (Bolden, 2018; Bowden, 2019; Heritage, 2011, 2012c, 2012a, 2013a, 2013b, 2018; Heritage & Raymond, 2005, 2012; Raymond, 2018; Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Sierra, 2016).

evenly distributed rights to know in joint play, the exclusive epistemic rights in more individual play, and asymmetric rights to know and contribute to imagined scenarios, while Kinalzik and Heller (2020) examine a researcher-constructed situation where children are given the task of explaining a game (without the game board so they orient to an imagined board) and must be aware of different levels of knowledge in how they explain the game. Landgrebe and Heinemann (2014) examine a workshop context that is designed for participants to have equal rights to know, and then analyze how epistemic primacy is established through going first and through locally constructed and external roles. I draw on this existing body of work and contribute to this scholarship on materiality and discourse by examining a different context (TRPGs) and by extending scholarly work on epistemics in conversation to analyze fictional in-character and out-of-character (real) knowledge as it is implicated in the collaborative construction of the imagined TRPG setting. Examining materiality as it is constituted through the social action of face-to-face interaction allows me to explore how TRPG players create and engage with fictional worlds moment-by-moment as they account for their actions and describe the imagined environments in which their characters exist, all while seated around a table in an actual physical place, periodically using documents and other representative objects in their interactions help constitute the imagined worlds.

2.2.2 Studying Information Practices – Drawing on Library and Information Studies

For this research, I layer conceptualizations of information and understandings of information behaviour and practices from LIS with a concern for the material aspects of phenomena from MCS to explore how information is embedded within the everyday practices of TRPG play. To begin, it should be noted that there is no singular agreed upon definition of the term *information* in LIS (Bates, 2017a). The definition of information as “a *difference which*

makes a difference” (Bateson, 1972, p. 453, emphasis in original) has been adopted in Case and Given’s (2016) textbook on information behaviour in order to encompass the variety of ways information has been conceptualized in this type of research. In a similar vein, Bates (2017b) notes that in information behaviour research information as a “term is generally assumed to cover all instances where people interact with their environment in any such way that leaves some impression on them—that is, adds or changes their knowledge store” (p. 2074). Because I take an approach that is influenced by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (as discussed in Chapter 3), my interest is in defining information as what participants orient to and construct as informative through their interactions.

Buckland (1991b) has presented three types of information that are useful for my discussion of information, and I return to these types in my concluding comments, because they relate to the material (and immaterial) information practices I observed in my data. The three types are as follows: first, “information-as-process,” where information is the act of informing; second, “information-as-knowledge,” where information is intangible, subjective, and is what is perceived in information-as-process; and, third, “information-as-thing,” where objects and documents are referred to as being informative—it is a quality such things possess (Buckland, 1991b, p. 351). These types are useful for considering the material and immaterial negotiations of world-building as they occur in situated practice. For example, “information-as-process” includes the practices of live TRPG gameplay that I recorded and analyzed, “information-as-knowledge” includes the tacit knowledge of games and the world used by the game masters and players, and “information-as-thing” includes the notes taken, maps, books, and other objects used to engage with the world in physical space. Buckland (1991a) has concluded that “*we are unable to say confidently of anything that it could not be information*” (p. 50, emphasis in original)

because whether or not something is informative is dependent on context. In my analysis, I examine what gets treated as information in the practices of the game masters and players. I view the situated social actions through which the gameplayers inform one another as information behaviours.

Information behaviour is “how people need, seek, manage, give, and use information in different contexts” (Fisher et al., 2005a, p. xix). It is “the term of art used in library and information science to refer to a subdiscipline that engages in a wide range of types of research conducted in order to understand the human relationship to information” (Bates, 2017b). Within LIS, information behaviour research has been studied through many different perspectives, theories, and paradigms (Case & Given, 2016; Fisher et al., 2005b; Heinström & Spink, 2011; Spink & Cole, 2006; Olsson, 2005). *Information practice* is a similar term, but it is used by some authors in contrast to information behaviour to emphasize the social and cultural aspects of information use rather than the cognitive demands of needs and motives (Savolainen, 2007). TRPGs are a collaborative social activity requiring group participation. As such, collectivist approaches to studying information are relevant. Collectivist approaches emphasize the group as a unit of analysis rather than individual perspectives, and consider information behaviour as embedded in social practice (Talja et al., 2005; Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007; Given & Kelly, 2016). Since my research examines the socio-material phenomena of world-building in TRPGs, my concern is with what types of information the game masters and players use, situated in the local contexts of their collaborative practices of gameplay. I use a fine-grained analysis of recorded live gameplay to examine information behaviours at a micro-level, as they occur turn-by-turn in talk. Thus, in my analysis I refer to the information behaviours I am analyzing as *micro-information behaviours*, which is a term that has been previously used by Nahl (2007a,

2007b) in describing information behaviours and flows of information in using computers. Nahl examined moment-by-moment interactions with computers as described by the people using them through discourse analysis. Wu and Liu (Wu, 2005; Wu & Liu, 2003, 2011) also use the term “micro” in examining information seeking; specifically, they investigate elicitation of information in dialogue. Although the contexts are different, I use the term micro-information behaviour because the scale of the behaviours being examined is similar with a focus on moment-to-moment flows of information.

2.2.2.1 Leisure and the Everyday in Information Behaviour Research

There is a growing body of work within the subdiscipline of information behaviour research that is focused on information behaviours and practices in everyday contexts. *Everyday life information seeking (ELIS)* is a concept, coined by Savolainen (1995), which is used to describe work within this area, and it should be noted that it has been used describe to information practices and behaviours broadly, not just those of seeking information (Chabot, 2019). Ocepek (2018b) uses the term “*everyday information behaviour*” to encompass all aspects of information behaviour in everyday life, and I adopt that term here as it places less emphasis on seeking as the primary mode of interacting with and using information. Savolainen (1995) used ELIS to refer to non-work contexts to emphasize the study of information seeking in an area that, although having been researched as early as the 1970s as “citizen information behaviour,” remained an area that did not receive as much focus as that of work contexts, and users and systems (Savolainen, 1995; Case & Given, 2016). Dervin and Nilan’s (1986) paper on information needs and uses called for a paradigm shift to consider information seeking in context, which although not specific to the everyday, aligns with a shift towards more qualitative work on information behaviour (Savolainen, 1995). Vakkari (2008) and Greifeneder (2014) have

also identified this shift towards more qualitative research approaches; they also highlighted a trend toward more studies of everyday contexts. The focus on everyday contexts of information use in information behaviour research is particularly pertinent to my research as I examine the moment-by-moment creation and use of information in TRPG play, an everyday leisure activity.

The distinction between work and nonwork contexts in ELIS has recently been problematized within information behaviour research (Dalmer & McKenzie, 2019), and a broader approach encompassing all aspects of life, including the quotidian, has been advocated for (Ocepek, 2018b). The concept of everyday practices has been used in information behaviour studies that examine a variety of contexts. Recent examples include: Gorichanaz (2015, 2017) on ultrarunners; McKenzie and Davies (2021) on documentation work in everyday life as it supports multiple domains of work, family and community; and Lee et al. (2021) on information creation in everyday life through curation of social media content on Pinterest and through think-aloud sessions in grocery stores. A subset of everyday information behaviour literature pertains to health-related practices (e.g., Johnson & Meischke, 1993; McKenzie, 2004, 2009; McKenzie & Spoel, 2014; Veinot, 2009; R. Harris et al., 2010; Oliphant et al., 2022), which as a topic is less relevant to my research; however, the approaches used in some of these studies are important to note because of how they understand information practices within situated context and in relation to discourse. Discursive approaches to information and information-in-social practice are the focus of the next subsection of this literature review. Previous research has proposed models of information behaviour, some of which are specific to everyday contexts (e.g., Savolainen's (2008) model of everyday information practice, and both McKenzie (2003a) and Williamson (1998) have proposed models of everyday life and information seeking behaviour). In my research do I not aim to propose such a model; rather, I explore a specific context using a fine-

grained, ethnomethodologically influenced method to examine information behaviours as they occur and then relate those results back to existing discussions of the everyday and leisure contexts in LIS. The concept of everyday life has been used in the study of information behaviour in hobbies and other leisure activities as well (Hartel, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010; Hartel et al., 2016; Cox et al., 2017; Mansourian, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). This is relevant to my work because the engagements with TRPG worlds that I examine occur within everyday hobby contexts.

Existing studies of leisure activities and everyday life information seeking (e.g., Hartel, 2003, 2007; Cox et al., 2017) have used a *serious leisure perspective*. This perspective was formulated by Stebbins (2007, 2009) who describes *leisure* as activities people want to do that are satisfying and/or fulfilling; they are engaged in during free time and are not coerced (Stebbins, 2007, p. 4). In the serious leisure perspective, Stebbins (2007) differentiates three types of leisure:

- “Serious leisure,” wherein individuals invest substantial time, launching themselves on a “(leisure) career” to acquire and express specialized skills and knowledge (p. 5)
- “Casual leisure,” defined in contrast to serious leisure as the activities not requiring that type of dedication (p. 37-43), and
- “Project-based leisure,” consisting of one-off or infrequent short-term activities (pp. 43-49).

Playing TRPGs is a serious leisure activity, requiring specialized knowledge and occurring over long periods of time (either to commit to a long-term campaign or to launch a longer career as a TRPG gamer). In TRPG play, the game master engages with, and creates in part, or in its entirety, a fictional world that players participate in (and also build in-the-moment

through their interactions) as a part of their everyday leisure activity of gaming. It is these activities of world-building that I examine in this research. The players collaboratively draw on, inform, and construct (im)materialities through their interactions. My research is situated within this body of research on information use in everyday life, with a particular focus on information as it is used and created turn-by-turn in the talk and embodied actions of gameplay. Such activities are a part of the serious leisure activity of TRPG play. Mansourian (2020, 2021a, 2021b) has examined such serious leisure contexts and the passion and joy involved. The small moment-by-moment activities of play I explore in this research can also be viewed in broader context as they contribute to collective and collaborative experiences of joy and pleasure in everyday life.

2.2.2.2 Information in Practice and Discourse

I specifically draw on and expand discursive approaches to the study of information behaviour in this research. Through discursive approaches to the study of information behaviour, “information is a communicative construct which is produced in social context” (Tuominen & Savolainen, 1997, p. 89). The ways information is used in discourse to achieve social action, termed “*discursive action*,” is the focus of studies that use this type of approach to the study of information behaviour (e.g., Tuominen & Savolainen, 1997; McKenzie, 2003b; Heizmann, 2012), and it is this body of research, alongside studies of everyday information behaviour, in which I situate my research within LIS. Discursive studies of information behaviour include a body of work that examines the communicative actions in accounts of information behaviour (as retold by participants in researcher generated interviews), e.g., accounts told by human resources professionals (Heizmann, 2012), accounts told by nurses (Johannisson & Sundin, 2007), and accounts told by theatre professionals (Olsson, 2010). I draw a contrast here between the studies

that examine accounts of information behaviour that were told in researcher-generated interactions and studies that examine information behaviour as it occurs in context (i.e., through methods that employ observation and recording as the behaviours occur), e.g., accounts of information practices in graded secondary school assignments (Lundh et al., 2015), positioning in recordings of midwife-client communications (McKenzie, 2004), and information seeking in children's talk with family members (Barriage & Searles, 2015). In my own research I draw on these discursive approaches to examine information behaviours through which participants collaboratively create and substantiate an imagined world. My initial approach involved collecting both post hoc accounts (i.e., after-game interviews conducted with players) and recordings of live gameplay. However, in my analysis, I focused on the live gameplay to closely examine the micro-level of information behaviours as they occur turn-by-turn in talk.

In arguing for the need for more examination of everyday information behaviour, Ocepek (2018b) recommends institutional ethnography as an avenue for "precise recording of the lived experience of participants in order to accurately portray the nuances of everyday life" (p. 406). I do not adopt institutional ethnography as a method; however, I share this concern for precise recording and attending to nuance as ways to further understandings of everyday information behaviour. I pursue such understandings through collecting recordings of live information practices as they occur, rather than through retelling alone (as would be provided in interview research). Attention has been called to information seeking in conversation (Solomon, 1997) and orally based information (D. Turner, 2007, 2009, 2010) in information behaviour research. I use conversation analytic approaches to studying discourse (specifically talk), which is the approach used by Barriage and Searles (2015) in their examination of question and answer sequences

(called adjacency pairs³ in conversation analytic literature) as information seeking behaviours in recorded family interactions with young children. A conversation analytic approach is also used by McKenzie (2009) in her work on informing and deciding as interactional goals in informed choice discussions between midwives and childbearing women. Through such an approach that utilizes recordings of real, situated (i.e., not simulated or researcher-generated) interactions, I contribute to LIS literature on information behaviours by examining them moment-by-moment as they occur. Accordingly, unlike Barriage and Searles (2015), who focus specifically on information seeking behaviours, I look at broader ways that information is used in talk-in-interaction to inform the construction of immaterial worlds. Information seeking is not necessarily the main purpose of those interactions, but it occurs within gameplay (e.g., when a game master describes a fictional location as the characters being roleplayed enter it), which is why I am also drawing on the concept of “information-in-social-practice” as introduced by Cox (2012, 2013).

“Information-in-social-practice” (Cox, 2012, 2013) is an approach to information behaviour and information practice research that is not restricted to information seeking activities or activities that primarily involve information. It is an approach that takes a broad view of information activities as “woven through all social practices” (Cox, 2012, p. 185). In that vein, Cox (2012) critiques the term “information practice” because “the phrase ‘information practice’ continues to imply a focus on activities that are primarily about information” (p. 185), but there are an array of activities, such as those that qualify as serious leisure activities, that may not be

³ Adjacency pairs are structures in conversation where the first part is recognized, the second part is an expected response (e.g., questions and answers, offers and acceptances/or declinations, greetings and greetings) (Schegloff, 1984, 2007a).

information focused but that still involve a rich array of information practices and activities. For example, Hartel's (2007, 2010) work on gourmet cooking is a thorough example of information-in-social-practice, analyzed using the serious leisure perspective. Cox (2012) uses Hartel's work as an example in his argument for the concept of information-in-social-practice, and although Hartel's work does not use the term, her work illustrates the complex ways that information is used in the everyday life context of hobbies. Considering information-in-social-practice is a way to examine not only information seeking but also information use, creation, sharing, encountering, etc. as information is constituted in practice and situated in (im)material context(s).

The approach of information-in-social-practice, with a collectivist understanding that practices are social and dependent on groups, is useful for considering information as a part of a variety of activities in daily life, such as TRPG play. For example, information use may not be the primary focus of the activity at points within a TRPG. The game master may focus on telling a story, creating intrigue, world-building, or creating any variety of situations for the players to work through in-character. Information about the fictional world and the tasks at hand may be used and have different levels of importance depending on the situation as it evolves in the game. Part of what I examine in this research is some of the ways that information is created and used by participants in the situated action of these activities. The manner in which players create and build upon information is an example of Huvila's (2022) "*making and taking*" of information, which is a conceptual apparatus

for explaining, in part, the mobility of information in terms of doing that unfolds as a process of becoming rather than of being, and in part, what is happening when

information comes into being and when something is taken up for use as information. (p. 528)

Taken together, the concepts of information-in-social-practice and making and taking are useful in conceiving of information as a social construct – used in and constituted through the embodied and discursive actions of gameplay. My research engages with these concepts through examination of some of the ways in which information is made and taken to construct imagined worlds within the social practices of TRPG play.

2.2.2.3 Studies of Fiction and Games in LIS

Information practices and behaviour related to fiction and fandom are under-studied and emerging areas in LIS research (Doty & Broussard, 2017; Forcier, 2017; Price & Robinson, 2017). Doty and Broussard (2017; Broussard & Doty, 2016) argue that fiction is informative and that information behaviour relating to fiction needs further study. They suggest that fiction may have been studied less in the past in LIS because greater value has been placed on information from scientists and engineers, on technical information and information retrieval, and because of perceptions that fiction is frivolous (Doty & Broussard, 2017, p. 63). However, Broussard's and Doty's (2016) preliminary analyses demonstrates how fiction can be informative and how it can be studied as a part of people's identity construction and "wayfinding" in the world (p. 7). Similarly, Forcier (2017) and Price and Robinson (2017) have described a gap in information behaviour research, a gap that my research addresses, at least in part. Little scholarship in LIS has considered fan culture, possibly due to limited understandings of fans by the academy. Forcier (2017) suggests this gap could be due to fan behaviour being considered deviant. For example, Jenson (1992) explores the characterization of fans as deviant and argues for shifting this conception in order to examine how "fandom is an aspect of how we make sense of the

world, in relation to mass media, and in relation to our historical, social, cultural, location” (p. 27). To counterbalance this lack, Forcier (2017) and Price and Robinson (2017) highlight several studies in LIS that deal with fan fiction and classification practices, e.g., Hart, Schoolbred, Butcher, & Kane (1999) and Bullard (2014), and they present their own studies of fandom. While my work does not deal specifically with fandom, the extent to which my research participants are fans (and thereby accomplished experts) of the games and genres of work they reference does inform what they say as they play, and so impacts the nature of the data I collected and analyzed.

Forcier (2017) proposes an exploration of information behaviour in fan cultures and transmedia reading practices. Transmedia stories relate to different representations of fictional worlds, and some TRPGs and game masters use, are inspired by, or extend established transmedia worlds. It is the engagement with, and the creation and adaptation of, these worlds that I examine in this research. Other studies of information behaviour as it pertains to fiction include: studies of information seeking in the contexts of book selection and access (e.g., Mikkonen & Vakkari, 2016, 2017; Moyer, 2007; Ooi & Liew, 2011; Saarinen & Vakkari, 2013); studies of the information found when reading, intentionally or incidentally, that is then used or applied in other ways, such as understanding the world, making change, models for identity, reassurance, new perspectives, connection, and acceptance (Ross, 1999, pp. 794–795); studies of the negotiation of sexual identities (Rothbauer, 2004a, 2004b; Helkenberg, 2019); or more generally, studies that include aspects of how fiction reading and the information involved serves other educational, recreational, or personal outcomes (Moyer, 2007; Stobbs, 2014). These works contribute to a broader area of studying fiction in everyday life of which my research contributes to by examining the construction of fictional worlds.

A limited number of studies that focus more specifically on gaming and information behaviour have also been conducted and have influenced aspects of my research. Most of the examples of these studies that pertain to gaming discussed here focus on *virtual worlds* and massively multiplayer online role-playing games. Harviainen and collaborators have conducted several studies related to information behaviour and gaming in live action roleplaying and virtual or synthetic worlds. Some of these studies analyze games as information retrieval systems (e.g., Harviainen, 2007; Harviainen & Rapp, 2018; Harviainen & Vesa, 2016). Harviainen and Hamari (2015) specifically examine how information practice-based services are used as payment in massively multiplayer online role-playing games, and Savolainen and Harviainen (2014) examine virtual worlds and information as capability for action. Sköld, Adams, Harviainen, and Huvila (2015) discuss research methods for the study of online games from an information perspective. Another researcher who has done work on online games is Storie (2008) who examines information behaviour in *World of Warcraft*, a massively multiplayer online role-playing game. One study by Atmore (2017) is not of a virtual context, but of the tabletop context, which is my focus. Atmore (2017) uses Dervin's concept of sense-making (a meta-theory used in the study of information seeking behaviour) to understand the information behaviour of a group playing *Pathfinder*, a TRPG.

All the aforementioned studies in this section demonstrate ways that information in games and virtual worlds has been addressed in previous research; however, none of these studies have a focus on the ways in which real materiality intersects with the immaterial aspects of fictional worlds. Additionally, these studies do not attend to information or the interactive creation of the information landscape that makes up the fictional world where gameplay takes

place; such a concern with real and imaginary materiality (immateriality) in relation to information is the area that my research questions address.

2.2.3 Materiality and Information Behaviour

The situated conceptualization of information behaviours in everyday social practices that I outlined earlier in this chapter in the section titled, “Studying Information Practices – Drawing on Library and Information Studies,” aligns with the approaches to materiality and discourse that focus on the embodied situated actions of interaction that I discussed in the “Studying Materiality – Drawing on Material Culture Studies” section of this chapter. This alignment grounds my interdisciplinary approach to this research as I draw on both areas of study and contribute to emerging understandings of materiality and information behaviour to examine the complexity of world-building through TRPG play. The research I reviewed in this chapter so far has common threads related to materiality and information in social action that, when combined, enrich one another in new ways. For example, some previous research on everyday information behaviour has examined embodied information behaviours (Lloyd, 2014; Olsson & Lloyd, 2017); however, I argue here that the use of ethnomethodological CA that I draw on in relation to MCS (e.g., Mondada, 2019b; Nevile et al., 2014b; Nicholas & Oak, 2018) provides particular insights into materiality and objects in moment-by-moment conversation that is novel within information behaviour research. Furthermore, information is addressed in discursive studies of material contexts, although it may not be termed as such (the terms “knowledge” and “epistemics”—ways of knowing—are more common in the ethnomethodological literature these studies draw on)⁴. For example, the type of embodied, conversation analytic approach used by

⁴ Epistemics is a topic of study within conversation analytic literature more broadly (Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Heritage, 2013a; Raymond, 2018).

Nicholas and Oak (2018) in their examination of consensus building in design interactions and used by Landgrebe and Heinemann (2014) in their examination of adults' imaginary transformations of objects in innovation workshops have both impacted on my work. Each of these studies draws attention to the sequential nature of interaction and intersubjective construction of meaning in embodied interactions where information is exchanged and rights to know are negotiated. I use these types of approaches to attend to nuanced information practices in context.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge that the concept of materiality has been explored in LIS, particularly in the area of document theory, which addresses aspects of the material forms of information. Scholars using document theory (e.g., Frohmann, 2004, 2007, 2012; Lund, 2004, 2009) resist reducing documents to carriers of an unembodied information. Therefore, they use the term *document* to emphasize that the form of the information, its materiality, and the intent of people to use it as a document are important (see Briet, 1951 trans. 2006; Buckland, 1997). The concept of the document defined within this area of study is important for me to recognize because of the concern within document theory for the material forms of information, which aligns with a MCS-influenced approach to understanding information. However, in my analysis, I do not focus on documents as the main phenomenon under study. Instead, I examine ways information is used and constituted in practice, particularly through talk, which includes how documents are referred to as situationally relevant within those practices. Because my focus is on the talk in interactions that construct imagined materialities, I do not engage extensively with document theory. While this section of this literature review has focused on situating my interdisciplinary research within MCS and LIS, the following section presents a focused review of studies of gaming that are relevant to this research.

2.3 Research on Gaming

Although this research is situated in the fields of MCS and LIS, in order to focus on the material (and immaterial) spaces, places, and information involved in world-building practices in TRPGs, it is important to recognize the field of game studies. Much of the games studies literature is focused on video games and not tabletop games (Cover, 2010), though I outline some notable exceptions in what follows. Also, because I focused on the ways that fiction, information, and materiality are a part of the practices of world-building in TRPG play, I draw more heavily on literature associated with MCS and LIS (with my data considered through ethnomethodologically informed perspectives) than the approaches from games studies (and media studies) which engage in examinations of ludic and narrative nature of games (e.g., Frasca, 2003; Ensslin, 2014). Given that the study of games is interdisciplinary and that the wide breadth of contemporary, game-related scholarship is beyond the scope of this research, in the following sections, I limit my discussion to focus on studies of roleplaying games, prefaced with a brief discussion of a connection between the concept of a “magic circle” from games studies as it relates to the previously discussed concept of possible worlds and fictional worlds. I touch upon the methods that have been used to study TRPGs and how my analysis of recorded live gameplay has the potential to contribute to this growing body of research.

2.3.1 Examining Gaming in Possible and Imaginary Worlds

Here I begin by examining relevant theoretical discussions and studies of gaming that do not necessarily directly involve gamers, but that do draw on the concepts of possible and fictional worlds, as introduced previously. Punday (2005) draws on possible worlds theory and describes TRPGs as narrative worlds made of objects, and these objects are assigned statistics that define them (Punday, 2005, p. 118). These objects (e.g., treasure, magic potions) are the

building blocks of the fictional (possible) world of the game (Punday, 2005, p. 118). In a similar vein, van Looy (2005) evaluates possible worlds theory as a framework for examining the virtual worlds of computer games, which aligns with Wolf's (2012) identification of possible worlds theory as a starting point for examining imaginary worlds. These examples demonstrate the feasibility of examining the fictional worlds of TRPGs; however, they do not address games as situated, material (and immaterial) spaces of information use.

One particular concept arising from game studies that is relevant to this research is that of the "magic circle" (Huizinga, 1949) because it is a way to conceptualize the world of the game. This concept is attributed to Huizinga (1949) and is elaborated upon by Salen and Zimmerman (2004). The *magic circle* is the frame of reality in which the game is played; it is the "special place in time and space created by a game" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 95). Salen and Zimmerman (2004) describe the circle as a boundary; it is an enclosed space and therefore separate from the real world, and it is a space where the rules of the game exist. Singleton (2021) has applied the concept in examining TRPG play and how players orient to the world as a separate space. Consalvo (2009) critiques this concept as formalist and argues that the rules of everyday life cannot be removed from gameplay and the study of games. The contexts of play should be emphasized (Consalvo, 2009). I would echo Consalvo's concern. Although the concept of the game world as separate is a useful starting point for thinking about the fictional world of the game as its own place, the conception of it as entirely separate from the real world of the participants' everyday lives reduces the complexity of the practices involved in play and in their construction and engagement with a fictional world. I do not specifically use the concept of the magic circle in my approach to this research, in part because I explore the ways in which borders between the imaginary world of play and the actual world are negotiated and blurred in

practice. However, it is relevant to this discussion as a concept that deals with the fictional worlds of games.

Within the previously mentioned volume, edited by Wolf (2017a), is a chapter by Baker (2017) that specifically examines TRPGs. Baker (2017) argues that “tabletop fantasy RPGs [roleplaying games] can be conceptualized as instructional material about subcreation” (p. 83) and that they offer both infrastructure and generative world-building material. He specifically examines the rulebooks and print materials for two game systems: *Dungeons & Dragons* fifth edition and *Pathfinder*. What is different about my approach when compared to most of the examples discussed so far is that I am concerned with the ways the worlds are created in practice and how these worlds are reflected upon by their creators, which required observation of, and interaction with, creators and players. In contrast to my engagement with live action and reflections upon it, Punday (2005) uses examples from game materials (e.g., rulebooks) and literature, van Looy (2005) presents a theoretical discussion using the game *Myst* as an example, and Baker (2017) examines print game materials. Authors who have observed live gamers include: Consalvo (2009) whose argument is based on work done with actual players and cheating, and Mizer (2015, 2019) and Fine (1983) who both present ethnographic studies of TRPGs that involve observation of actual players. Rather than observing and taking notes, I recorded and transcribed live games, which allowed me to closely examine the live discourse (see Chapter 3). This methodological approach is similar to that of Mondada (2012) and Hofstetter and Robles (2019); however, they study video games and tabletop games, respectively, rather than the TRPGs that are the focus of my study. Using an approach that involves both recording live play and interviewing players provides diverse windows through which to view the complexity of gaming in situated, socio-material contexts.

2.3.2 Studying Gameplay and Players

A small number of studies of roleplaying games and gamers in and across contexts have been conducted, and they take a variety of approaches (note that some of these examine other forms of roleplaying games, not just TRPGs). For example, both Fine (1983) and Mizer (2015, 2019) examine TRPGs through ethnographic methods. Fine (1983) examines TRPGs as social worlds, and Mizer (2015, 2019) examines the experience of imagined worlds—both using participant observation as an aspect of their methods. Similarly, Mitchell's (2016) study of live-action roleplaying examines frames of play and location based on ethnographic field notes and observations, and Bowman (2008, 2010) uses ethnographic methods to study roleplaying games generally (including tabletop and live-action varieties of roleplaying). Roleplaying games broadly (including live action roleplay and video games) have been explored by Montola (2008, 2012) and identity in roleplaying games has been examined by Bowman (2010). Schalleger (2018) provides a postmodern perspective, analyzing agency and situating roleplaying games in socio-historical context. Clement (2017) examines emergent narrative, and Cover (2010) examines TRPGs as a rhetorical genre. Each of these studies provides a different perspective on roleplaying games and their broader social context. My study differs from these previous works and adds to the research on TRPGs by examining world-building, specifically world-building in recorded play. Some studies of games involve examining published materials and examples, while others involve collecting data from players themselves or some combination thereof.

In this research, I examine information creation and exchange as it occurred in the moment and with additional context as provided in the reflections of the players. This approach provides examples of how worlds are built and engaged with at a micro-level, turn-by-turn in talk (see Chapter 3 for greater detail). Such an approach differs from those taken in much of the

literature on games because, rather than generalized observations of behaviour, as reported in the thick descriptions generated through ethnographic methods, I focus on interactions in live gameplay, through which the construction of the imagined worlds of play occurs moment-by-moment. For example, Fine's (1983) chapter on shared fantasy examines the ways in which the game worlds are collective experiences and how the game master serves a role as a referee. However, Fine's approach is more concerned with the social construction and refereeing of the world than with considering the practices that constitute it as an (im)material space (that may be analyzed through examples of recorded gameplay). Further, in Fine's (1983) discussion of frames, generalized, overarching examples are given, rather than transcripts of recorded play. I highlight this difference in approach not as a criticism, but rather to emphasize the purpose of my research—to examine the practices of world-building and worlds in-play as they are constituted in sequential turns of talk.

Live recording of TRPG play provides a context for the study of fictional world-building as it occurs in conversation as play unfolds; therefore, the few scholarly studies that exist of talk in games are particularly relevant to my work. Like Fine (1983), Hendricks (2006) examines the shared social reality of TRPGs, but he does so specifically through critical discourse analysis, in which power management through the discursive elements of TRPGs (e.g., the use of first and/or third-person pronouns) are attended to, rather than the co-construction of meaning through aspects of materiality, which is my primary focus. Hendricks (2006) identifies strategies used by gamers to incorporate themselves into the world of the game, an approach that is more in line with my intentions and with my methodological approach of examining small stories as these create and engage with (im)material worlds (as noted earlier, small stories are discursive practices in conversation, such as relatively brief accounts, and are distinct from the big stories

of reflective interviews). Unlike Hendricks (2006), who draws on critical discourse analysis, I use approaches aligned with ethnomethodological conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis (a mode of analysis that enables the study of the ways people identify with groups and understand those groups in conversation). Ethnomethodological approaches, like the one I adopt, have been used to examine other types of games previously (e.g., Mondada's (2012) study of switching in and out of fiction and reality in video games using multimodal analysis of conversation, Hofstetter and Robles's (2019) study of sporting activity and cheating as constructed in talk during board game play, Hofstetter's (2020) examination of embodiment and thinking in boardgame play, and Hofstetter's (2021) examination of turn allocation in games). While these studies provide examples of how the discourse of gaming contexts can be analyzed, my focus differs from these works in that I am focused on TRPGs and the construction of worlds in-interaction, with particular attention to the ways in which materiality becomes an important aspect of gameplay.

2.4 Summary

In this literature review, I outlined the concepts of fictional worlds and world-building, which are the phenomena under study herein, situated my interdisciplinary research within the literatures of MCS and LIS, and presented a selected review of relevant studies of gaming. In my work I draw on concepts of materiality and immateriality from MCS as well as approaches to research that examine materiality in and through discourse (Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Nevile et al., 2014b; Nicholas & Oak, 2018). My dissertation adds to this body of work by examining a new context, TRPGs, with an extended focus on the ways that imagined things and places can be intersubjectively built and engaged with through talk. This focus extends existing work on immateriality to consider ways in which the real and imagined worlds are intertwined at

a micro-level within everyday activities, such as the talk of TRPG players. From LIS, I draw on the concept of everyday information behaviour (Ocepek, 2018b), studies of such behavior in context (Chabot, 2019; Hartel, 2006; Lee et al., 2021; Ocepek, 2018a), and discursive approaches to studying information behaviour (Barriage & Searles, 2015; McKenzie, 2004) in order to examine the micro-information behaviours that occur in the turn-by-turn talk of gameplay. The micro-level focus of my work contributes to the information behaviour literature in LIS by examining behaviours as they occur and with attention to the ways in which information is both made and taken (as in Huvila's (2022) concept of "making and taking") to create and perpetuate imaginative contexts. This focus on imaginative contexts and worlds will contribute to both the MCS and LIS literature by addressing gaps where there has been a lack of attention to the extent to which everyday life situations may include elements of fiction or fantasy that nevertheless draw upon knowledge of, and enact information exchanges concerning, material phenomena. This research also presents a new methodological perspective from which to examine TRPGs, through a focus on the moment-by-moment discursive actions of world-building that occurs in the talk of play.

PART II: RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 3: Perspective and Methodology

This chapter details the research design used for this study. It is separated into two sections, “Personal Perspective and Rationale for this Study,” and “Methodology,” followed by a “Summary.” I begin by providing my early motivations for this research in the “Personal Perspective and Rationale for this Study” section. The “Methodology” section sets up the research approaches and analytic stances that underly how the research was designed. I start by outlining the research’s analytic orientations as I present the project’s ethnomethodological underpinnings, and how I use aspects of conversation analytic, membership categorization, and the small story (and lesser-used big story) approaches that frame my analyses in later chapters. Such approaches are compatible with my use of MCS to emphasize sensitivity to the role of objects used in gameplay (e.g., game pieces and material objects referred to and accounted for in talk) as well as the in-context communicative practices that are the central focus of this research. Overall, this chapter provides an explanation of how I approached my research questions concerning how fictional worlds are created and engaged with in TRPGs through studying relationships between materiality and the informative actions of spoken discourse. The methodology and research design I selected to provide opportunities for detailed examinations of information behaviour and the role of material objects and their social qualities as materialities as they are constituted in and through TRPG play.

3.1 Personal Perspective and Rationale for this Study

This section provides an overview of my early motivations for this research and the influence of a pilot study that I carried out in Winter of 2018. The rationale for my methodology is grounded in how I came to be interested in this research and early data collection and exploration of methods. My own knowledge of gaming as a TRPG gamer myself is also important to account for and is related to the research design and methodology I used. My

interest in this research arises from my previous work on information and fiction reading (Stobbs, 2014) and being subsequently introduced to Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition when a friend asked if I wanted to play in 2016. The gaming context was new to me, and I wanted to explore information in fictional worlds, realizing that they may not be confined to a particular medium (e.g., fan art, cosplay, gameplay, movies, and writing—all could be creative activities extending experiences of the same world). I wanted to continue the explorations of information behaviour and fiction that I had conducted in my master's research, with more of a focus on the making of objects and items related to fictional worlds (regardless of medium). To begin this investigation, I carried out a pilot study in the winter of 2018, after which I adjusted my methodological approach based on insights from the pilot study data.

3.1.1 Influence of the Pilot Study

I originally intended to use interviews where the main source of data would be interviews where the participants shared stories of items they had created; however, the pilot study provided insights and opportunities to work with recordings of live gameplay as well as with interviews of players. Both of these types of data were incorporated more formally into the design of my larger dissertation study. In the pilot study, all the participants, players and creators alike, talked about interacting with others, and the three who were game masters all talked about collaborative storytelling and creating things for, and with, their players. One of these participants invited me to observe a game night, which I did, after getting agreement from all of his players. This type of live gameplay data provided insights into how the game master and players engage with the world in a material space in a way that was not captured in the interviews alone. This insight led me to draw on ethnomethodology as a foundation for my methodology and also to narrow the context of focus to TRPGs, specifically because of the richness of live game data and the

possibilities it had to provide insights into how information is created and exchanged as participants collaboratively build a fictional world through their moment-by-moment behaviours.

While the influences that led to the development of ethnomethodology and, in particular, the extent of its connection to established modes of sociological theory, have been disputed (Hilbert, 2009), *ethnomethodology* (as I engage with it here) can be understood as a micro-sociological approach with a focus on understanding participants' own social actions as situated accomplishments (Lynch, 2001) and, as such, is an appropriate conceptual framework for aspects of my study. I have incorporated the type of in-the-moment data used in some ethnomethodological studies into the design for this research as a result of my interactions with my pilot participants. Further details of how I adjusted my research based on the pilot study and how it sensitized me to the potential social practices that could be explored in live recordings of play are included in a discussion of my pilot study in Appendix A. Further details on ethnomethodology and its appropriateness for this research are provided in the following section of this chapter on methodology.

3.1.2 My Role in the Research⁵

I have played *Dungeons & Dragons*, both as a player roleplaying a character and as a game master. My involvement in TRPG play gave me an awareness of the richness of

⁵ Note that reflexivity can be treated differently in ethnomethodological research than in other forms of qualitative research, so I do not use the term in the main body of this text. Ethnomethodology has been described as radically reflexive in that it considers all social action to be accomplished (Pollner, 1991), though the degree to which that radical reflexiveness continues to be inherent is debated (Lynch, 2000; Pollner, 1991, 2012; and more recently in a collection of papers from a 2016 event on <https://radicalethno.org/index.html> wherein the radical nature of ethnomethodology is discussed). Reflexivity is also sometimes considered to be inherent in the actions studied (as ethnomethodologists aim to describe “tacit or taken-for-granted practices and processes” (Pollner, 2012, p. 53)). Further, in regards to reflexivity and ethnomethodology, Lynch (2000) highlights the ethnomethodological view that there is reflexivity in accounts and that “it alludes to the embodied practices through which persons singly and together, retrospectively and prospectively, produce accountable states of affairs. According to this view, reflexivity is ubiquitous and unremarkable” (p. 33-34). In this sense, reflexivity is a part of the way people make their actions recognizable to one another (a focus of ethnomethodological inquiry). Pollner (1991) uses the term “endogenous reflexivity” (p. 373) in describing CA—because the focus in CA is on gaining detailed understandings of “members

interactions and imagined worlds that are involved. In ethnomethodology, this familiarity with the phenomena being studied can be important and necessary. Ethnomethodologists studying specialized areas can spend years becoming competent in the area of study in order to better understand and explicate members' knowledge and actions (Francis & Hester, 2004; Lynch, 1993). Pollner and Emerson (2001) have summarized approaches to ethnomethodological studies as both making the familiar strange in studying everyday ways of interacting, and then, as ethnomethodology continued to develop, also as a way of making the strange familiar by gaining the knowledge of a practitioner. Such familiarity has been described as a "unique adequacy requirement" wherein a researcher needs to be familiar enough with the context to follow the local production and accountability of phenomena (Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992, p. 182).

For my own research, my background as a TRPG player allows me to understand the practices and specialized vocabulary used by my participants. However, managing this knowledge and using data collection methods, such as participant observation, can introduce distance from the situated actions being studied. Analysis based on a researcher's own accounts, written up during or after an event as in fieldnotes, or as retold by a participant in a researcher generated interview, is a post hoc reconstruction, rather than providing direct access to how action is made accountable moment by moment (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). For this research, I

methods" of making their actions recognizable—he suggests that CA applies these aspects of ethnomethodology. Furthermore, Pollner (1991, 2012) suggests that reflexivity may be declining, or becoming unneeded because of "increasingly reflexive sensibilities" (2012, p. 53) as we are "all invited to be ethnomethodologists of our own lives" (2012, p. 53). However, Lynch (2000, 2019) does not necessarily align his discussion with the idea of a decline, but rather with the idea that the reflexivity is within the practices themselves: "reflexive uses of ordinary language and commonsense knowledge constitute whatever sense can be made, whether or not it is billed as objective. Such reflexivity comes with the territory of language-use" (2000, p. 42). Approaches may also differ as ethnomethodologists either try to keep a distance and / or pursue specialist knowledge (Pollner (1991) and Pollner and Emerson (2001) discuss these distinctions as shifts in how ethnomethodological studies have been carried out over time). In my analysis I use endogenous reflexivity – with a focus on the actions as they are constituted by members; however, my own knowledge of gaming enables my understanding of the interactions I observe, so to maintain some distance (and focus on the actions of the participants rather than importing my perceptions) I recorded game groups in which I was not involved.

wanted to access how action is ordered by participants in the moment, while also being conscious that retellings in interviews can provide additional insights when the approaches are used together (an approach demonstrated by Oak, 2013). As I both recorded and transcribed live games, and undertook interviews with selected players, I decided to focus my analysis on the action of the games, though my knowledge of what was going on was supplemented by the “big story” knowledge acquired through interview-based information. Accordingly, I adopted an ethnomethodologically underpinned methodology that draws on conversation analytic and membership categorization analytic approaches to focus on what is going on in the small story accounts and justifications that occur in the face-to-face talk of gameplay. Acquiring data through the complementary modes of the big stories of post hoc reflections and the small stories within on-going interaction provides a strong foundation from which I explore how interactions are ordered and meaning is collaboratively constructed in TRPG play. This methodology is explained in the following section of this chapter.

3.2 Methodology

This section explains the methodological stances of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis, big story and small story approaches, and why they were selected for this research. My rationale for focusing on small stories and analyzing live interaction is also detailed. Fictional worlds and gameplay provide a complex and layered context in which to examine the situated action of gameplay wherein worlds are discursively constructed and engaged with.

3.2.1 Ethnomethodological Underpinnings

Ethnomethodology treats language, knowledge, meaning, and order not as social structures or cognitive or behavioural mechanisms but as “situated accomplishments by the

parties whose local practices ‘assemble’ the recurrent scenes of action that make up a stable society” (Lynch, 2001, p. 140). It is a descriptive, empirical micro-sociological approach to research that originates in the work of Harold Garfinkel (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992; vom Lehn, 2019; vom Lehn & Dingwall, 2014). The ethnomethodological focus on social action as a situated accomplishment that is jointly managed by participants as they interact is particularly relevant for this research as I examine how fictional worlds are created and engaged with during gameplay—that is, I am concerned with how the (im)materialities of game worlds are accomplished through the interactions of play. The fictional worlds of TRPGs are constituted and re-constituted in the social interactions of gameplay, and in those interactions, information is created and exchanged to create the intersubjective world of play in-the-moment. The settings of TRPG gameplay are multi-layered, contingent, and constructed. They involve the interaction of multiple players, with their own individual histories and bodies of knowledge as well as group histories as games continue across time. The interactions of play perpetuate and (re)create the (im)materialities of play which are imagined, immaterial spaces and places that are created by real people in physical spaces. Real materialities and fictional materialities are intertwined in the actions of gameplay, which is why I use the term (im)materialities.

Instances of TRPG play provide “perspicuous settings” (Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992, p. 184) for examining how the (im)materialities of fictional worlds are constituted by players. The concept of a *perspicuous setting* arises from ethnomethodology and the way it eschews established sociological theory to focus on how interaction is organized by interactants themselves (Garfinkel & Wieder, 1992). Ethnomethodology focuses on observable, recordable “forms of practical action, done in real-world settings, by competent actors, as part of their

everyday lived experience” (Trace, 2016, p. 59). A perspicuous setting is “a setting that in its specificity and uniqueness allows us to highlight methodic and systematic features” (Mondada, 2007, p. 198). Lynch (2007) furthers this definition by emphasizing the contextual nature of meaning, where a perspicuous setting (Lynch uses the term “perspicuous site”) is a part of ethnomethodological inquiry where “the organization of everyday language and practical reasoning cannot be reconstructed as an abstract cognitive system, but that it is situated within, and indexed to, particular occasions of use” (p. 108). My interest in TRPGs as a perspicuous setting allows me to focus on the explanatory and descriptive techniques used by the players to inform one another as they interact within and construct the (im)material settings of their games. Part of what makes this site compelling for study is the layered nature of the interactions. The players are playing in and creating fictional worlds while also being physically present in the real world. These fictional worlds are created and reconstituted throughout the gameplay interaction, and each participant group provides a particular perspicuous setting for analysis (see the “Site Profiles” section in Chapter 4 for more detail on participant groups).

Ethnomethodology’s understanding of social action as embedded and constitutive of contexts allows me to examine the constitution of fictional materialities as they exist through the information behaviours that occur within the situated context of gameplay. Watson (2015, A Praxiological Solution section, para. 16) uses the term *gestalt contexture* to describe this type of situated accomplishment in context and its kaleidoscopic nature. According to Watson, and as used in this research, a *gestalt contexture* is a

conception of context where the elements in a given contextual pattern are said to ‘exist through each other’. The functional significance or specificity of sense of these elements is, in any particular instance, dependant [sic] on that of the others. If an element is torn

from a locally given pattern then the significance of both particular and pattern are modified. The gestalt contexture has, then, an ‘instanced’, locally specific, patterned coherence in which each element is reflexively related to the other and in which the elements and the pattern are, in a back-and-forth way, constitutive of each other.

(R. Watson, 2015, A Praxiological Solution section, para. 16)

I designed this research project to explore this complexity and how it is negotiated in practice in TRPGs where the real and fictional exist through each other in the practices of gameplay. The concept of gestalt contextures is important to my research because it draws attention to how, during gameplay, references to, and engagements with, game rules, real objects, and fictional works are layered together by real people who are roleplaying fictional characters. It is through the “locally specific, patterned coherence” of the players’ talk and manipulation of objects, that the participants simultaneously exist in the entwined contexts of the real, material world and the imagined, fictional world.

My overarching research questions are about the construction of fictional worlds, as imagined material environments, and how those worlds themselves are contingent upon how they are built and invoked in the conversation and social action of gameplay. My analysis, presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, draws on concepts from ethnomethodologically informed conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. This approach allows me to examine the ways that order is established in action, that is, how the situation of the game is defined by the players through their play. *Definition of the situation* is a concept arising from Goffman (1959) and is described by Housley and Smith (2011, p. 701) as providing for conditions and interactional coordination of social action as well as requirements to account for action, selves, and places. It is tied to Garfinkel’s (1967) concept of *documentary interpretation*,

in which expectations based on patterns of previous experience are used to understand events and actions (Potter, 1996, pp. 49–52; McHoul & Watson, 1984, pp. 291–292). For this research, I draw on these concepts to analyze ways that the gestalt contextures of interaction are constituted through the situated actions of the TRPG players. The (im)material worlds of play are constituted in and through the actions of gameplay.

Two related ethnomethodological phrases that apply to this type of analytic focus are “doing being _____”⁶ and “who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing.”⁷ *Doing being* is a term used in ethnomethodological studies that recognizes that norms are enacted and constituted in the moment. As Sacks (1984) describes in a seminal work on being ordinary, a person does not happen to do things that are considered ordinary; they also know what typical action is. Examining how those norms are enacted in the moment is the study of doing being ordinary, or as in the case of my research, I am studying doing being a TRPG player who is roleplaying a fictional character in a fictional setting and how those settings are constituted as part of the interactions of play. This analytic focus on the minutia of social interaction allows me to examine “*culture-in-action*” (Hester & Eglin, 1997b) or norms-in-action (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002, 2009); in my case, the culture and / or norms of gameplay in action. Francis and Hester

⁶ Sacks (1984) wrote a chapter on doing “being ordinary,” in which he describes an analytic focus on how people accomplish ordinariness through recognizable action. Being ordinary is something that is accomplished in interaction as a person does what is considered to be ordinary by knowing what is ordinary and carrying those actions out. Other scholars with an ethnomethodological focus have carried this concept forward to analyze how people do being different things (e.g., “doing-being-a-student-amongst-other-students” (Attenborough & Stokoe, 2012), “doing being boys with ADHD” (Evaldsson, 2014), “doing being ‘strange’” (Morriss, 2016)) by orienting to identities and carrying out activities in particular ways.

⁷ Variations of this phrasing, both hyphenated and not, have been used by different ethnomethodological scholars. Schegloff (1972) presents an in-depth discussion of the concept with a focus on how people orient to who they are, what they are doing, and where they are, and then formulate their phrasing of locations based on the situation at hand. Butler and Fitzgerald (2010) revisit the concept in an examination of tacitly invoked membership (categorical identities) in conversation.

(2004) discuss culture, worldview, and ideology not as “decontextualized sources of members’⁸ actions” (p. 9); rather, members methods are in “and only in” the “situated activities themselves” (p. 9), which frames culture as an “accomplishment of talk and action” rather than “a determinant of it” (p. 11). Culture and norms then, are accomplished by people as they interact. Hester and Eglin (1997b) emphasize the importance of considering this accomplishment as “occasioned,” thereby bringing focus to the context of the talk and action being studied (p. 28). Similar to the concept of doing being in ethnomethodological literature, is the concept of *who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing*, a phrase used to draw attention to situated contexts and the ways in which members orient to these contexts as they are created in and through interaction (Butler & Fitzgerald, 2010, pp. 2471–2472). In TRPGs, the norms and culture of the gaming interaction and fictional world of the game are enacted and constituted moment by moment as players explain, construct, and orient to *who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing* through their talk and gameplay.

Schegloff (1972) uses the concept *who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing* to discuss the systematic formulation of terms for places in talk. He uses the term *common-sense geography* to refer to a shared sense of geography assumed by interactants in conversation (p. 85). This shared sense adds a “where-we-are” element to *who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing* that is particularly relevant to my research as I focus on the constitution of (im)material places that are not only the setting of the interactions of characters within the game but that are also being constructed by the players through the interactions of their gameplay (both as players in the real world and as

⁸ “Members” refers to the members of a group being studied (TRPG gameplayers in this case) and is used in membership categorization analysis to examine how people create and infer membership in particular categories in talk. Membership categorization analysis is discussed further in the “Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis” section of this chapter.

characters in the imagined world). Schegloff (1972) suggests that there are three aspects that go into formulating place in conversation:

- membership analysis (the location is formulated by taking into consideration the categories of membership relevant to the speaker and hearer in this context, i.e., the who-we-are of the interaction),
- location analysis (the speaker analyzes their location and the location of any object spoken about, i.e., the where of the interaction), and
- topic analysis (the speaker analyzes the subject of conversation, i.e., the what-we-are-doing of the interaction).

Each of these aspects is taken into consideration in interaction, so the speaker chooses words that they think their listener(s) will understand and that are situationally relevant.

As I locate this research within the realm of material culture studies, I add the phrases “where-we-are” and “with-what” to the aforementioned phrase, who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing, in order to emphasize the importance of the context, particularly the material (and immaterial) objects and environments involved in interaction. Schegloff’s (1972) notes on the formulation of place could be applied to any referent (i.e., not necessarily only place) as aspects of the identities and the environments invoked in the interaction are layered into and constitute the gestalt contexture of the moment — the who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing-where-and-with-what. For example, when formulating references to time, or to characters, or to people, the players orient to the current situation and relevant context as they do so. Through references in conversation, where they are is associated with who they are, what they are doing, and what objects they are using, so that each is contingent upon the other. For my purposes, I am bringing the terms together to frame culture-in-action as:

- *Who* the interactants are: the roles and membership categories invoked by participants may vary or be made relevant at different points in an interaction.
- *What* they are doing: the tasks tied to particular membership groups, locations, and objects.
- *Where* they are located: how fictional and actual spaces are negotiated and described as places as a part of the situated action of play and how these locations are invoked and tied to the who and the what in the moment-by-moment activities of play.
- *With-What* [Objects]: how real and/or imagined objects are used in the practices being studied; in this case, real gameplay through which fictional worlds are constructed and engaged with.

Examining how the real, material and imagined, immaterial aspects of the gameplay intersect is particularly important given that an imagined fictional world is engaged with in the actual, material spaces of TRPG play. The actions accomplished in interaction are situated in a particular place, as participants use objects, both material (e.g., dice, maps) and immaterial (e.g., “I use my glasses,” where the glasses are an object worn by a character and referenced in a verbal description of the character’s action of using the glasses). Throughout gameplay, material and immaterial objects are described, invoked, and used in interaction, and these actions constitute the fictional world as play progresses. Even if an object is imagined, the person holding the floor of interaction (i.e., the attention of others), speaking and describing that object, brings joint focus to the imagined item, thereby building and perpetuating “common ground” (Enfield, 2006) through shared attention to the objects and environments involved in play. Enfield (2006) describes *common ground* as shared presumption that fuels inference in communication (p. 399), a definition that I adopt in my work. Common ground consists of an

informational imperative, to cooperate in maintaining common understanding, and an affiliational imperative, to maintain a common degree of affiliation appropriate to the status of the relationship(s) of interactants (Enfield, 2006, p. 399-400). As individuals interact, they draw upon presumed common ground to be understood. Put another way, they intersubjectively orient to who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing, where-they-are, and with-what-objects in ways that are relevant and observable to other interactants, and to myself as a researcher.

While as an analyst I do not have access to the thoughts that underly the selection of terms used by the players as they formulate their utterances during their interactions, through recordings and transcriptions I do have access to the terms they select and how those are taken up sequentially in conversation (e.g., if further explanation or repair of a misunderstanding is required, a player may request clarification from the game master; explanations may also be longer accounts or may involve more back-and-forth amongst the players). Players may make explicit statements of purpose, and accounts may be used to create order and shared understanding in conversation. To examine how action is ordered and fictional worlds are constructed through TRPG play, as noted earlier, I primarily employ a small story approach (Bamberg, 2006b; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Freeman, 2011; Oak, 2013; Sools, 2013), wherein I am sensitized to the significance of narrative, especially in the brief narratives within interacting participants' conversational accounts, descriptions, etc. Additionally, since I interviewed some participants, I am also aware of the insights shared in the big stories of post hoc reflections on the experiences of gameplay. While this dual approach is useful for understanding the broader context of each group and game world, my focus on participants' own actions in their live game talk enables my analyses to be grounded in the ethnomethodological concepts discussed earlier. Further, since ethnomethodology can be understood as underpinning aspects of conversation

analysis (and the associated method membership categorization analysis) my analyses can consistently consider how participants themselves construct the (im)material worlds of gameplay through their talk-based micro-information behaviours.

3.2.2 Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) is an approach suited to understanding the structural underpinnings of conversation; it assumes that conversation is ordered action, and that the orderliness of conversation is the result of the shared methods, practices, and reasoning that people use in conversation (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013, p. 2). As a method of analyzing talk in everyday settings, CA can be understood as being connected to ethnomethodology's interest in how participants in everyday action (including interaction) shape the intersubjective meanings through which their mundane worlds proceed (Clayman et al., 2022). The beginnings of CA as an approach are typically traced to the work of sociologists Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013; Sacks et al., 1974). The analytic approach of CA considers how the structured, sequential organization of talk allows social action and understanding to happen in an orderly manner. Turn-taking, the sequential nature of talk, and entering and exiting of sequences of talk (see Schegloff, 2007a; Robinson, 2013) as well as term selection (the way referents or words are chosen) (Enfield, 2013a) are all practices managed within conversation that can be analyzed through CA, and that are relevant to the analyses I undertake here.

As it underlies my research methodology, CA is useful for examining how meaning is collaboratively constructed turn-by-turn within talk. An important aspect of a CA approach is that, rather than a focus on the researcher's interpretation of what they think is happening in the talk, attention is directed to how participants themselves interpret each other's utterances. This

enables the researcher to consider how participants understand each other, turn by turn (i.e., rather than perhaps importing their own ideas of what is going on). This next turn “proof procedure” (Sacks et al., 1974) occurs through turn-taking, so sequential turns at talk can be examined for evidence of how each prior turn has been interpreted. By analyzing transcribed data of naturally occurring language (e.g., interaction that would have happened whether or not I was present to record) of the TRPGs through a CA-based approach, I am able to examine how the utterances of participants themselves constitute and engage with the (im)material worlds of TRPGs through their moment-by-moment play.

3.2.2.1 Institutional Talk

In conversation analytic studies, a distinction is sometimes drawn between ordinary talk and those more explicitly goal-oriented interactions that occur within particular institutional settings (e.g., classrooms, courtrooms). Such forms of *institutional talk* have been studied in contrast with, or in addition to, ordinary conversation where *ordinary conversation* is “a term that has come to denote forms of interaction that are not confined to specialized settings or to the execution of particular tasks” (Heritage, 2005, p. 104). In the analysis of institutional conversation, interactions are examined “for how specific practices of talk embody or connect with specific identities and institutional tasks” (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, Chapter 2 Institutional CA section, para. 2). Drew and Heritage (1992) describe three aspects of institutional talk:

- 1) It involves orientation to “some core goal, task or identity...associated with the institution” (p. 22),
- 2) It may involve constraints on what is “treated as allowable contributions to the business at hand” (p. 22), and

- 3) It may involve inferential frameworks that are specific to the institutional context.

Although TRPGs may not take place in a formal, spatio-material institutional context associated with employment or specific organizational locations (e.g., meeting contexts as in Pomerantz & Denvir, 2007; medical contexts as in Lindström & Weatherall, 2015), some of the interactions in TRPGs demonstrate the characteristics of institutional talk, as it takes place in a leisure setting.

For example:

- 1) The players come together with a core goal of collaborative storytelling (with many smaller goals throughout their interactions, such as winning a battle or finding an object),
- 2) The players are constrained by what is appropriate for their particular roles as players and game master and as the fictional characters they roleplay as well as by allowable actions based on the rules of the game, and
- 3) Understandings of the fictional world where the game is set and the game rules as well as broader understandings of how games and genres work serve as inferential frameworks and contribute to how participants understand the on-going interaction.

These aspects of TRPGs make the constraints and identities of gameplay analyzable through a CA-based understanding of the nature of institutional talk, particularly as the roles of player and game master are oriented to and order the action at hand. The way that these identities are tied to roles and rights to know, in ways that affect the moment-by-moment construction of the fictional world of play, will be explored in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, and Chapters 5 and 6 both discuss ways that players accomplish shifts between ordinary talk and more goal-oriented institutional talk. Membership categorization analysis is also an approach that I use to analyze the use, and construction, of categories and descriptions of fictional places in on-going talk.

3.2.3 *Membership Categorization Analysis*

Membership categorization analysis (MCA) is an ethnomethodological approach that, like CA, arises from the work of Harvey Sacks (e.g., as edited by Jefferson, 1995) and is a way to analyze both talk and written texts. MCA is focused on the ways that people (“members”⁹) describe their worlds, which demonstrates their mutual understandings of those worlds and their common-sense perceptions of the workings of society (Stokoe, 2012). *Membership categories* are “classifications or social types that may be used to describe persons” (Hester & Eglin, 1997a, p. 3), e.g., man, woman, student, teacher. Through MCA, talk is treated as culture-in-action, and identities are discursively negotiated and attributed through participants’ usage of categories (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 38–39). Jayyusi (1984) provides an in-depth and nuanced discussion of some ways that membership categories (as applied to people) are constituted and oriented to in talk, with attention to how they establish moral order, and MCA continues to be applied and adapted as an approach (Stokoe, 2012; Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015; Smith et al., 2021). In the context of MCA, the terms *category work* or *categorization work* are terms for the methods that members use in conversation to create, formulate, refer to, and imply categories as a part of ordering their interactions (as demonstrated by Jayyusi, 1984; Stokoe, 2010, 2012; Butler & Fitzgerald, 2010; Evans & Fitzgerald, 2016; Fitzgerald & Rintel, 2013; Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015; Smith et al., 2021). In talk, participants use category work to reference social categories to describe people; these categories may be built collaboratively as interaction proceeds, and they can be made relevant through the use of inference-rich terms that are used to imply a category rather than explicitly stating it (discussed further in my analysis in “Collaborative Category Work” in Chapter 7).

⁹ “Members” refers to members of the group being studied or the members of a membership category.

Although membership categorization analysis is an approach that is usually applied to categorizations of people, I also examine category work as it relates to places and objects as they are categorized and instantiated in the TRPG talk. Schegloff (1972) demonstrates this approach in CA, regarding formulations of place in talk where a term or phrase used to describe a location is chosen by a speaker based on their analysis of who they are talking to and what knowledge of the place they can assume their listeners have (membership analysis). Also influencing the speaker's choice of words is what they are talking about (topic analysis), and where they are (location analysis). McHoul and Watson (1984) have furthered applications of MCA to material environments by examining how space and place is formulated by students and an instructor in a geography lesson wherein they refer to types of city structure, and Housley and Smith (2011) have applied it to examine ways that spaces and places are categorized as participants in interviews describe locations and account for everyday actions. As an analytic approach, MCA sensitizes me to the ways that places and environments are categorized by participants themselves, and how those categories are created and taken up in the on-going talk of play as the participants orient to who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing, where-they-are, and what-objects-they-are-using.

I use analytic concerns from both CA and MCA to examine how the (im)material worlds of TRPGs are constituted in talk through the joint creation and sequential exchange of information, information that intersubjectively constitutes the fictional setting of the game as it proceeds moment-by-moment. In this research design, I make a connection between the ethnomethods used by people (i.e., the methods participants themselves use that are being identified and studied in my CA / MCA-oriented analysis) and information behaviour research in LIS. Ethnomethods can be construed as *micro-information behaviours* or small ways that people

create, share, and orient to informative aspects of talk. I incorporate the CA / MCA oriented analysis into a big and small story approach, as outlined below.

3.2.4 Big and Small Stories

Big story (Freeman, 2006, 2011) and small story (Bamberg, 2004, 2006b) approaches to research are markedly different, with small stories developing as a critique of some big story approaches (Bamberg, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2011a; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007). *Big stories* are relatively large-scale narratives, such as life histories or reflections on identity that are elucidated in researcher-generated interviews (Bamberg, 2011a; Freeman, 2011; Georgakopoulou, 2015). As such they do not have the same kind of ethnomethodological stance as that found in the small story approach. Georgakopoulou (2006) describes *small stories* as

an umbrella-term that covers a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. These tellings are typically small when compared to the pages and pages of transcript of interview narratives. (p. 123)

A small stories approach focuses on interactional context, and this type of approach has developed with influence from CA to address the ways smaller narratives are used and negotiated during in-the-moment social action (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Georgakopoulou (2007) argues for taking a practice-based view of narrative to consider how people orient to talk as stories during conversation and what social consequentiality a sequence of talk has if it is treated as narrative. She highlights four types of small stories evident in two bodies of data (recordings of conversation amongst adolescent friends and a corpus of emails):

- “Stories to be told” (p. 41) where speakers defer telling a story or note they have one to tell,
- “Breaking news” (p. 42) where events are told as they are unfolding,
- “Projections” (p. 47) where stories are of near future events, and
- “Shared stories” (p. 50), which are retellings or recontextualizations of known or familiar stories.

I argue that such small stories occur in the context of TRPGs as created through the “tellings of ongoing events” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 123) in the “breaking news” style of narratives discussed by Georgakopoulou (2007, p. 47). The games themselves involve not only the telling of events as they occur; they also include frequent projections of possible events as players decide what to do and where to go (which I discuss in Chapter 5), and use of intertextual references and shared stories (which I discuss in Chapter 7). Georgakopoulou (2007) explains the impetus behind the approach concisely in stating:

not seeing them [small stories] in the framework of narratives as temporalized and recontextualizable activities with a life-cycle would deprive the analysis of valuable insights into processes of retellings of stories but also of the participants’ joint construction of a collective memory. (p. 39-40)

This construction of collective memory is evident in the TRPG play I studied as players use small stories to create shared understandings and contribute to the on-going activities of play. Although much small stories scholarship has focused on identities in interaction (e.g., Bamberg, 2004, 2011b; Georgakopoulou, 2007), my focus is on the settings created in interaction, particularly the imagined settings where TRPG play occurs. De Medeiros and Etter-Lewis (2020)

have demonstrated such an application with a focus on place in their small story analysis of places referenced in interviews.

The debate over when or whether to use either a big or small stories approach arises out of life history and identity research in psychology (e.g., Bamberg, 2004, 2011b; Freeman, 2006, 2011) and sociolinguistics (Georgakopoulou, 2007), and since the initial debate, arguments have been made for using both approaches to provide complementary insights into a phenomenon (Freeman, 2011; Oak, 2013; Sools, 2013). Sools (2013) further notes that the distinction between small stories and big stories is not always so clear; a small stories approach can be taken to analyze interviews where there is a more conversational style since small stories may occur within the big story narratives. However, drawing the distinction is useful in defining and explaining the methodological underpinnings of analysis in this dissertation and the focus of my interests as a researcher.

I initially took both a big and small story approach in my early research design to examine how fictional worlds are constituted in the small stories of practice-based talk (e.g., accounts and explanations that occur during gameplay) as well as how experiences of gameplay are reflected upon in the big stories of researcher-generated interviews with game masters. However, after familiarizing myself with the rich interactions of the live game play, I decided to focus my analysis on small stories, since it is in the moment-by-moment play that the intersections between real and imagined materialities are especially observable as such intersections are talked into being. Also, a small stories orientation to my work enabled the analytic stance of ethnomethodology and the methods of CA / MCA to be most consistently engaged with. In the case of my research, the small stories approach is particularly well suited to examining the intersubjective construction of fictional worlds; while the big story reflections

provided through the interviews that I undertook offer additional insights into the worlds and styles of play. The analysis I undertake in subsequent chapters focuses on how material and imagined environments and objects impact and are constituted within talk-in-interaction; such interaction includes instances of small stories that are entwined with and implicated in contexts of real and imagined materiality.

3.3 Summary

As noted above, my analytic approaches entail some attention to big stories (post-hoc reflections), but my primary focus is on small stories. The small stories perspective considers brief, in-the-moment accounts and other forms of narrative, as these are understood by participants themselves, and as such can be analyzed through ethnomethodologically influenced methods. My pilot study sensitized me to some such ways that participants undertake and constitute the games (e.g., by giving accounts and descriptions of objects and places, which employed categorical and inference-rich language) and highlighted how an ethnomethodologically grounded approach could provide a foundation for in-depth examination of the situated practices of gameplay in this larger dissertation research project. Accordingly, the kind of data I wanted to collect (from live instances of TRPGs) and the kinds of analysis I wanted to undertake (attentive to participants' meanings) influenced the methods I used to collect my data and subsequently interrogate it through analysis of detailed transcripts.

The sites of TRPG play I observed and recorded for this research are perspicuous settings in which to examine situated practices that intersubjectively constitute fictional worlds as (im)material settings of gameplay. Play takes place in an imagined space that the players have to find ways to represent verbally and / or materially so that they have enough of a consensus on what the world looks like and how things work there in order to act within it together. Through

collaborative play, TRPG participants collectively orient to different identities as they establish and draw on common ground to construct the world of play and their actions within it. The identities that players orient to (both in-character roles played in the game and out-of-character identities) are situationally relevant as they are part of the gestalt contextures of play—the who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing and the where-they-are-doing-it are formulated through their talk as they create shared meaning. The analytic stances of CA and MCA, and the use of a small stories approach, enables me to examine how these imagined worlds are built intersubjectively, turn-by-turn, during live gameplay. The following chapter provides detail of how the sites of study were selected and how participants were recruited.

Chapter 4: Methods and Site Profiles

This chapter presents the methods used for this research and site profiles of the participant groups. The “Recruitment and Sites of the Research” section presents how I gained access to appropriate sites of gameplay with three game groups and the challenges of recruiting participants. The “Data Collection and Data Types” section details the types of data that were collected, including video recorded live gameplay, video recorded interviews, objects and documents, and transcription of the recorded data. The “Approach to the Analysis” section describes the analysis, including transcription and early stages of working with the data. Lastly, the “Site Profiles” section describes each of the participant groups and the game they played.

4.1 Recruitment and Sites of the Research

For this study, I recruited three groups of gamers. I selected this research design in order to conduct an in-depth examination of the complex ways in which fictional worlds are built and interacted with in actual and imaginary spaces of tabletop gaming in everyday life. Because I wanted to build rapport with participants and interview them, I wanted to attend and record their games, rather than review games posted to YouTube. Case-based approaches are used in CA studies as researchers gain access to sites and do analyses of specific situations of interaction through studying extended sequences of transcribed talk (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). By recruiting three groups of gamers, I built a corpus of naturally occurring TRPG talk to review from three sites. The corpus of talk included approximately 35 hours of recorded TRPG play, from which I identified specific phenomena that I chose to focus on for in-depth analysis (these are presented in Part III, the data-analysis chapters, as excerpts of interaction). In CA, by considering single cases of interactional action (i.e., as analyzed excerpts) that demonstrate how participants orient to each other, the researcher is able to maintain the social context of what is going on (Schegloff, 1987; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). In this sense, in CA, a case of analyzed

action is excerpted from a larger corpus of data. In my research, each of the three groups of gamers that I studied can be considered to be a case of the interactional situation of gameplay, but further, the specific instances of talk that I study are themselves each a case of interactional phenomena that deserve attention. For purposes of clarity, I refer to each group as a site of research in this document.

Case-based studies of excerpts may use analytic generalizability, connecting to other CA studies in the same and different contexts (Peräkylä, 2021). This is because CA is a qualitative approach that focuses on maintaining interactional context rather than on coding phenomena into separate buckets or categories in a way that loses the turn-by-turn structure of the interactional context (Stivers, 2015). Quantitative approaches and statistics have been argued for as ways to demonstrate generalizability in CA research, but not until after a phenomenon has been thoroughly documented through CA approaches of single case analysis from corpuses of hundreds of cases of a phenomenon (Robinson, 2007; Stivers, 2015). In this study, I document phenomena of interest related to the ways that immaterialities are substantiated and oriented to through talk, and in doing so I am able to demonstrate ways discursive actions, that have previously been identified as analytically relevant in CA and MCA research (e.g., use of markers like “ok,” or the use of categories and inference in the players’ talk), are used in the games. My approach is a way of presenting possibilities of “social practices that are possible” (Peräkylä, 2021, Generalizability of Research Findings section, para. 8). These possibilities can extend scholarly debates about micro-information behaviours and imagined materialities in talk and may provide grounds for analytic generalizability for future studies.

Knowing that TRPGs occur over multiple sessions, I collected data repeatedly from three sites, observing two to four games from each site. I also restricted the number of sites to three in

order to keep the data set manageable. There is some tension in CA and MCA scholarship between whether analysts should engage in the in-depth examination of talk through excerpts or through presenting larger-scale, corpus-based analyses. Watson (2015) addresses this tension in discussing the importance of the perspicuous case and of not decoupling category work from its context while also being critical of formalist and structuralist influences on MCA. In contrast, Stokoe (2012) advocates for a corpus-based approach that builds large, multimodal, and multi-setting databases for examining category work across contexts, which differs from my approach that focuses on three sites of a single context (TRPG play). Both approaches have value. However, for this study, I wanted to examine the situated practices of gameplay in-depth and across more than one game with each group, and so I considered each group as a specific site of play, within which I would further consider specific cases of interaction to be presented as excerpts in my analysis chapters. This nested approach enabled me to collect a relatively large corpus of the situated talk of gameplay that was grounded in each group's context, from which I noted particular, materially engaged sequences of interaction. By studying three groups, I could both gather a range of talk while also remaining close to the individual contexts of each group. By attending games over time, I was able to gain knowledge of the players and gain an understanding of their style of gameplay and relationships that helped me to orient to their intersubjective knowledge exchanges when undertaking analysis. Also, by being present at games and working with three sites, rather than building a corpus from existing online video, I became familiar to my participants, which enabled me to acquire helpful big story reflections through carrying out interviews. Although these interviews do not form a substantial element of my analysis here, they did enable me to gain more insights into world-building as a phenomenon.

4.1.1 Rationale for Accessing Sites and Importance of Natural Language

My approach to data collection required a way to access both big story and small story types of data by collecting both natural language recordings of games during live gameplay (for small stories) and post-hoc interview reflections on play (for big stories), though as noted above, my analysis in this dissertation is primarily based on a discussion of small stories, and so it is the natural language of game play that is central to the analyses I undertake in this research. A key contribution of Sacks to ethnomethodology is the use of naturally occurring conversation, which is recorded and transcribed to enable the fine-grained analysis of the orderly turn-taking by which intersubjective meaning is produced (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). It is through considering the natural language (i.e., what participants say to each other in everyday interactional situations that are not generated by a researcher) that I was better able to understand and analyze the moment-by-moment actions through which participants create shared meanings.

To collect this type of natural language data, I required access to the sites of gameplay during live games to video record gameplay. In order to avoid putting undue pressure on friends with whom I play TRPGs, and in order to not influence gameplay myself, I elected to recruit groups of players of games in which I was not a participant. This choice of method affected my role in the site and selection of cases. The site of my research is gaming groups who often meet in private homes, which I needed to gain access to. Cover (2010) has argued that research on TRPGs is often done by gamers examining their own practice, in part because of the requirement to understand the complex nature of gaming and in part to be able to gain access to games, which are typically by invitation only and run for long periods of time. I do play TRPGs, but for this research I wanted to gain access to practices that are not my own in order to have more of an observational role when games are played, with minimal influence on what was said by

participants, and also to enable observing material aspects of the contexts. As such, I required more formal access procedures in the sense of permissions to enter private spaces and make video recordings. This approach allowed me to maintain an ethnomethodological distance to focus on my participants' ways of doing being TRPG players (rather than importing my own ways of playing) as in ethnomethodological CA, while also having enough understanding of the gaming context to understand their in-situ interactions.

4.1.2 Recruitment Method

For my pilot study (see Appendix A for an overview), I was able to recruit participants through snowball sampling. I had existing connections to a small subset of the TRPG community in Edmonton through my participation in one *Dungeons & Dragons* game and through being the dungeon master for another. The players in both of the games I was participating in circulated my research materials to people they knew, and I was able to gain access to potential participants through them. For this research study, I used a similar method, primarily contacting people through emailing the waitlist of participants from the pilot study who also passed the recruitment materials along to other gamers (see Appendix C.1 and C.2 for the materials). I also sent emails out on a library listserv at the University of Alberta, and another researcher, who studies fans and their connections, shared my recruitment materials along to gamers they knew. Further, I provided the recruitment materials to anyone who approached me based on word of mouth (e.g., to potential participants who heard about my research through presentations I gave or from others who had heard about it).

4.1.2.1 Recruitment Challenges

Recruitment was difficult and took over a year; I began on January 28, 2019, and the last data was collected March 6, 2020. This difficulty was in large part due to the nature of TRPGs,

which are group activities that required consent from all group members for participation. Once someone expressed interest, I would give them time to share the materials with the other players in their group and to discuss participation before I would move on to the next possible group. If everyone in a group was interested in participating in my research, they would invite me to their next game. However, while many individuals expressed interest, getting full group consent was not easy, particularly since I wanted to video record the games. In addition to the three groups that participated, 12 other groups expressed interest and discussed the study amongst themselves before deciding against participation. One additional group that expressed interest was excluded because it contained a researcher who uses conversation analytic methods.

There have been portrayals of TRPG gaming and fandom as deviant in the past (Forcier, 2017; Jenson, 1992), and as such, I anticipated a need to build rapport with potential participants. Most of the potential participants who contacted me were eager to talk about their games, but not everyone in their group was willing to be recorded. Most were made more comfortable by the fact that I am a TRPG player myself, but it still took a significant amount of time and back-and-forth communication with potential participants to confirm participation, especially since the groups themselves had to schedule games around all their players' availability. A typical game group may involve four to eight players, which can make coordinating times to play difficult. For example, Group 2 first expressed interest in March of 2019, but they were not able to schedule a game and arrange for me to observe until January of 2020. Over time, I was able to connect with three groups and collect data as I intended. In order to begin that process and recruit human participants for this research, I had to first pursue ethics approval, and after receiving approval, I was able to recruit the three groups detailed in the "Site Profiles" section of this chapter.

4.1.3 Ethics Approval for Human Participant Research

This study received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (see Appendix B). Approval was sought by following the application process using two stages: once for the pilot study, and once for the larger study. The application for the pilot study was approved January 23, 2018, and the larger study was approved January 22, 2019, with an amendment approved June 1, 2019. Participants chose the names they are referred to in this write-up and had the option to remain anonymous or use their own names.

4.2 Data Collection and Data Types

Although recruitment began in January of 2019, it took until May to have a group confirm participation and schedule a game that I could be invited to. Data was collected in the Edmonton area in the homes of participants between May 29, 2019 and March 6, 2020. For each case, I collected data of spoken discourse from live gaming contexts and interview reflections, and also visual / material data (e.g., photographs, examples of objects used). I used two primary modes of data collection: video-recorded games (for the natural language of situated gameplay), and audio recorded interviews (for the post-hoc reflections of practice in researcher-driven context). These two modes were supplemented by my own notes (mostly on camera orientation), photographs, and observations of the material spaces of the recorded games and of any objects brought to the interviews. This last type of collected data (visual / material data and notes) served to record the material spaces to provide more detail of the objects and places of play than may be evident in a single-direction shot of a video recording. Each of these types of data collection is detailed further below with a brief rationale for why they were chosen.

4.2.1 Video Recorded Games-in-play

I video recorded and transcribed games in-play to capture natural language discourse and interactions in the material settings of gameplay. Video recording was used to capture discourse situated in material environments. A total of approximately 35 hours of video of games-in-play was collected (see Table 4.1 below for a summary of what was collected from each group).

Conversation analytic research uses audio-recorded language in order to be able to analyze talk turn-by-turn (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013; Mondada, 2013), and multimodal approaches also require visual data to capture objects interacted with (Mondada, 2016; Jewitt et al., 2016).

Group	Date of Collection	Duration
Group 1	August 22, 2019	3 hours
	September 5, 2019	3 hours
Group 1 total		6 hours
Group 2	January 17, 2020	3 hours, 10 minutes
	January 31, 2020	4 hours, 30 minutes
	February 15, 2020	5 hours, 40 minutes
Group 2 total		13 hours, 20 minutes
Group 3	May 29, 2019	4 hours, 45 minutes
	June 29, 2019	3 hours, 20 minutes
	July 6, 2019	3 hours, 20 minutes
	July 27, 2019	4 hours, 20 minutes
Group 3 total		15 hours, 45 minutes
Total		35 hours, 5 minutes

Table 4.1: Summary of Video Recorded Games in Play

Recordings were collected as the games occurred in the setting typically used by participants. I used two cameras (one from a height angled down to the table and one from the side to catch as many participants as possible); additionally, I used two audio recorders as a backup and to ensure audio quality. I recorded two to four game occurrences for each case. Collecting two to four different instances provided an opportunity for me to gain familiarity with the individual group's practices and to see how the fictional worlds progressed in practice across time. This type of approach is used in longitudinal CA as understandings are built across time (Deppermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2021; Deppermann & Schmidt, 2021). Recordings of natural language (and setting) capture the way the fictional world is engaged with and constituted by participants through discursive and material practices. This data includes the small stories in the accounts and explanations that occur in-the-moment to contribute to understanding the specific world as built and used in context.

4.2.2 Video Recorded Interviews

While the data analysis portions of this dissertation are focused on the live play of TRPGs, it is important to note that I also undertook interviews with specific participants. These interviews (that allow a big story analytic stance) inform aspects of my understanding of gameplay. In particular, I interviewed the game master for each group about their world-building processes and experiences (note that one group did not have a game master, so I interviewed them as a group, see "Group 3: Gloomhaven" in this chapter). See Table 4.2 below for a summary of data collection dates and durations for each site.

Group	Date	Duration
Group 1	September 24, 2019	2 hours
Group 2	March 6, 2020	1 hour, 10 minutes
Group 3	July 27, 2019	1 hour, 10 minutes
Total		4 hours, 20 minutes

Table 4.2: Summary of Video Recorded Interviews

Like the games-in-play, these interviews were video recorded with audio backups. I began with open-ended invitations to reflect on gameplay and the world. I then asked questions to gain clarity based on my observations of the recorded sessions of play. This was a semi-structured approach in order to allow flexibility to focus in on occurrences from each group's play and the stories told by the individual rather than asking all the interviewees all the same questions (Kvale, 2007). The interviews were scheduled after the gameplay recordings in order to collect game masters' reflections on their world as experienced in those recorded situations and to give them the opportunity to elaborate on the places and objects they used.

Participants were invited to bring pertinent objects to the interview or to be interviewed in the gameplay space if possible. The use of photo and object-based interviews has been described as a way to access visual and material aspects of a phenomena in a way that is different than in an interview alone (Harper, 2002; Woodward, 2016).¹⁰ This interview format allowed me to explore the material aspects of TRPGs because objects are physical anchors for experience (e.g., maps of the fictional world), and they provided opportunities for game masters to elaborate on the materials they used as a part of their practices.

¹⁰ This approach facilitated the collection of rich data in the pilot study as participants shared their stories of each item they brought to the interview.

As noted earlier, although I collected interviews as data, as I became thoroughly engaged with the analysis of the live gameplay data, I decided to focus closely on those interactions, because of the ways in which it was evident that participants were collaboratively creating stories and building the imagined world of play moment-by-moment. The practice of creating a collection of data and then identifying phenomena of interest within it is a cornerstone of CA (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Consequently, while I note the issue of interviews here, they were not substantially engaged with throughout my analysis; rather, I used sections of them that provided additional insight into phenomena I first identified within the live gameplay data. As indicated in my conclusion, one area of further research would be to do further analysis of the big stories in the interview data.

4.2.3 Objects, Documents, and Other Data Sources

Like the interviews, objects and documents that I collected served as supplementary information that informed the data of face-to-face interactions that are the main focus of this research, rather than being a primary focus of my analysis. As the games were played, I made note of particular objects and settings that emerged as important in the recorded games (and indicate, in the analysis chapters, some moments when these items are relevant to the interaction). By noting objects and documents that informed gameplay as the games were happening, I was then able to ask about those objects in the interviews with game masters and invite further explication of the objects and their meaningfulness. Game masters were also invited to bring any notes or materials they wanted to speak about to the interviews. Preparation notes and maps were common items used throughout gameplay and so these are items occasionally referenced in my analyses. I also sought out any published game materials used by the players to give me a more in-depth understanding of the games. For example, TRPGs use

rulebooks, and each game used a form of character sheet where characteristics and statistics of each player / character are recorded. I took photographs of all these sheets (which served a secondary purpose of confirming the spelling of character names). This study is a discourse analysis of gameplay, not game materials, but it was useful to be able to refer to the same materials being indexed by the participants in conversation. The types of game pieces used and ways they are talked about (or not talked about) in reference to the fictional world were recorded in the video of games in-play. However, their detail cannot be made out from the video, so examples were also collected.

4.3 Approach to the Analysis

Data collection and analysis overlapped because initial analysis began through transcription and repeated listening through the data as soon as I collected the first recordings. Transcription is given particular attention in CA research, and I discuss my approach to transcription in the next subsection. I follow that discussion with a subsection that describes the analysis that followed transcription and a subsection that describes details of each site (game group). The description of each site is intended to provide context for the analysis chapters that follow in Part III.

4.3.1 Transcription

Transcription is a pivotal aspect of CA studies, and is at the core of analysis, so much so, that it has been described as a “distinctive stage in the process of data analysis itself” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 69). Transcription is not only verbatim; it also includes careful recording of other aspects of talk (e.g., pauses, discourse markers such as “um,” overlapping speech, laughter, etc.). Such details are included in transcription because they are a part of how participants make themselves understood and respond to the actions of others (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Gail

Jefferson's (2004) transcription symbols are commonly used for CA work. The transcription notation I used is indicated in Appendix D. Note that I did a simplified notation rather than full Jefferson transcription. While my research is influenced by CA approaches, my objective was to explore the ways materialities are informed in social action, so I focused the transcription on pauses and overlaps and where pauses occurred, but I did not time pauses or record changes in pitch. I also noted when significant interaction with objects occurred (e.g., referring to computers, or maps), but I did not do a full multimodal transcription of gesture and object use (nor did I record every time dice were rolled).

Some transcription processes in multimodal CA will use gesture or visual representation (e.g., video stills, or sketches) to accompany the portions of transcript that are excerpted for analysis or use a timeline approach (Heath et al., 2010). Such forms of transcription allow for analysis of gaze, gesture, and other silent actions that are part of embodied interaction (Mondada, 2019a). It is important to note that any transcription, whether it focuses on talk alone or on multimodal aspects of interaction, is not an unproblematic representation of that interaction—a transcript is inevitably selective (Lester & O'Reilly, 2019). Psathas and Anderson (1990) highlight that the type of notation used enables certain types of analysis by making particular details systematically visible. However, they also note that the original audio or video should be retained and can always be returned to for retranscription. I returned to the recordings frequently in my analysis to listen through the data as it occurred rather than relying on my transcriptions alone. The phenomena I identified for analysis, through multiple reviewings of the data, were largely related to the sequencing of talk and selection and the uptake of terms (e.g., references to objects, people, and other works), which made transcription with a focus on talk most relevant for the analysis presented in this dissertation. Further, because I focused on the imagined

material objects and places being constructed through talk, I focused on the conversation, rather than also transcribing to include all gestures, gaze direction, etc. Some gestures were included, when they related to items being used in the talk (e.g., a game master turning a laptop for everyone to see the screen). In the analysis chapters, I include some images to show how the players were seated in relation to each other, and I also include some images of objects used in game play (particularly those objects used to build understandings of the imagined world), but because my focus is on how imagined materialities are constructed through the interactions, I do not also provide in-depth information of how, for example, such objects are handled during game play. While I made this choice for the purposes of analysis in this dissertation because it provided the best match for pursuing my research questions, an avenue of further research would be to analyze the gestures used by players to demonstrate the embodied actions of imagined characters (this was an area of player activity that I noted in my corpus of data but that I chose not to focus on because my research questions are about the world-building and the construction of the fictional world, rather than actions of players within that world).

To transcribe the data, I used software that allowed me to slow down the playback speed and start and stop the recording using keyboard shortcuts. For the pilot study, I experimented with using ExpressScribe and ELAN software. ExpressScribe allowed me to start and stop audio while transcribing in Microsoft Word. ELAN is designed to allow for much more fine-grained transcription, including layers in the transcription (e.g., for gesture, to demonstrate overlaps) and putting markers in the audio (or video) to indicate where things occur. This level of granularity would be useful for future work, if I was to focus on gesture, gaze, changes in pitch, or overlaps in talk. However, those aspects of talk were not analyzed here, and as such I moved away from using ELAN. For my larger study, Group 3's data was collected first, and for it I used

ExpressScribe to play the audio while typing in Word. When I began analysis using MAXQDA (see the “Marking up Data and Selecting Excerpts for Further Analysis” in this chapter), that software allowed for transcription and video playback within the same interface as well as adding memos to particular points in the playback, so I imported my earlier transcriptions into the software and used it for Group 1 and Group 2. MAXQDA uses turn numbers rather than line numbers and line lengths change depending on level of magnification being viewed at, so excerpts that were selected for additional analysis and inclusion in this document were reformatted in Word.

4.3.2 Early Analysis and Selection of Excerpts

I approached the analysis by listening to and reading through the transcribed data multiple times, marking up references to objects in and through the actions of talk, the use of in-character and out-of-character knowledge, and portions of interaction where participants’ descriptions of the imagined and / or real characteristics of the worlds were particularly rich. I reviewed data as it was collected, and the earlier groups affected my understandings and sharpened my focus as I analyzed subsequently collected data. I began my data collection with Group 3; however, as I explained in Chapter 1, I do not present examples of interaction from Group 3 in this dissertation, because Group 3 was playing a legacy game (which are different than the TRPGs I wanted to discuss). After completing data collection with the two TRPG groups who later volunteered to be in my study, I decided not to focus on the legacy game group (Group 3) in the data analysis chapters, but instead I chose to centre my attention on my TRPG-focused research questions and the data that would enable me to answer them. However, since I did do some analysis with the data from all three groups, I have detailed aspects of all the groups in the following subsections.

4.3.2.1 Marking up Data and Selecting Excerpts for Further Analysis

The process of listening through the data and reviewing the transcripts required a way for me to mark up areas of interest. I used MAXQDA for initial transcription and to mark areas of interest in transcripts (e.g., “WorldDescription,” “PreviousGameKnowledge,” “OutsideReference,” and “Materials” were labelled buckets into which I sorted excerpts, what MAXQDA would call a “code”¹¹). These buckets function like folders where I organized excerpts of data based on criteria I defined. I grouped excerpts where the world was described, where previous knowledge of games was shared, where references to other media or sources were made, etc. The buckets were not mutually exclusive, meaning the same excerpt could be assigned to more than one bucket. When I decided what segments to excerpt, I included turns before and after the segments where descriptions and knowledge use for world-building occurred because I did not want to lose the on-going, turn-by-turn context of interaction. In MAXQDA I was also able to jump back to the original full transcript (and recorded video) from the window that summarized the contents of a bucket. I also added memos to the transcript and video based on my observations, which aided in sorting through the excerpts. Using Group 3’s data as my initial case of analysis, because their data was collected before the other groups confirmed participation in my study, I began to refine my focus and formulate more specific research questions. For instance, an interest in references to outside or real-world phenomena, and how such references were used to build the fictional world of play became a focus based on the frequency of such outside references (i.e., to material phenomena and media from outside the

¹¹ Coding is not a term typically used in CA because assigning codes is considered reductionistic (Stivers, 2015). I use the term bucket here because I did not code at levels of words, turns, or even sentences, but at a level to identify portions of game talk where world-building and material phenomena were being created or engaged with, and sorted those excerpts into buckets. Further analysis of turn-by-tun talk was carried out on the excerpts in each of these buckets.

imaginary world being created) and references to previous knowledge (e.g., other games participants had played) apparent in Group 3's transcripts. Once the transcripts had been marked up and excerpts had been grouped in MAXQDA, I pulled the initial excerpts identified in MAXQDA into Scapple (a mind-mapping software) to further note types of references and category work present in each excerpt. Figures 4.1 and 4.2, below, are screenshots of portions of this initial analysis in Scapple. Excerpts were then selected for in-depth analysis in the single-case approach of CA, which is presented in Part III.

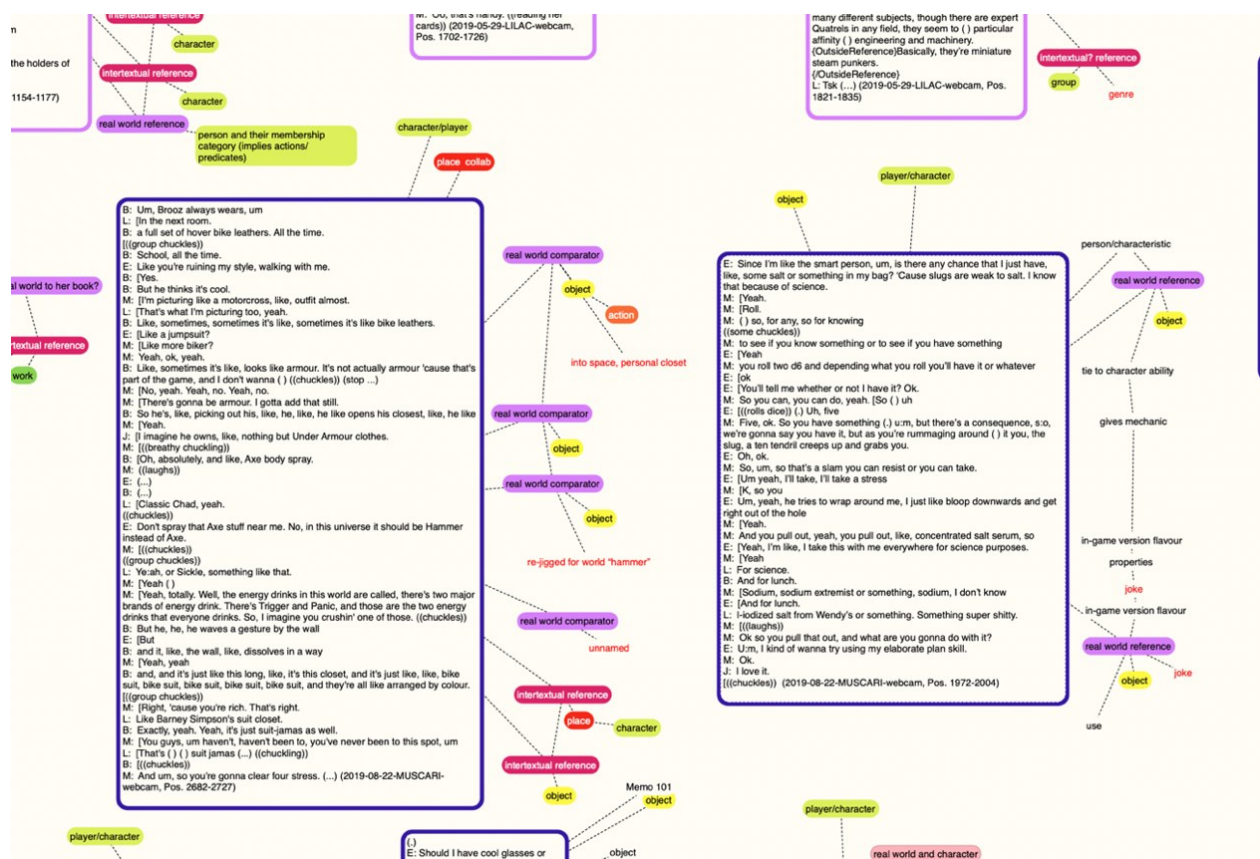


Figure 4.1 Close Up of Excerpts in Scapple

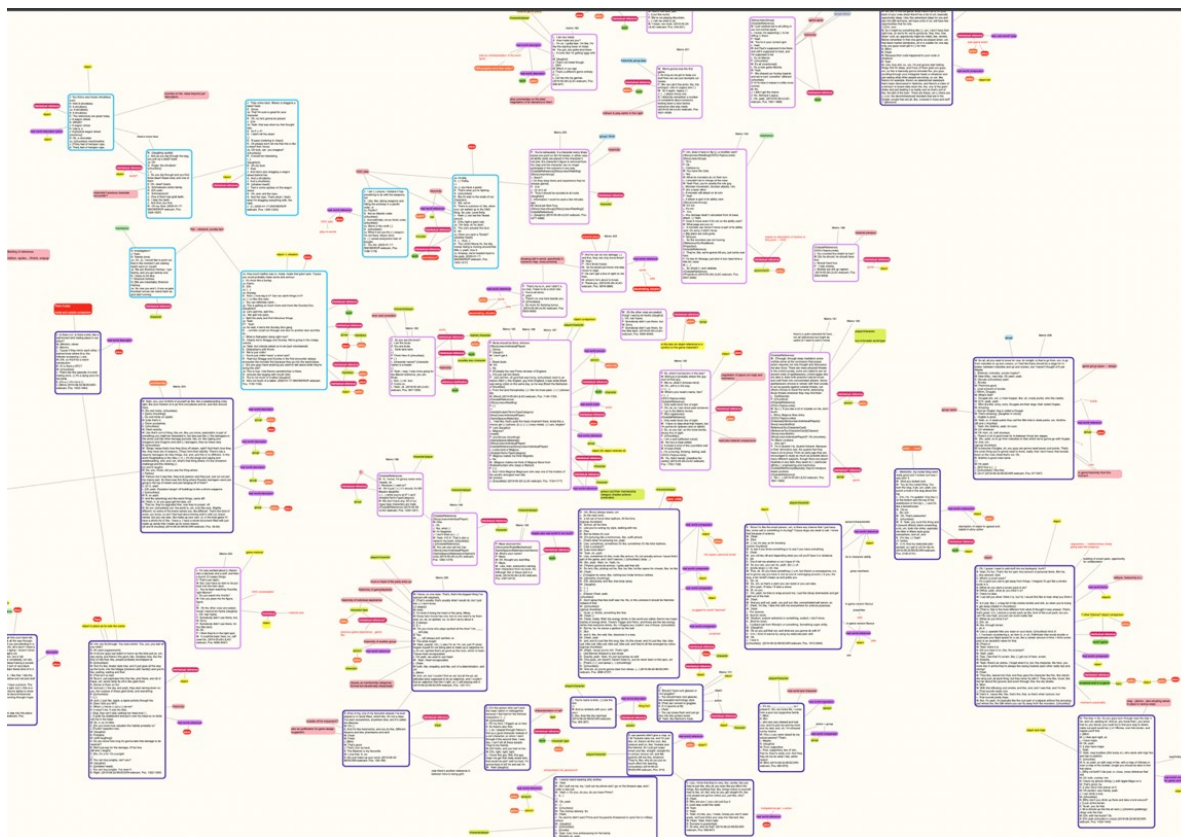


Figure 4.2 Excerpts in Scapple, Zoomed Out

4.3.2.2 Refining the Focus of the Research Based on Early Analysis

My overarching research question of how fictional worlds are discursively constructed and interacted with in tabletop roleplaying games guided my initial analysis. While that overarching question and experiences from the pilot study influenced my early exploration of appropriate methodological approaches and initial analysis, I reformulated more specific questions, based on phenomena of interest identified in that early analysis. Each of the three main subquestions is the focus of a specific analysis chapter in Part III.

The data could be analyzed for multiple conversation analytic concepts that organize interaction; however, I focused specifically on the following concerns as they closely tied into

my research questions on the construction of fictional worlds and information used in those processes:

- 1) ways that who-we-are-what-we-are-doing, and where-we-are-and-with-what are oriented to by the players, with particular attention directed to how these orientations are formulated and used to inform understandings of the fictional world in unfolding gameplay;
- 2) ways that roles and rights to know about the world and gameplay influence some of the ways that the fictional world is built and engaged with; and
- 3) ways that (im)materialities are created and informed by the players through their references to previous experiences and other works (also referred to as intertextuality).

The methods used by players that I identify in the three analysis chapters are micro-information behaviours being used turn-by-turn in the talk of gameplay. I do not present an exhaustive list of ways that information is created and exchanged across all three groups. Rather, I focus on ways the (im)material world is constructed and oriented to, how roles and authority can be implicated in those processes, and how materialities are informed by intertextual references that are made situationally relevant to the action at hand.

4.4 Site Profiles

The following subsections provide an overview of each participating TRPG game group, the game and world they were engaging with, and the data I collected from them. I provide this detail to give context for each of the three game groups and as background information to support my subsequent analysis chapters. Since my ethnomethodological approach is focused on analyzing talk-in-interaction alongside other actions in situated context—gestalt contextures—it

could help readers to have some background information about each group to better understand the specifics of the contexts and actions being analyzed. As detailed in the introduction and as indicated by my research questions, I have focused on TRPGs as perspicuous sites that offer rich opportunities to consider how the real materiality of physical and spatial environments intersects with the imagined materialities of the fictional worlds of the games, and how players constitute those worlds through micro-information behaviours that occur in situated context. Each of the participating TRPG game groups are detailed below: Group 1 played *Slugblaster*, Group 2 played *Storm King's Thunder* (a fifth Edition *Dungeons & Dragons* module), and Group 3 played *Gloomhaven* (a legacy game). I conclude this section with a brief comparison / continuum of the flexibility and room for creation / adaptation of the world in each of the games.

4.4.1 Group 1: *Slugblaster*

Group 1 played *Slugblaster*, a TRPG created by the game master, Mikey. Note that as Mikey is the creator, he is both the game designer and the game master in this context. These multiple roles create an additional layer of complexity to the world-building since Mikey has control over the to-be-published materials, (the materials were not published when I was collecting the data of this group, but Mikey was working towards making the game available to the public, and it can now be found at <https://wilkie.itch.io/slugblaster>). *Slugblaster* is an episodic game based on the *Blades in the Dark* system (see <https://bladesinthedark.com/greetings-scoundrel>). Mikey used this system and made significant modifications to it in creating his own game. He has created his own world that began as a setting for short stories that he wrote. The version of the game that I recorded the group playing is not the first version of the game. Mikey created a card version previously, but he has since changed it to its current format. During gameplay, Mikey made reference to previous playtests of

earlier versions of the game with other groups of players as a way of explaining evolution of the rules and world of the game. Mikey describes the game as falling into the “indie-storytelling school,” and in it, players roleplay the characters of teens who travel between dimensions in a multiverse (a fictional setting containing multiple dimensions). The game is influenced by skateboarding culture, and as such, players – as characters – may be searching for places to do “sick tricks” within the imagined world of the game.

For this group, I have two recordings from two playtests and an interview with Mikey, the game master. One player from Game 1 was unable to attend the second game, so a new player (and character) joined the group. Players included:

- Mikey: game master and game author – “M” in transcript excerpts
- Blaine: plays Brooz, the tough character – “B” in transcript excerpts
- Jordan: plays Kyp, the gutsy character – Game 1 only – “J” in transcript excerpts
- Sam: plays Taisha, the spirited character – Game 2 only – “S” in transcript excerpts
- Emily: plays Ariel, the keen character – “E” in transcript excerpts
- Marshall: plays Bongo, the chill character – “L” in transcript excerpts

The players spent a portion of the first game learning how to play and creating the characters they would use. Each character has a particular “attitude” that is their main character trait. These are listed by each player above (tough, gutsy, spirited, keen, and chill). This beginning is particularly important for my analysis and is the focus of large sections of Chapter 5. Data collection dates and approximate lengths of recordings were as follows:

- Game 1: August 22, 2019, 3 hours
- Game 2: September 5, 2019, 3 hours
- Interview with Game Master: September 24, 2019, 2 hours

Beyond the recordings, I took photographs of all of the character sheets (called “playbooks”) used by the players (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4 for an example). Mikey also provided me with a sample countdown clock on a sticky note used by him in the game to determine timing of consequences for player actions (see Figure 4.5), his prepared notes for a chase scene, and copies of different versions of the multiverse map (see Figure 4.6).

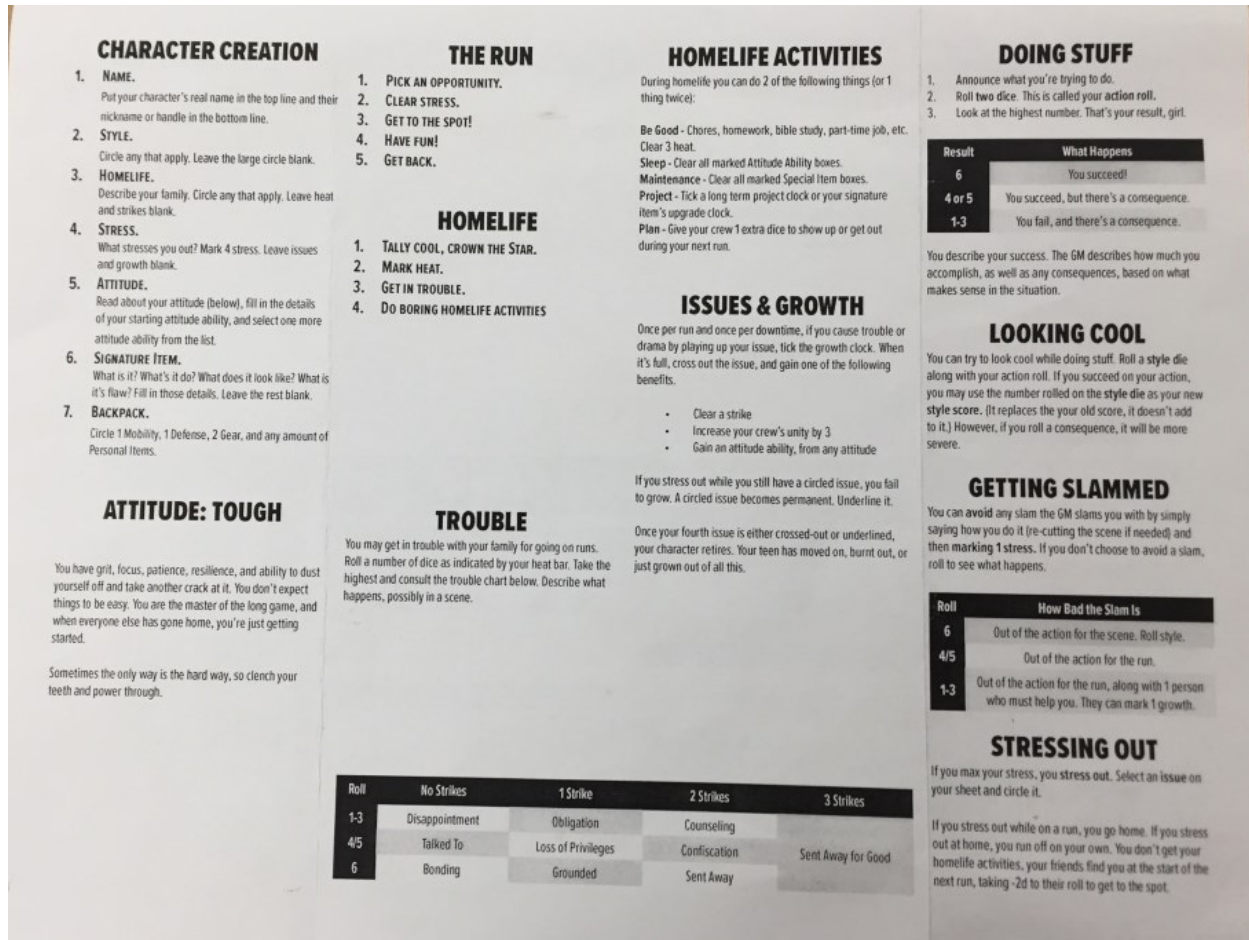


Figure 4.3 Slugblaster Playbook, Side 1, Rules

Figure 4.4 Slugblaster Playbook, Side 2, Character Details

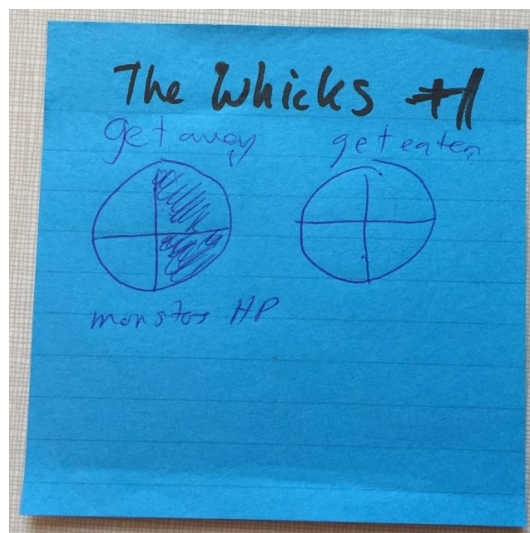


Figure 4.5 Sticky Note with Countdown Clock

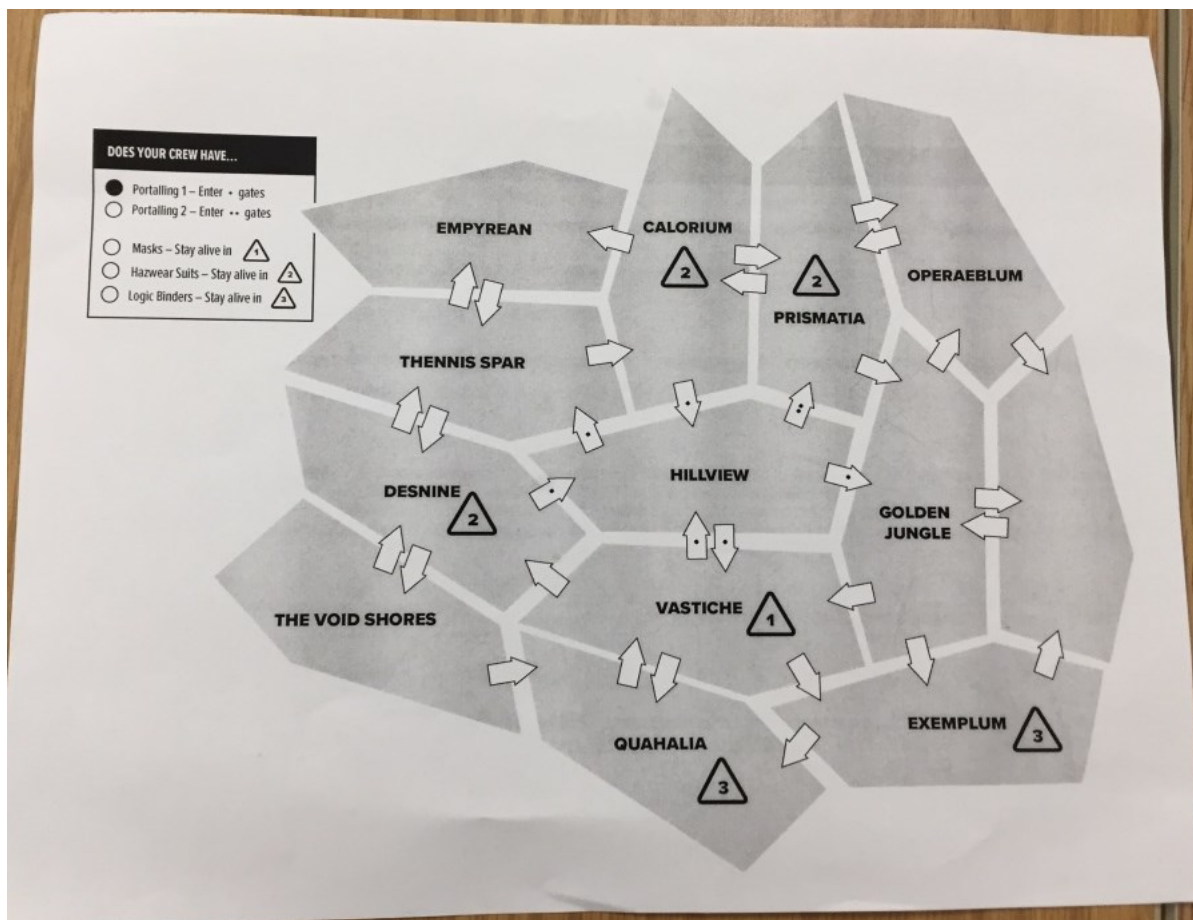


Figure 4.6 *Slugblaster* Map of the Multiverse Dimensions

This group of players in my data came together specifically for the data collection of the two recorded sessions and had not played together as a group before. Mikey was interested in participating in my study and also wanted to playtest his game, so he recruited people who were also willing to be recorded for my project as his playtesters. *Playtesting* is a process where a game or a piece of a game (like a “home-brew,” game master-created, item, feature, or new character type) is tested to see how it works in actual play. This process can be a way to test if the game (or new item, etc.) is balanced (e.g., can the players defeat enemies too easily with it, do the features make sense and work with the way people play?). Mikey has tested his game before (one of the players in this research group had played previous versions). The playtest

context is important to aspects of play and will be referenced in my analysis when it is oriented to by Mikey or his players. For example, the character sheets and maps were still in flux based on how the testing progressed. The map changed from Game 1 to Game 2 based on feedback during Game 1.

The game is composed of homelife and “slugblasting,” which refers to the sci-fi activity of traveling to different planes of existence and potentially battling quantum slugs while doing so. Actual play of *Slugblaster* occurs in “runs” where the players leave their homelife in their small town to blast their way into other dimensions. Players decide where they want to go on their run and what they want to accomplish (from a list of suggestions provided by the game master or from their own suggestions). The process of play is narrative as the players tell a story together. There is no fixed turn order. Players have ideas and roleplay them (rolling dice for outcomes as needed). A simplified overview of a run is: players decide where they want to go and what their goals are, and then they work out how they are getting to the location. They roll dice to see if their travel is successful. The game master describes the location / situation they arrive at (and any consequences of their travel based on their dice roll). He then invites them to act. Different consequences may result in the creation of a clock. As time progresses (or successes or failures accrue) a countdown clock gets filled in and something occurs (e.g., an enemy approaches) once it is full (see Figure 4.5 for an example clock). If characters fail in something they attempt, they take a “slam.” If a slam is severe, it can take the character out of the action for the duration of a run. Players may also or choose to take “stress” to avoid a slam. Points of stress are tracked on their playbook, and if they acquire too many points, they will develop an “issue,” which affects how they have to play going forward. Slams can take them out of the action for the duration of a run, but they can rejoin the group on the next run. This game

does not use a grid map for battle encounters, but there is a map of the multiverse (see Figure 4.6), and Mikey noted that he had used a map of West Edmonton Mall's water park in a previous playtest to explain the features of one of the dimensions to the other players.

The game itself is intended to be episodic; there is no built-in plot beyond the events of a run. Mikey noted the possibility of getting better equipment or getting a sponsorship as potential mechanics within the game, but it is not intended to be a campaign like *Dungeons & Dragons*. The players tell jokes and share references as they play, building enjoyment and relationships as play proceeds. Over the two games, the players create a narrative through their play and extend out their characters' stories and relationships, for example, by building up backstories of two characters who are related and joking about their reactions to events. There is evident enjoyment as they play, which can be observed in excerpts of their talk as they refer to one another's stories, laugh, and build them into the on-going action. This dissertation does not address the larger scale building of narratives and relationships in detail, rather it focuses on the moment-by-moment play. However, it is important to note that the longer-term stories contribute to the pleasure of gameplay.

To indicate the construction and performance of a characteristic run and how the game unfolds through small stories and talk, Figure 4.7, below (p. 107), presents an overview of the first run the *Slugblaster* players undertook, which was approximately two hours and seven minutes of Game 1. The right side of the diagram presents a bulleted list summary of the events that occur in the in-character narrative of the run. These bulleted points demonstrate the overall flow of the plot that the players create during that run. The bolded items refer to game-mechanics driven parts of the run, which would recur in every run (e.g., selecting a location, traveling to the location, and returning home and ending the run). The left side of the diagram contains three

portions of transcript as examples of the detail of the conversations that constitute those plot elements (this interactional detail as it constitutes the fictional setting is what I focus on in the analysis chapters). The first portion of transcript is of the travel to the chosen dimension, which is the Golden Jungle. The second portion is of the result of Kyp attempting to jump into a tree and Ariel using her special glasses. The third portion is when the slug they fight appears as they take a selfie photograph. The arrows from left to right indicate where the portions of transcript fit into the plot points that are described in the bulleted list.

Figure 4.7 Transcript Excerpts (L) and In-game Plot Events (R) of *Slugblaster*, Game 1, Run 1

M: K. K, we're gonna roll.
 ?: U:::h
 (.)
 ((sort of collective)) Wo:oo ((bad tone))
 M: Not great.
 E: That, that looked bad.
 M: Not great.
 B: en ha
 M: If it's a one to three. So take the highest one too. If it's a one to three something goes horribly wrong getting there.
 L: Sweet.
 M: Ok, so I think it has to do with your bike thing.
 B: Yeah.
 M: 'Cause that's good, right? Um, like, so
 B: It explodes. Hu:ge explosion.
 M: What
 (.)
 J: ((chuckle))
 B: Maybe the fusion core ruptures.
 M: Oh, uh, you wanna destroy your bike?
 (.)
 B: ((shrugs)) sure.

B: How did you miss the tree?
 J: [By not hitting it. How do you miss things?
 M: [((chuckles))
 M: K, what, what's next?
 E: U:m, I tap the button on my glasses. I convert them to the goggles just in case things get crazy.
 M: Yeah
 E: And I'm gonna use them to help look around to see if I can find any of, like the Gundams.
 M: Ok, yeah.
 E: 'Cause I can see like mechanical and like electrical stuff with them.

M: And as you take the selfie, um, the flash goes off, you, you, you're looking at, you're zooming in on the photo. This is great. And then, you see standing, you see something behind you guys in the photo. Um
 B: ((chuckles))
 M: ((chuckles)) You se:e
 B: That's () right.
 M: a, well I mean this is the first game, so we're goona say, a slithering, slimy, giant, slu:::::g.
 B: E::::h we should blast it.
 E: I blast it.
 ((B and E chuckle))
 M: K, so this thing, um, turns ((makes sound effect)) and the, the flash seems to, to like bother it a lot, and then, um, and it sees you guys, and its mouth sort of ((sound effect)) opens up into all these little, all these tendrils that, um, are, that fly toward you guys. Some tentacles to try to grab you guys in. So, um, first the, that () have each one of you guys, a tentacle (.) wraps around you ((motions tentacle)). So this is a, a slam that you can avoid by spending stress, and then you, and then you tell me how you can avoid it, or you can accept the slug [into your life.
 L: [Um, I'm spendin' a stress.
 J: Mm
 J: [Yeah, same.
 B: [Me too.
 M: K, yeah, so describe how, what you guys do to get away from this thing.

- **Select location to travel to (Golden Jungle) and goal (get power crystals and find the way back)**
- **Travel there**
 - As a consequence of the roll Brooz volunteers to have his bike blow up
 - The consequence starts a “clock” (pie chart on a sticky note) that when filled some unknown event occurs
- They try to figure out how to navigate
 - Kyp climbs a tree (or to be more accurate, attempts to jump using her “jumpy stompy robot boots” and fails on the roll)
 - Ariel uses her science glasses/goggles and is successful, so she can see the lay lines of an old electrical grid in the world, which leads her to a Gundam (mechanical robot with the power crystal they need)
- On the way to the Gundam, Brooz tries to look cool and falls in a dumpster (this interaction is quite involved as they learn about the ways to look cool in the game and work through it)
- They arrive at the Gundam and describe how they climb or fly up to it
- They go to take a selfie and realize a giant slug is there (and it attacks)
 - They all try to get away, and Brooz gets hurt and is out of the action
 - Bongo avoids being hit as leans over to tie his shoe
 - Kyp headlocks one of the slug's eyestalks
 - Emily (player) asks if she can have salt in her character's (Ariel's) bag
 - Ariel uses her elaborate plan ability to salt the slug
 - Bongo uses his rocket board to blast the slug and keep it in place
 - Kyp lures it (and gets hurt)
 - Ariel salts it
 - The slug is defeated, and they collect the crystals
- They locate the portal home
- **They return home and work through the end of run list (which includes taking heat from their parents)**

4.4.2 Group 2: *Storm King's Thunder (Dungeons & Dragons, Fifth Edition)*

Group 2 played *Dungeons & Dragons*, fifth edition. *Dungeons & Dragons* is a TRPG that exists in many different iterations. There are different editions (the most recent being the fifth edition), prepackaged games, playable modules, and more. Group 2 is different from the other two groups because they were mid-campaign when I came to do the recording, rather than just beginning. This timing of data collection means they had already established how to play, their characters, and had a pre-existing group dynamic. There is much less negotiation and discussion of how to play amongst this group as result of the timing of this data collection. The group is playing *Storm King's Thunder*, an official *Dungeons & Dragons* module published by Wizards of the Coast. However, the game master has also been seeding in plot points and additional world details for an extension to the campaign of his own creation. This extension will be based on the players' characters and backstories that will continue beyond the plot for the campaign in the published module.

I recorded three of their games and an interview with Jo, the game master. This group had the most variable game length, depending on whether they planned an evening game or an all-day session. Data collection included:

- Game 1: January 17, 2020, 3 hours and 10 minutes
- Game 2: January 31, 2020, 4 hours and 30 minutes
- Game 3: February 15, 2020, 5 hours, 40 minutes (note they continued play past that time)
- Interview with Game Master: March 6, 2020, 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Beyond the recordings, I collected copies of each player's character sheet (see Figure 4.8 and 4.9 for an example), Jo provided me with photos of his game master screen with customized notes on rules inside, and a screenshot sample of his game preparation notes. I also have copies of the

Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, and Storm King's Thunder books. Note that due to the length of the games, and because this group's data was collected last after analysis of the other two groups' data had begun, I selectively transcribed the data (for game three and the interview, based on the direction the analysis had taken).

(17 unannounced)

INITIATIVE +3 SPEED 30ft. ARMOR CLASS 20 = 30 + 14 + 2 + 2

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3 INSPIRATION

SAVING THROWS: -2 ATHLETICS, -2 SAVING THROWS

STRENGTH -2

SAVING THROWS: +3 ACROBATICS, +3 SLEIGHT OF HAND, +3 STEALTH

DEXTERITY +3

SAVING THROWS: +3

CONSTITUTION +3

SAVING THROWS: +1 ARCANEA, +1 HISTORY, +1 INVESTIGATION, +1 NATURE, +1 RELIGION

INTELLIGENCE +1

SAVING THROWS: +3 ANIMAL HANDLING, +3 INSIGHT, +3 MEDICINE, +3 PERCEPTION, +3 SURVIVAL

WISDOM 0

SAVING THROWS: +5 DECEPTION, +5 INTIMIDATION, +5 PERFORMANCE, +5 PERSUASION

CHARISMA +5

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION) 10

CHA 16 SPELLCASTING 16 SPELL SAVE DC 16 SPELL ATTACK BONUS +8

ACCESSIBLE ITEMS: 165 manacles, 213, 213, 300, 110

WARLOCK 6 CLASS & LEVEL

MISERY PLAYER NAME

TIEFLING RACE

LAWFUL NEUTRAL ALIGNMENT

EXPERIENCE POINTS

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

RESISTANCES: FIRE & MAGIC Cold.

ELDRITCH INVOCATIONS: Eye of the Runekeeper, Detect Magic, Mask of Many Faces

DEFENSIVE DUALIST

HEXBLADE PATRON: Pact of Chain → FAMILIAR, Accursed Spector → HUMANOID YOU'VE KILLED RISES AS A SPECTOR, TEMP HP = 1/2 WL, OWN INITIATIVE, OBEYS COMMANDS, ATTACK + CHA MOD.

ATTACK FEATURES: Hex

Sneak attack 1d6

URBAN BOUNTY HUNTER - CONTACT IN EVERY CITY

DARKVISION, THAUMATURGY, DARK FEATURES

Common, Infernal, Abyssal

Disguise Kit

Medium armour, martial weap.

NAME	ATTACK	DAMAGE	RANGE	EFFECT(S)
Apple - HEXWARRIOR	+8	1d8+8 PIER	5FT	19 is crit, regain HP CHA
Crossbow	+6	1d10 PIER (100/100)		WL
Hellish REBUKE	DEX	3d10 ARE	60FT REACTION	DISORIENT & STONE, 10FT RAD. SPECTOR, NEBUL
SHATTER	CON	4d8 THUNDER	60FT	paralyzed
HOLD PERSON	WIS	(2 Humanoids) 60FT	60FT	See DEMONY CHART
SUMMON LESSER DEMON	CON	3d10 THUN.		
THUNDERBOLT		START DEX → 2d6 cold, END DEX → 2d6 acid	150FT (20FT RAD)	DIFF. TERRAIN, BLIND,
HUNGER OF HADAR	+7	2x1d10 FORC.	120FT	
ELDRITCH BLAST	WIS	2d8/2d12	60FT	
TOLL THE DEAD	+8	3d6	Touch	GAIN HP 10, HOLD PARADE, CAN KEEP CASTING
VAMPIRIC TOUCH	+8	3d6	Touch	
BlowGUN		+1	25-100	

SPELL SLOTS USED: ○ ○

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

SPELL LEVEL: 3

OTHER SPELLS: THAUMATURGY, DARKNESS, MIRROR IMAGE, MAGE HAND

Figure 4.8 Character Sheet, Misery, Side 1

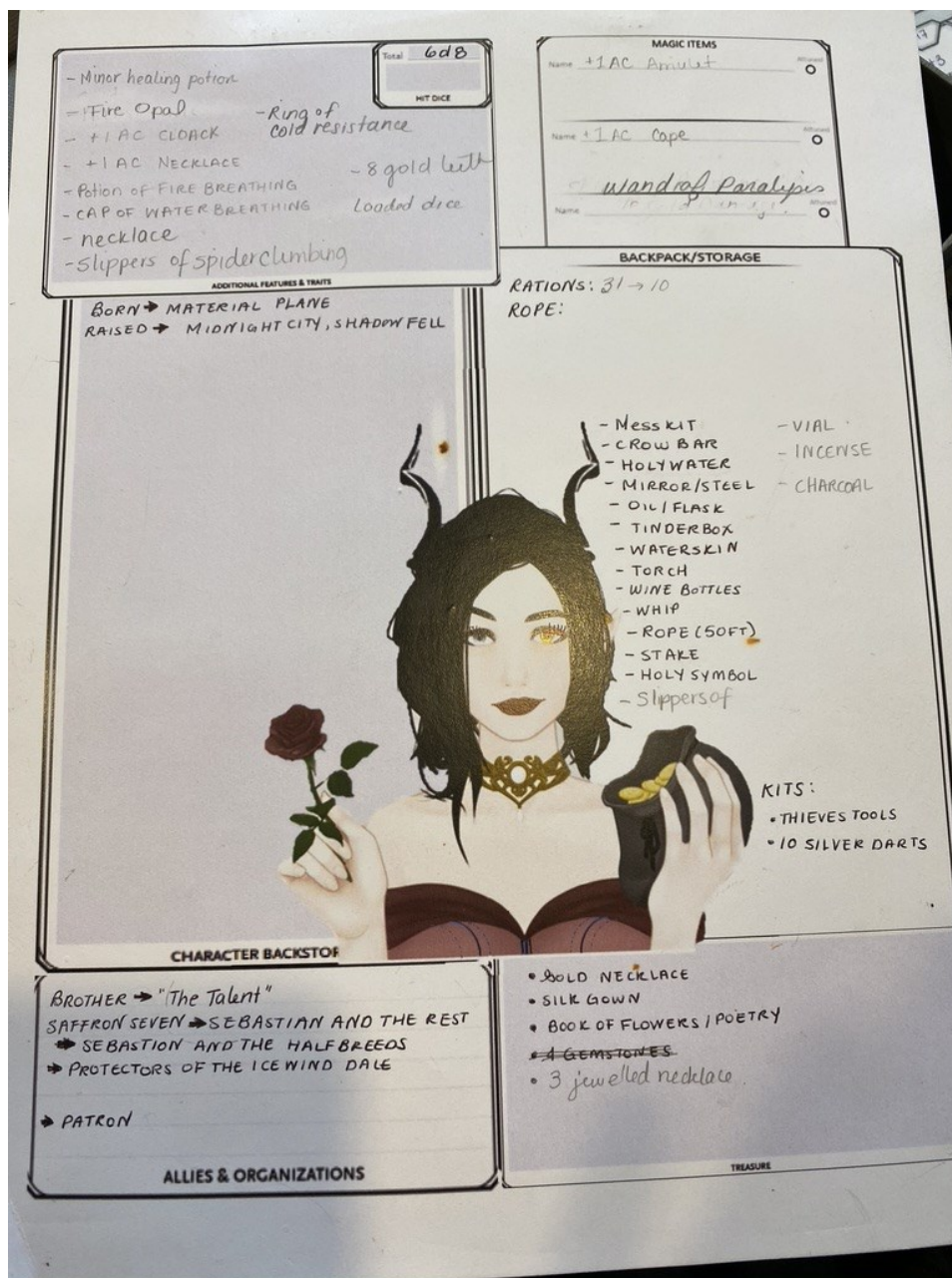


Figure 4.9 Character Sheet, Misery Side 2

Players included:

- Jo: game master – “J” in transcript excerpts
- Bonnie: playing Misery, a tiefling warlock – “B” in transcript excerpts
- Richard: playing Druik, a half-orc monk – “R” in transcript excerpts
- Johnny: playing Ash, a half-elf sorcerer – “Jy” in transcript excerpts

- Christie: playing Cronk, a Goliath barbarian – “C” in transcript excerpts
- Emily: playing Sebastian, a bard, and later Fey (a multi-classed character) – “E” in transcript excerpts
- Julia: playing Casia, a tiefling cleric – “Ju” in transcript excerpts

This group contains family members and friends. Some of the group members have played *Dungeons & Dragons* before, and others were new to the game when they began, though they had all been playing together for some time at the time of data collection, with them being part way through Chapter 4 of the *Storm King’s Thunder* module when I first observed their play (note that Jo disclosed in the interview that they skipped some of the earlier content).

Dungeons & Dragons can include different types of play, e.g., combat encounters (with combat rounds determined by initiative order) as well as more free-flowing exploration and travel in the fictional world, both types of which I recorded. The first game I recorded was continuing on from where the group had left off on a previous full-day session of play. There was significant time spent figuring out a puzzle in their environment and surviving their interaction with it. The adventuring party (the players in-character as a group can be referred to as an adventuring party) is trying to figure out what has happened to the “ordning” of the Giants (as detailed in *Storm King’s Thunder*). The group’s play included exploration, describing where there are and what they do, periodically making use of maps and props. Map layouts of dungeons were provided in the published module, and maps with grids created by Jo were used for battle scenes with three-dimensional miniatures that Jo created with a 3D printer.

4.4.3 Group 3: *Gloomhaven*

Group 3 is playing *Gloomhaven*, a one-to-four player legacy game. They are a group of four family members, consisting of two couples (two sisters and their partners). The players and their characters are as follows:

- Their group (“party”) name is “The Asshats”
- Jeff: plays a scoundrel, named Vex – “J” in transcript excerpts
- Marnie: plays a spellweaver, named Kasula – “M” in transcript excerpts
- Lynne: plays a Brute, named Magnus – “L” in transcript excerpts
- Paul: plays a tinkerer, named Maze Lovelace – “P” in transcript excerpts

The group regularly play games as a family. *Gloomhaven* is not their first legacy game. They also play other types of games, including *Dungeons & Dragons*. I recorded a total of four games and a group interview. I elected to do a group interview because this game did not have a game master. At the first game, I was able to observe and record their initial process of learning the game as they figured out how to set it up and play it.

The data collection dates and approximate lengths of recordings included:

- Game 1: May 29, 2019, 4 hours and 45 minutes
- Game 2: June 29, 2019, 3 hours and 20 minutes
- Game 3: July 6, 2019, 3 hours and 20 minutes
- Game 4: July 27, 2019, 4 hours and 20 minutes
- Group interview: July 27, 2019, 1 hour and 10 minutes

Beyond the recordings of the live gameplay and interview, I also purchased a copy of *Gloomhaven* to have access to the printed materials used for play (see an example in Figure

4.10), and I collected photos of the character sheets of each player (and the group sheet), see an example in Figure 4.11.



Figure 4.10 Gloomhaven Scenario Map and Pieces

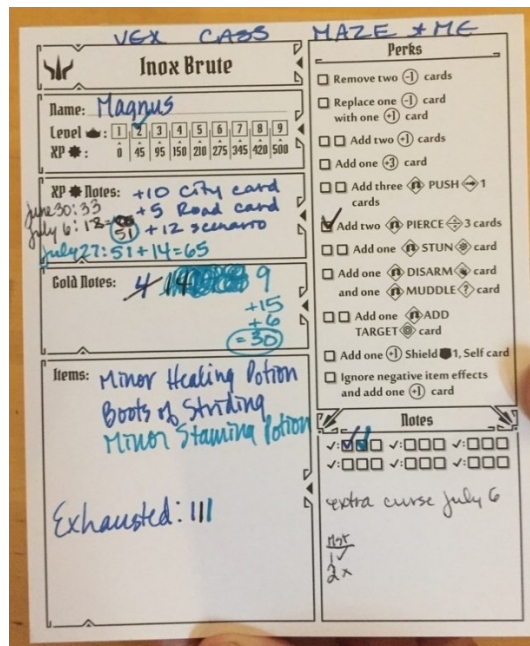


Figure 4.11 Gloomhaven Character Sheet, Magnus

Gloomhaven has a similar structure each time it is played. The party selects the scenario they are going to play based on which scenarios are available to them (they unlock scenarios through play and mark the available scenarios on the world map). They can do an optional “city event” before heading on the road to their scenario, then they do a “road event” before setting up the scenario. The possible city and road events are presented on a deck of cards. Each card describes an occurrence (e.g., being attacked by bandits while on the road) and gives the group options on how to respond. They choose the option they want and then read out the consequences.

The scenarios are contained within a scenario book. Each scenario has some initial narrative text and concluding text (some have text read when other conditions are met, e.g., upon opening a particular door). To set up a scenario, the players lay out pieces of map and enemy miniatures, as depicted in the scenario book, and then choose, from a predetermined set of hexagons on the map, where they are starting. Each scenario lists the conditions for victory (e.g., “kill all enemies”).

To play the game, the starting text is read, and then the players carry out combat in rounds. Turn order (also known as initiative order) changes each round, based on numbers on cards. Each player chooses two cards with possible actions. On their turn they carry out the actions on their cards. The players are allowed to strategize as a group, but they cannot reveal their cards to one another or use particular card names or disclose the numbers on them in their discussions. Once they meet the victory conditions for the scenario, they receive the rewards and can read the concluding scenario text.

I have included this simplified overview of how *Gloomhaven* gameplay typically works (based on the instructions in the game, my observations of the game, and having played the game

myself) as context for readers of my analysis. However, as previously noted, the *Gloomhaven* data influenced my early analysis, but since it is not a TRPG, I focused on excerpts from Group 1 and Group 2 for my analysis chapters in Part III.

A Continuum of Play

If I was to construct a standard, albeit artificial, continuum of play (including flexibility of story, rules, and fictional world) to summarize the detail of play for each of the groups, I would say that Group 3 *Gloomhaven*, would be the least flexible, with everything provided for play and the storyline within the game's box. Group 2 *Storm King's Thunder* would be the next least flexible as the group is playing a pre-determined module, but as their game master noted, there is considerable room for story and world invention, and he has built past the module's end with additional details of the fictional world, items, and characters. Finally, the most flexible in terms of story creation and world-building, is Group 1 *Slugblaster*, in part because it is a playtest, so even the materials referenced and used during live play are still in flux, but also because, at the point in time of my data collection with this group, both the imaginary world and the game rules and materials had been created by the game master. The final version of *Slugblaster* would still be more flexible than *Storm King's Thunder*, because it provides a world but not a set storyline or set of events. It includes ideas for "runs," to provide optional guidance for game masters, but they are not required and sequenced plot points.

The main point that I want to highlight here is that these games and how they are played are highly dependent on the individual groups, the game masters, and their chosen styles of play. The worlds that are created through play are situationally dependent. Different groups playing the same games could each adapt the materials in their own way or create entire worlds of their own. In this research, I do not provide an analysis of the world details and rules of each game (as

might be done in critical world-building (Ekman & Taylor, 2016)); rather, I examine how the imaginary worlds are constructed and engaged with in play, and how the discursive processes through which the games occur are reflected upon in research-generated interviews. By engaging with the data of live-action play, supported by context from participants' reflections on play, I analyze how materialities are constructed in TRPGs and the micro-information behaviours that are involved.

4.5 Summary

I began this research with an interest in fiction and material aspects of information practices which had arisen from my previous research and being introduced to TRPGs as a social activity with friends. The complexity of TRPG gaming provides a perspicuous case for the examination of intersubjective construction of imagined materialities, which are immaterial spaces that are nonetheless influenced by real materialities as they are created by people seated within a real space who co-create an imagined space by indexing other imagined and real material spaces in their talk. An ethnomethodologically influenced methodology that uses aspects of CA, MCA, and the approaches of big and small stories (with an analytic focus on the latter) is at the core of my research design because it allowed me to examine the complexities of moment-by-moment interaction in play as fictional worlds are intersubjectively constructed (and as they are reflected upon in post hoc interviews). I collected data from three participant groups as sites of research from which I built a corpus of data. Two to four live game sessions of each group were video recorded, followed by an interview with their game master (or the entire group if there was no game master). These recordings were transcribed as an initial step in analysis. I also observed the use of documents and objects and collected photographs and game materials of each game to provide information to supplement the talk in the recording. Data was reviewed

and the transcripts were marked up through multiple listenings, and excerpts were selected for single-case style analysis in order to demonstrate the sequential turn-by-turn nature of the discursive actions under study. In Part III, I present three analysis chapters, each of which is focused on one of my research questions.

PART III: ANALYSIS

Chapter 5: Contextures and Common Ground – Establishing the (Im)material World of Gameplay through the Orderliness of Interaction

In this chapter, I present an analysis of ways that players orient to and construct the fictional world of a game through their interactions. It addresses the following research questions:

- How are aspects of actual and fictional materiality managed discursively between game players to create intersubjective understandings?
- How do players create and draw upon common ground to build an intersubjective understanding of the fictional world of play?

The first section of this chapter, “Framing the Analysis” highlights the methodological and analytic concepts used in this chapter and how they apply in examining TRPG play as a perspicuous setting. The following analysis is broadly organized based on how activities create a noticeable overall structure of the game talk. There is 1) introductory explanation of the game, and 2) on-going play (which consists of other recognizable actions as the players collaboratively roleplay to tell a story). This distinction is not necessarily definitive; rather, it is a rough construction that I am employing to demonstrate the complexity of on-going interaction within and through the construction of an (im)material space. The introductory portion of games is the opening of the gameplay interaction. The activity of “opening” has been widely investigated in CA literature (e.g., Robinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2007a), and the analysis in this chapter examines how fictional worlds are constructed in game openings and on-going play. The first section, “Beginning Play: Establishing and Drawing on Common Ground,” is in two parts. The first part analyzes some of the ways in which Mikey, as game master for Group 1 *Slugblaster*, orients the players to the game and how they build a sense of socio-material “vibe” together. The second part is an analysis of the portions of openings of other game sessions (Group 1 – Game 2, and

Group 2 – Game 1) that include recaps and shifts between ordinary and institutional talk. The second section, “Setting the Scene: World-building Through Deciding Where to Go Next” continues this analysis, using data from Group 1, to examine points in play where the players have to choose what they are doing next and where they are going. In *Slugblaster* these sections of play are termed “runs.” These instances are not necessarily openings, but they are still distinct structural aspects of talk. I examine the planning and selection of the runs followed by how travel to, and arrival in, place are negotiated.

The analyses in both sections of this chapter focus on ways in which the players create, orient to, and inform a sense of who-they-are, what-they-are-doing, where-they-are and with-what (i.e., in relation to their imagined character’s actions within the imagined world of the game). Each excerpt of talk has been selected for analysis as a particular example of discursive action, but also to demonstrate the on-going nature of play. My analysis points to particularities within the talk to examine ways in which the talk builds and indexes common ground. These discursive methods locate the group and individuals within the game world as it is constituted through their interaction. The current chapter demonstrates the layered nature of orienting to and constituting (im)material setting(s). It demonstrates some of the ways that interaction is ordered and how through those interactions imagined materialities can be constructed and inhabited by players.

5.1 Framing the Analysis

This section provides an overview of two analytic concepts used in this chapter, each in their own subsection: “Common Ground” and “Framing and Footing.” These concepts are useful for drawing attention to nuances of how players build common understandings and shift between different types of talk.

5.1.1 Common Ground

This chapter explores some of the conversation of the participants as they orient to the game, with a particular focus on how they co-construct the fictional world of play through their talk. As discussed in chapter 3, Enfield (2006) describes two imperatives of common ground in talk: informational and social. The informational imperative involves a need to maintain common understandings, and the social imperative involves a need to maintain appropriate relationships (Enfield, 2006). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the on-going interaction of gameplay has an informational element as players collaboratively inform one another of their character's actions, the effects of these actions on the imagined world, and what the setting is as play progresses. The interaction is also (im)material, creating and shaping an immaterial, imagined space (sometimes represented physically through maps and other game materials to define places within the space, sometimes not) that is created and shared within a particular material environment (by real people seated at a physical table). The actions within the talk are influenced by understandings of that real material environment as well as other (im)material environments (i.e., settings for other fictional works). Because the interaction occurs amongst people, it is also social, so their relationships and identities are situationally relevant (as described by Enfield (2006) this aspect of conversation relates to the social imperative of common ground). Common ground makes conversation, and the type of gameplay I have examined in this study, possible. I examine ways common ground is created and oriented to throughout this analysis, and this chapter focuses on how information is created and shared to constitute the materialities of the fictional world at hand.

5.1.2 *Frames and Footing*

Shifts between real and fictional materialities and in-game and out-of-game social contexts occur frequently and often with great fluidity in TRPG talk. The players shift between more ordinary talk and talk that is more goal-directed (or institutional in nature as outlined in Chapter 3, “Institutional Talk”) to accomplish gameplay. Because TRPGs involve roleplaying, the players also shift into and out of character roles. I use the concepts of frames and footings (Goffman, 1974, 1981) in the following analysis to examine how these shifts occur in small stories of play, particularly in relation to their informative and material implications for beginning play and orienting to and building the fictional world. In later chapters, I use these concepts to analyze in-character and out-of-character shifts, and intertextual shifts through references to other fictional works and real objects.

As an analytic concept, the term *frames* has been defined and used differently across disciplines (Gordon, 2015). In my analysis, I particularly orient to the work of Goffman (1974) who defines frames as “definitions of the situation” (p. 10-11) that participants in interaction build through their interaction to indicate to each other what is going on. Goffman’s work was based on his observations and largely theoretical (Sierra, 2016), but later authors have examined frames using recordings of naturally occurring talk (e.g., Sierra’s (2016) work on intertextuality and frames, Gordon’s (2009) work on intertextuality and framing in family discourse, and Goodwin’s (1996) work on frame shifts in four different conversational contexts). Goffman’s work drew on that of Bateson (1972) who first introduced the idea of the frame as people’s interpretation of what is happening in an interaction, e.g., jokes, fighting (Sierra, 2016, p. 22). Sharing an understanding of a frame requires participants in a group to have some connecting knowledge that allows each member to recognize how an activity (including talk) is organized.

When participants do not share a frame, problems (i.e., misunderstandings and other indications of confusion in talk) can occur because participants in talk do not have a common understanding of their interaction. Goffman's (1981) concept of *footing* is also useful for discussing frames. Footing refers to "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present" (p.128) as indicated in the way that utterances are produced or received, i.e., it is through shifts in footing that participants move from one frame to another in the course of an interaction. Gordon (2015) explains that "as people create frames, they also construct footings, or alignments between one another as well as between themselves and what is said" (p. 325). Examining footing is a way to understand interactional alignment (or who is speaking and to whom) (Sidnell, 2022). These aspects of Goffman's work that I draw on are complementary to an ethnomethodological, conversation analytic approach to my data as Goffman's considerations of framing and footing focus on the management of alignment in jointly produced interaction, as demonstrated by Sidnell (2022). My analysis considers how changes in footing facilitate frame shifts between real and fictional contexts in TRPG play.

Both Fine (1983) and Hendricks (2006) have used the concept of frames to examine engagement in TRPGs. Fine (1983) focuses on awareness contexts between player and character identities; he identifies the way that games involve layered frames that include a primary frame (the real world), a fantasy frame (where the characters interact) and a game frame (where the players are bound by the game rules), with the fantasy and game frames occurring on top of the primary frame. Hendricks (2006) recognizes this layering but focuses on engagement within the fantasy frame. Fine's (1983) descriptions of primary, fantasy, and game frames are particularly useful in the analysis in this chapter. The players shift between ordinary talk into game-focused

talk in their game openings as a way of reconstituting the game-world and locating themselves within it for play.

This chapter presents an analysis of the embedded and continuous relevance, and reconstitution, of the fictional worlds in-play by examining ways the players orient to and inform the socio-(im)material aspects of the setting at different points during play. Players orient to, construct, and locate themselves within these settings as a part of the gestalt contextures (see Chapter 3, “Ethnomethodological Underpinnings”) of play. In the discussion that follows, I present examples of the layered nature of this process at different points in the game where different types of play occur.

5.2 Beginning Play: Establishing Common Ground in Place and Time

The analysis in this section is of game openings. The “Getting on the Same Page” subsection is an analysis of the opening of Group 1’s first game. Group 1, who played *Slugblaster*, played their first game together while I was recording them, so there is more introductory context than for the Group 2, who played *Storm King’s Thunder*. The second subsection, “Looking Forward, Looking Backward,” examines the openings of Group 1’s second game and the first game I recorded from Group 2, which was not their first game as group. These openings include *recaps*, which are retellings of the previous game before new events in the narrative are roleplayed. The activity of opening the games is part of the larger overall structure of play where the participants are specifically situating themselves within the world, and in doing so they are simultaneously constructing that world through their actions. The players both “make and take” (Huvila, 2022) information turn-by-turn at a micro level as they demonstrate understandings and contribute to the on-going constitution of the (im)material game world through their talk. Prepared information is taken and reformulated in the new context, and new

information is made as the game master and players improvise. New information can then be taken up in subsequent turns. The materiality of the imagined world is not only described or summarized based on prepared documents and published materials by the game master, it is also collaboratively engaged with and elaborated upon by the group through their discursive actions as play proceeds.

5.2.1 Getting on the Same Page

In order to co-tell a narrative occurring in a fictional world through their gameplay, the players need enough of a common understanding of the game-world and its rules to be able to interact in a way that will be recognized and understood by one another. The players draw on and create common ground throughout their interaction; however, it is especially apparent in the early portions of play as the group learns about and builds the world and its (im)materiality through their on-going interactions. In the opening of Group 1's first game, which lasts for approximately the first eight minutes and 32 seconds of the recording (see the transcript in Appendix E.1), Mikey, as game master, is orienting everyone to the game before his players create the characters they will subsequently roleplay. As Mikey explained in my interview with him, the game is "techno-fantasy" (see line 14, Appendix E.2), and he has designed the world and gameplay to "emulate genre tropes" (see Mikey's turn starting at line 11, Appendix E.3), mimicking recognizable aspects of sci-fi, fantasy, and coming of age movies and narratives. Figure 5.1 depicts the group seated around their table.



Figure 5.1 *Slugblaster* Group Seated at Their Table

In this early part of the playtest, Mikey holds the interactional floor (the attention of others) with longer turns of talk as he explains how the game works and what its “vibe” is. He does so in part through negotiating the expectations of gaming contexts and through group norms associated with his role as the game organizer and game master (for further discussion of roles and authority in game talk as institutional talk, see Chapter 6). Parts of this introductory portion of play were pre-scripted in written text by Mikey, and the script and materials (e.g., the playbooks) are specifically meant to provide examples that are sufficiently informative to build a sense of the game and its imaginary setting for the players. Mikey shifts between reading the prepared script and providing explanations and elaborations with the players. The script is an informative document that Mikey has created, and only portions of it are used as made relevant in the interaction at hand. Although Mikey is taking longer turns at talk and providing prepared explanation, the scripted explanation is reworked and recontextualized in the moment.

Excerpt 5.1 is the beginning of the first game, and in it, Mikey explicitly identifies the need to get everyone “on the same page” (lines 8-10), an indication that this portion of the talk is proceeding as a kind of game-located, institutional interaction, wherein participants are orienting to one or more shared goals. Throughout this initial explanation in interaction, Mikey uses examples that layer information about people (who-we-are, e.g., lines 14-16), actions (what-we-are-doing, e.g., line 2 as players, and lines 14-23 as characters), spaces and places (where-we-are, e.g., “other dimensions,” (line 15)), and objects (what-we-are-interacting-with, or with-what, e.g., “ray gun,” (line 15), “hover board,” (line 18)). Through such talk, Mikey is building a sense of what the setting of the game is and what norms-in-action are in the game. As he takes his turns, Mikey builds an on-going sense of the imagined material environment of play, including a sense of the game’s fictional world (e.g., lines 14-23). Further, he also references the present or immediately forthcoming phenomena that will be engaged with by the actual group members (e.g., lines 2, 5, 9). In effect, Mikey both draws on and extends the common ground of the group through sharing information in scripted and unscripted descriptions that are taken up in interaction (i.e., as in Marshall’s positive assessment responses (lines 7, 17)).

Excerpt 5.1 All on the Same Page

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Um, ok well then, I'll just, uh, I guess we, well, we're
 2 gonna, so we're gonna, we're gonna make characters? I'm
 3 hoping it takes (.) about thirty minutes. That's what it

build a layered sense of the socio-material environment of the fictional world and the potential for actions within it.

Through interaction the players draw on and build common ground to understand how to play the game, and as they do so they continuously reconstitute the world of the game through that interaction. As the game opening progresses, Mikey uses his scripted document and its listing of examples several times in longer turns (see Appendix E.1, “Who do you wanna be?” (lines 51-58), and “so the stuff you’re gonna do in this game i:s” (lines 63-71), the later part of which is a prepared list of consequences of actions). Mikey does not read the script from start to finish; rather, he uses it as a tool to guide this introduction to the game. He jumps to different parts of the script as they become relevant (the extended interaction is in Appendix E.1). As noted earlier, Mikey created the game and notes for play, like the script, in advance. These notes and the descriptions of the world they contain are a material instantiation of the imagined world that the players engage with, but the script is only used during play as it is made situationally relevant to contribute to the reconstitution of the world for play – the parts of these documents that are referenced become a part of the gestalt contexture of play, tying together the instantiated descriptions in the document with the imagined material environment of the moment-by-moment story told through gameplay.

Throughout this introductory portion of the first game, Mikey is laying groundwork for how the game will proceed by both sharing and creating information with the players, moment-by-moment, as play proceeds. Mikey describes socio-material aspects of the fictional world, thereby orienting the players to what the game is, who the characters are, what types of things they do, where, and with what. However, Mikey, as game master and creator of the game, is not doing that alone. Mikey is conversing with the players and adjusting as necessary. He is not

simply reading a scripted text or speaking a monologue. Mikey's turns are long as he holds the floor in order to provide useful explanations. While Mikey's talk might seem to be a monologue, it is interactive, as other participants indicate that they are paying attention (through interjecting approving utterances, such as "excellent" (line 7), "sweet" (line 17), and slight laughter (line 24)). However, the players can also clarify and extend the explanations offered by Mikey to collaboratively build an intersubjective sense of the game and world. The sequential and unfolding nature of interaction is explored in subsequent sections of this chapter. The turn-by-turn activities carried out by the players in their conversation and their embodied interactions with game materials demonstrate Huvila's (2022) concept of making and taking information at a micro-level in turns of conversation. That is, Mikey shares the information he has prepared about the game world ("making"), which the players hear and respond to ("taking"). It is through this flow of information that the participants co-construct an (im)material world as play proceeds in moment-by-moment turns at talk. These turns reference real, material documents and the players' own experiences, as well as imagined circumstances and environments; together, the real and the fictional jointly create the common ground of gameplay.

5.2.2 Looking Forward, Looking Backward

Recapitulations of what has happened earlier, known as "recaps," are a common element in TRPG play because the game is not contained within one sitting; rather, a single campaign can span many sessions over years of play. Summarizing what occurred in the previous game session is a way to open a game session by bringing everyone together for the game at hand and situating them to proceed. The way this retelling is done can vary. For example, one game master from the pilot study has their players collaboratively summarize what happened previously before they start the next game. Group 1 and Group 2 also had ways of recapping previous game events to

situate themselves within the world of the game that were more driven by the game masters of those games. These initial recaps reconstitute the fictional world of the game through the players' retellings. The following sections present analyses of openings and recaps from Group 1 *Slugblaster* and Group 2 *Storm King's Thunder*.

5.2.2.1 Frame Shifts and Recaps – Group 1 Slugblaster

At the beginning of the second game of *Slugblaster*, there are two sections of different types of talk before the main recap. The players begin with more ordinary talk (i.e., talk between friends that is not addressing or engaging in the institutional goals of gameplay) interspersed with preparations to play (e.g., organizing game materials and refreshments, see Excerpt 5.4), for approximately the first 10 minutes, before Mikey, the game master, shifts them to more goal-oriented, institutional talk (see Excerpt 5.2, lines 14-16), wherein they incorporate a new player / character into the game (Sam joins them to roleplay Taisha for Game 2), and then talk shifts again to the recap (in Excerpt 5.3). These two shifts accomplished by Mikey, discussed in the “Adding a Player / Character” and “Opening Credits” subsections, demonstrate ways collective attention is drawn to goal-oriented activities of play as part of the overall structural organization of game talk. Nevertheless, there are also many smaller scale, small story, shifts within these sections as demonstrated in the “Getting Situated -- Small Shifts in Talk” section.

5.2.2.1.1 Adding a Player / Character

Mikey accomplishes the shift from peer-to-peer chat to moving the game forward in his role as game master by, after a pause, beginning to ask a question (line 14) and then following this up with a specific query as to how the participants (“we”) want to incorporate a new character (lines 17-19) into the game, which is an important action they need to carry out before play can proceed.

Excerpt 5.2 Ordinary Talk Shift to Adding a Player / Character

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 E: Nothing more ro, more ro, [more ro, more romantic than
2 twinkle lights.
3 L: [Tragedy brings people
4 together.
5 M: That's right, yes. That's the, that's the
6 E: That's true takeaway.
7 M: That's the takeaway. ((laughing as he talks))
8 L: That's a very, a very Emily [thing to say.
9 M: [Yeah.
10 M: Oh
11 B: X has promised not to throw dirt in your windows.
12 M: [Ok, X don't sleep in my car X. ((chuckles))
13 L: [(...)
14 (.)
15 M: Ok, um, (.) do we want t:o (.)
16 S: Kitty spsp
17 M: What do we want to do about Sam's character? Do we want
18 to find her, um, during the adventure, or do we want to
19 just sort of ((motions hand)) have her in?
20 L: U:h, let's, let's hear what she has and then we'll figure
21 out the best way to throw her in.
22 M: [Sure.
23 S: [Thanks.
24 M: Sam, why don't you tell us about your character?

Once the group has established how Sam's character will fit into the story (how they know her and will meet up with her), Mikey shifts the talk again to provide a recap of previous action and prepare everyone to play (see Excerpt 5.3). He begins this shift with "Ok, let's play" (line 1), which is agreed to by Marshall (line 2). Once Mikey has the floor, he explains how they

will start playing, telling the players that he “wrote an intro for us” (lines 3-4). Stating what will happen next is a move typical of institutional talk, where asymmetries in interaction occur, as when a speaker in a position of authority has the right to take the floor in the opening moments and indicate at least some actions that will follow (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Both the shift from ordinary talk to the game-oriented talk about Sam’s character, and the shift from talking about Sam’s character to the recap (in the next section, Excerpt 5.3, line 1) begin with Mikey saying, “Ok.” Previous CA research has established multiple uses for “ok” in talk; it is recognized as a discourse marker that indicates a change from one stage of information to another, particularly when the term is used by someone who has a role (that is generally accepted by hearers) of managing group discourse (Levin & Gray, 1983; Schleeef, 2008). This type of use is apparent in Mikey’s talk where “ok” marks a transition as he shifts from ordinary talk to formal, goal-oriented activities of the game (to incorporate a new character into the game), and again to begin play with a recap. Mikey’s talk demonstrates how participants can shift from out-of-character, ordinary talk to institutional talk, and how there can be shifts within that institutional talk as goals are accomplished and the next activity begins.

5.2.2.1.2 “Opening Credits”

Below we see how Mikey reads out his scripted recap of the previous game (Excerpt 5.3). In the interview I conducted with Mikey, he explained that he has played with another group that makes use of the TV episode “opening credit” format (i.e., where, at the start of a TV episode, there is some information provided to remind viewers of what happened before), and that he likes to encourage the cinematic elements of describing play to set the tone for his games (see Appendix E.4 for the interview transcript that provides Mikey’s big story explanation of his process in his own words). These small story recap accounts of past play remind the group of

where they left off at the end of their last game, while also shifting them from the previous, informal talk into the more structured interaction of gameplay. In recapping previous play, the players are resituated within the fictional world, which is reconstituted to begin the next session of play.

Excerpt 5.3 Opening Credits

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: in the excerpts of talk found in this dissertation, sometimes lines of talk have been excised for brevity. The excised lines do not substantially impact the analysis. Each time lines have been excised, I indicate where the full transcript, including those lines, can be found in the Appendices.

1 M: Ok, let's play. [Um
 2 L: [Yeah, let's play.
 3 M: Ok, I'm gonna do the, I'm gonna do an intro. I wrote an
 4 intro for us.

((10 lines excised for brevity. See full transcript in Appendix E.5))

15 M: Last time on Slugblaster
 16 E: ((chuckles))
 17 (.) ((M turns music down a bit))
 18 E: (...) soundtrack on my game.
 19 M: ((reading on his laptop)) Hillview is a pretty boring
 20 place at times, but if Brooz, Bongo, Ariel, and Kyp, now
 21 Ty have anything to say about it, it's going to be a
 22 boring place they can leave whenever they feel like. They
 23 might be new to the scene, but the Goblins are already
 24 gaining a reputation as the sickest crew with the

25 stupidest name, and things are only getting sicker and
26 stupider from
27 E: [((chuckles))
28 B: [((chuckles))
29 M: here, you see Brooz blow up an ancestral tree. You see
30 Ariel scanning the jungle with her goggles. You see Kyp
31 wrestling an android, and Bongo rocket boarding through
32 Prismatia. Will they find Brooz in the abandoned
33 waterpark? How much shit will they get in with their
34 parents? Will they ever get a logic binder? Find out this
35 week in Slugblaster. ((stops music)) Ok, u:m, that's the
36 intro.
37 E: [((chuckles))

Mikey's recap in Excerpt 5.3 shifts the players from the game frame, in which they are discussing how to play and incorporate Sam as a new player, towards the fantasy, in-character frame of gameplay, by retelling striking aspects of the last game and hinting at possible avenues of action for this session (this recap combines "shared stories" (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 50) of past group activity with "projections" (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 47) of potential future action, which Mikey has scripted although other such retellings can be less formal). This long turn at talk serves to shift the players from out-of-character discussion of gameplay towards one of ongoing, in-character play. Within this long turn at talk, Mikey has embedded several small story descriptions of places (e.g., "Hillview is a pretty boring place at times" (lines 19-20)) and important activities and objects engaged with by the named characters in the previous game (e.g., "You see Ariel scanning the jungle with her goggles. You see Kyp wrestling an android" (lines 29-31)). The retellings feature key objects that capture aspects of the characters and setting (e.g., goggles, rocket board, the ancestral tree being blown up). These short examples of small stories indicate how such discursive actions not only summarize aspects of the previous game but also resituate the players within the socio-material world of the game.

5.2.2.1.3 *Getting Situated -- Small Shifts in Talk*

The frame shifts I have described (from ordinary talk between friends / acquaintances, to out-of-character talk about the game itself, to the game-specific action of the recap) speak to the overall structural organization of game talk. Moving between ordinary and goal-oriented talk can occur frequently within a small excerpt of talk, and, as such, the concept of institutional talk as distinct from ordinary interaction can be difficult to discern at times (and indeed, has been critiqued as arbitrary, with, e.g., Heritage (2005, p. 107) acknowledging that even talk that occurs in informal, family-based contexts can, at times, be perceived as institutional. Heritage (2005) cites a conversation about astronomy occurring at a family dinner table in which, he notes, it is difficult to delineate between the two types of talk. Despite such potential overlaps between institutional and ordinary talk, it is important to note how the players of TRPGs continuously orient to the shared goals and character identities specific to the game context, and in so doing, themselves co-create the institutional nature of game-based talk.

A notable aspect of some game openings is how small story recaps also occur within the context of ordinary conversation that happens prior to the more focused, game-play session. An example of such talk is in Excerpt 5.4, below, where the players shift between getting situated within the physical space (e.g., Emily and Sam switch seats (lines 1-5); Sam pets the cat (line 2)) and talking about the characters they will roleplay in the subsequent gameplay (e.g., line 14). Additionally, they engage in retellings of previous game events (e.g., Marshall recounts how his character did not get in trouble with his parents (lines 22-24), while Emily notes her character's reaction to her parent's punishment of her brother (lines 27-29)). There is also important use of recaps in the openings of game sessions played by Group 2, as they play *Storm King's Thunder* (analyzed in the next section of this chapter).

Excerpt 5.4 Small Shifts

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 E: This is my throne. We, were we switching Sam? ((before
2 recording L wanted to sit by E))
3 S: Yes, we were.
4 E: Let's do that then.
5 S: Absolutely.
6 L: What colour of dice do I want (tonight)? I'm just gonna
7 go classic white and green.
8 B: O::h
9 S: [() Hi, hi ((hugs E as she comes around the table))
10 M: [(...) Bongo.
11 S: How you doin'?
12 E: [I'm good.
13 M: [Ni:ce.
14 L: [Oh yeah, my name's Bongo. That's awesome.
15 S: Oh um, is there a bathroom (...)
16 B: Yeah, it's right here. ((points))
17 M: [() around the corner there. ((points))
18 S: [Ok, awesome.
19 L: If you hit the bed, you went too far.
20 B: Yes.
21 S: Ok, I just wanna pet the cat first. Hi. How's it goin'?
22 L: Yeah, I keep just like, hangin' out and not gettin' in
23 trouble with my parents. It's just like, real, real
24 teenagers.
25 B: ((chuckles))
26 L: () Marshall.
27 E: I was like, screw you parents, you've grounded my
28 brother. I'm not gonna make up with you, so my heat's
29 real high.

5.2.2.2 Frame Shifts and Recaps – Group 2 Storm King’s Thunder

For Group 2, my first recording of one of their games was not their first game in the campaign because the group had been playing long before I started data collection. There are two aspects of that game’s opening highlighted in the following sections: first, the way the game master, Jo, brings players together and shifts the group into retelling (and evaluating) their previous play (in the “Recaps and Collaborative Evaluation” subsection); and, second, the use of references and small story retellings of other fictional locations to locate the players and inform their actions (in the “Retelling and Locating Selves through References” section).

5.2.2.2.1 Recaps and Collaborative Evaluation

The recording of Game 1 of *Storm King’s Thunder* begins with the players discussing whether they remember how many “hit points”¹² they have left after their last game (this talk is not included in the excerpt below). In a way that is similar to how Mikey shifted the Group 1 players’ attention to begin gameplay with his use of the term “ok” (Excerpt 5.3, line 1), in Excerpt 5.5, Jo interjects with the discourse marker “so” (line 1). Like “okay,” “so” has been noted within the CA literature as a change of state marker that can signal a transition from one frame of talk to another or as a way to initiate a topic (Schleef, 2008). Immediately after his use of “so,” Jo reminds players of the length of their last session, which is enthusiastically assessed by some of the players (lines 1-6). These positive judgments are followed by Jo’s recap (lines 8-9). Jo’s turn is less formal than Mikey’s reading out of his written script for Group 1 (which was delivered in the vocal tone of a TV narrator’s voice-over recap of a previous episode). Jo tells a small story, “So, started with, you guys met a frost giant, who appears to be on your side” (lines

¹² Hit points are a game mechanic for tracking the amount of damage or loss a character has sustained and so their degree of health or capacity to continue in the game.

1-2), that is collaboratively built on by other participants (lines 10-16). A negative assessment concerning how a fictional character, Hashnog, is introduced and this judgement is agreed upon by others (lines 13-14). In the talk that follows, participants effectively collaborate to reconstruct the storyline by indicating what they do and do not like about the previous game.

Excerpt 5.5 "I don't like the appears part"

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)

B = Bonnie (Misery)

R = Richard (Druik)

Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)

E = Emily (Sebastian)

Ju = Julia (Casia)

1 J: So last time during our twelve hours session, which we
 2 need to do again.
 3 C: [Lots happened.
 4 E: [Oh it was so much fun. I wanna do it again.
 5 R: Oh yeah.
 6 C: Oh yeah, we have to do that again.
 7 Ju: ... reading week.
 8 J: So, started with, you guys met a frost giant, who appears
 9 to be on your side.
 10 E?: Yes, what's his name again?
 11 J: Hashnog ().
 12 E: Hasnog.
 13 R: I don't like the appears part.
 14 B: I don't like that either. I also didn't like that.
 15 E: I'm gonna write that down.
 16 Ju: He (...)
 17 J: Only one person made an insight check. ((chuckles))

Following the brief collaborative recap noted above, the game shifts into active play with Game master Jo's third utterance of the discourse marker "So" followed by, "we'll pick up

now?" (Excerpt 5.6, line 1). This utterance, while spoken with a rising, questioning intonation was heard as a question by the players as they respond with immediate, positive answers; however, the phrase is also an indication of what will happen next, as it is spoken by the person who, as game master, has the interactional right to assert authority and initiate play.

Excerpt 5.6 "So we'll pick up now?"

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)

B = Bonnie (Misery)

R = Richard (Druik)

Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)

E = Emily (Sebastian)

Ju = Julia (Casia)

1 J: So we'll pick up now?
 2 ?: Yeah.
 3 ?: Yep.
 4 J: The creature has just been killed.
 5 E?: Nice.
 6 J: You are now
 7 C: We're still in that room.
 8 J: Yeah. So now you get a chance to look around the room.
 9 Um, it's warm compared to the rest of the complex
 10 ?: (
 11 J: there is a fire. There is a fire burning in the middle of
 12 it.

In the above excerpt, Jo reminds the others of a significant plot development from the previous game (the creature has been killed (line 4)), and after eliciting from a player the recognition of where the characters are situated ("still in in that room" (line 7)), Jo then takes a turn to begin to describe the room they are now investigating in active play. This description also has aspects of a recap because the players were in this room last session, so as the talk proceeds it becomes an

intermingling of small story retellings (e.g., line 4) and brief narrations and descriptions of current location (lines 7, 11).

5.2.2.2.2 “*Did we speak friend?*” – *Retelling and Locating Selves through References*

As the play of the *Storm King’s Thunder* game progresses, the players need to open a door that is under an archway with runes around it. In Excerpt 5.7, below, players are re-familiarizing themselves with a setting they first encountered in their previous game. This recap is not located within the opening portion of the game. Instead, it is a retelling that occurs as the information becomes situationally relevant to the on-going gameplay. Here, after a turn in which the archway is described by Jo (line 5), Julia interjects with the discourse marker “oh” (after this term is first uttered by an undiscernible speaker). Julia immediately follows her “oh” with “it’s rock” followed by another “oh” and the description, “it is the gate from the Lord of the Rings” (lines 8-9). As with the previously discussed terms, “okay” and “so,” “oh” is a discourse marker that indicates a changed state within the talk, though in the case of “oh” (and relevant to this gameplay interaction) the word usually indicates that a speaker has had a sudden realization or remembrance (Bolden, 2006; Fox Tree & Schrock, 1999; Heritage, 1984). Later, Emily asks, “Did we speak friend?” (line 14). Here, she is quoting the line that opens the gate in *The Lord of the Rings* (this is an intertextual media reference; such references are explored in Chapter 7). In Julia’s subsequent utterance (lines 16-17), she indicates that she recognizes this intertextual reference by recapping that she said the same thing when she first entered the imaginary room (in the previous game). Following Julia’s retelling, Emily asks if anyone speaks Giantish (line 18), which is relevant because they are in a building built to Giants’ proportions. Note that as play unfolds, although no utterance is made that confirms whether a character can speak Giantish, Christie’s raised hand (line 19) is a gesture that acts as an embodied turn at talk that indicates an

affirmative answer to the question. Hand raising has previously been investigated in CA research in the contexts of meetings (e.g., Mondada, 2013) and classrooms (e.g., Sahlström, 2002) where it serves as a way to bid for a turn to speak or to self-select to answer a question. In this case, Christie confirms her character's ability to speak Giantish, self-selecting and implying the possible action of speaking the phrase in Giantish, but this avenue is not explored in play as Julia shifts the conversation to focus more on the giant with them (line 20). Through the talk in Excerpt 5.7, we see how the on-going play intermingles references to other fictional works (lines 8-9, 14) with small story occurrences from the previous game (lines 16-17), and also with potential future actions in the game at hand (lines 11, 18). Knowledge of real-life materiality (that a stone can be rolled away from an archway to open it (line 11)) is layered with how such a material environment is handled in another fictional work, *The Lord of the Rings* (i.e., as referenced by Emily's quoted utterance (line 14)).

Excerpt 5.7 "Did we speak friend?"

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)

B = Bonnie (Misery)

R = Richard (Druik)

Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)

E = Emily (Sebastian)

Ju = Julia (Casia)

-
- 1 B: Have we tried to just open the door with brute force?
 2 Ju: No yet.
 3 C: [It's, it's an archway isn't it?
 4 Ju: [...]
 5 J: It's an archway () there's like rock behind it.
 6 K: (...)
 7 B: Oh

8 Ju: [Oh it's rock, ok. Oh, so it is the gate from Lord of the
9 Rings.
10 E: [(...)
11 C: (We) have to like roll away the stone.
12 J: Similar.
13 Ju: K.
14 E: Did we speak friend?
15 ((some chuckles))
16 Ju: That's what I said the first- the first thing I said as
17 we entered this room. Speak friend and enter, right?
18 E: Does anyone speak Giantish? You () speak Giantish.
19 ((C raises hand))
20 Ju: So does the giant that's with us.

The example above demonstrates use of small story references to *The Lord of the Rings* and the group's previous game as the players remember and interpret a setting (i.e., a gate with runes). The historicity evident in such a small story has multiple layers: the players have seen this archway before when it was described in their previous game, and they retell their past identification of it with the gate from *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as correspondingly re-identifying the gate in the present moment. This shared story informs the players' intersubjective construction of the (im)material setting where they are starting play for the evening's game. The fictional materiality of the archway from *The Lord of the Rings* (that can also be visualized as real through remembering the actual materiality of the movie set) is being made situationally relevant to the fictional setting of the game at hand (the dungeon that the players are exploring as they play *Storm King's Thunder*). Here an apparently simple archway with a stone acts as a kind of common ground anchor— part of the informational imperative of common ground and participant alignment – based on an assumption of shared knowledge of the book (and / or film) *The Lord of the Rings*. Such interweavings of assumed knowledge from past experience (derived from both real life and media representations), alongside the current setting of the game, work

together to build the materiality of the intersubjectively imagined environment as play resumes from where it left off in the previous game session.

Recaps and interweaving of retellings within current play do not only occur at the beginning of game sessions. They are incorporated throughout play, both in-character and out-of-character, and with varying levels of additional context provided in-the-moment. The use of recaps as relevant information in interaction collaboratively recontextualizes the shared story of their collective previous experience in the current moment to perpetuate a shared sense of (im)material place. In this way, individual character stories and actions have temporal elements as personal histories and knowledges and group histories and knowledges are intermingled with the narrative. The next section of this chapter further elaborates on ways that the where-we-are of the fictional world is oriented to by players during play.

5.3 Setting the Scene: World-building Through Deciding Where to Go Next

The materiality of the fictional world of play is momentarily and imaginatively instantiated in talk (and sometimes also represented with maps and game pieces). While the previous section used examples of the opening portions of games and recaps in the data of Group 1 and Group 2's gameplay to examine how players create a socio-material sense of the setting through their talk (and references to texts) that enable them to create and draw on common ground, this next section provides examples from proceeding moments of Group 1's gameplay to show how players build and orient to the socio-material setting of the game. Although gameplay involves the telling of a story, the progression of interaction is also structured by the rules of the game itself, which is built upon the concept of "runs" where the group of characters travel to other dimensions. The excerpts in this section were selected to highlight a specific point in on-going play where the players come together to strategize for a session (i.e., a run, or several runs

played back-to-back, in *Slugblaster*) and to account for and explain their sense of place within the game.

Each of the sub-sections in the following analysis examine aspects of player / character decisions concerning where to go within the game. As those decisions are made, the prepared world (as planned by the game master) is reconstructed for, and with, the players in the moment. The first subsection below, “Communicating Options, Choosing a Path,” introduces the way that the players select a run, and the second subsection, “Preference and Assessing the Options” examines how preference for behaviour and positive evaluations are established by Mikey and taken up by the players. The last subsection, “(Im)Material Constraints,” furthers this discussion by examining game materials and how they are implicated in the game’s progress through the ongoing selection of runs. All of these instances provide examples of information being exchanged in play to enable decisions to be made about where characters will go and what their goals are or will be. These interactions draw on and incrementally build common ground through on-going understandings of the socio-material setting.

5.3.1 Communicating Options, Choosing a Path

As the participants prepare to play a session in *Slugblaster* (or do a “run” to use the game’s language), the players have to decide where they want to go (which dimension in the multiverse) and what their goal will be when they get there. Going on a run occurs to begin play (after initial informal conversation and recapping as outlined in the previous section of this chapter). Making the decision of where to go on the run involves an informative process of micro-world-building through descriptive utterances that create and share verbal snapshots of the (im)material setting and actions that are possible there. In Excerpt 5.8, lines 1-2, below, Mikey opens with a reference to the “full game” and its “crew sheets” on which will be listed

“opportunity ideas.” These utterances remind players that they are participating in a playtest version of the game and not the future “full” version.¹³ In this explanation, Mikey is highlighting a point where the game materials could be used to define possibilities in the future versions of the game (more on the authority of game materials is discussed in the “(Im)material Constraints” section of this chapter). Mikey goes on, by indicating that in his subsequent talk he will be listing information (“start talking things – ideas” (lines 17-18)) and suggesting that the group attends to what, of these listed items, “grabs” them. He further links his action of list making to assumed common ground from the group members’ real-life, embodied knowledge as he states that his list is “basically going to simulate - scrolling through your Instagram feeds” (lines 19-20). Mikey’s words orient the players to what is going on in the game and the possibilities they will be able to investigate in the fictional world.

This method of sharing information gives the players (and their characters) options for activities and dimensions to explore by layering together small pieces of information concerning what their characters might know about the imagined material environments available to be travelled to and also what they might want to do when they arrive (the ways that the game master and players negotiate who can or would know what are explored further in Chapter 6). More material details of the setting are disclosed, and potentially improvised, as play proceeds.

¹³ Published game materials for TRPGs sometimes include tables where the game master rolls a dice and then the table lists the result based on the roll. In this case, the results would be options for activities in the game world’s fictional planes of existence.

Excerpt 5.8 Opportunity Ideas

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: So, um, in the full game, what there'll be is, on your
2 back of your crew sheet there'll be a list of um,
3 basically opportunity ideas. Like, like adventure ideas
4 for you and also the GM will have, will have [um a list
5 of uh, will have like opportunities that he rolls.
6 J: [O:h, cool.

((10 lines excised for brevity. See full transcript in Appendix E.6))

17 M: Like, holy shit, so, um, I'm just gonna start talking
18 things hhh hh ideas, and if any of them grab you guys,
19 um, so this is basically gonna simulate the, you guys
20 scrolling through your Instagram feeds or whatever and
21 just seeing what other people are doing, so um, like,
22 there's for example, there's an abandoned waterpark
23 that's been discovered in Vastiche, and there's a video
24 of a kid tryin' to board slide down the, the, one of the
25 giant slides and just beating it so badly, and so that's
26 sort of like, the talk of the town. There are these, um
27 (.) there are (.) u:m, the decommissioned Gundam that are
28 in the Golden Jungle that are all, like, covered in moss
29 and stuff
30 ?: Mhmhmh
31 M: Recently the new cool thing to do is to, like, um is to
32 go there and try to, um, get in there and pull, like
33 power crystals out, um, and use
34 J: [MM
35 E: [O:o
36 M: them, so those would be modules that you can use to
37 upgrade you:r, your items, right. So, um, there are kids
38 doing that [right now.
39 E: [That sounds sweet.
40 J: [Mhm.

41 M: Obviously all of the hottest action is happening in
 42 Quahalia, which is basically the plane of hell, sort of,
 43 ?: [((chuckles))
 44 M: [so that's where all the cool parties are happening and
 45 stuff, but obviously, but you guys can't get there
 46 because you don't have logic binders, so you're just
 47 seeing all these kids' selfies, with like, ultra-fiends
 48 and stuff, and you're just jealous about that.

49 ?: Hm
 50 M: U:m, [a:nd
 51 L: [Doin' sick ollies over giant pools of lava and
 52 M: Yeah, you, and you know a (.) and you heard a, you got a
 53 lead on where the gate back from the golden jungle is.
 54 You heard it is near a (.) um, (.) uh, bird mating
 55 ground, like a tropical bird mating ground. Um, that's
 56 the best you've heard, but you've heard a rumour about
 57 that. U:m
 58 B: We'd be famous (.) if we found that.
 59 (.)
 60 B: People would notice.
 61 M: Yeah, 'cause right now, the
 62 E: I'm down for Golden Jungle (.) bro. ((chuckles))

For the first run (seen above, in Excerpt 5.8), Mikey shares options so the players know where they can choose to go (places such as, Vastiche (lines 23-26); the Golden Jungle (lines 26-29); or Quahalia (lines 41-48)), and what types of activities they might do there, e.g., do skateboard tricks like a “board slide” (line 24) in Vastiche, find power crystals in the Golden Jungle (lines 31-33), and take “selfies with ultrafiends” (line 47-48) in Quahalia. Mikey also provides small details about what the place will look like: “an abandoned water park” (line 22), Gundam “covered in moss” (line 27-28), and felt like “basically the plane of hell” (line 42). These small story descriptions are category implicative, suggesting category bound actions (e.g., board sliding, taking selfies) that link to the social category of teenagers (here, slugblasting teens) whose actions are enabled by the properties of the different dimensional locations they can travel to. *Category bound actions* (also called category bound activities) are actions (typically verbs) that are linked to category membership in MCA (Lepper, 2000; Reynolds & Fitzgerald,

2015). Mikey's use of category bound actions in this description serves to build common ground for the players to orient to the imagined, material world through these examples of who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing as they choose the location and goal for their run.

5.3.2 Preference and Assessing the Options

The talk outlined in Excerpt 5.8, above, is an example of how players locate themselves and make assessments of places and activities based on the identities and characteristics of their characters. Positive assessments such as “cool thing to do” (line 31), “hottest action” (line 41), “cool parties” (line 44), “sick ollies” (line 51) are used throughout as descriptive terms to not only locate the players' characters in terms of environment and practices, but also in terms of their attitudes and evaluations of experience. Such indications of positive evaluation by Mikey help to further demonstrate how the players might not just share common experiences but also judgments of these experiences. The players recognize the preferred positive assessment and interject (e.g., Emily with “that sounds sweet” (line 39), Marshall with “sick ollies” (line 51)) in ways that demonstrate how assessments, when made by one speaker and agreed upon by another, can help to confirm shared experience (Pomerantz, 1984; Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013). The informative descriptions of the world that Mikey has made are taken by the participants who agree with, take up, and expand on his perceptions, thereby further constructing the world together.

An overarching and on-going sense of who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing is situationally relevant and oriented to at points in play where decisions about where to go or what to do next are made, as, for example, in Excerpt 5.8 (above) as the game master and players relate to the potential “coolness” of an option for a run. In the excerpt, we can see how Mikey helps to establish the appropriate attitudes for the characters, and they then take turns that

sequentially reference and build upon the “coolness” of the proposed activity. Mikey frames the option of seeking out power crystals using the phrase “recently the new cool thing to do” (line 31), and as he gives further context a few moments later, Blaine follows up with “we’d be famous (.) if we found that” (line 58), and after a short pause, “people would notice” (line 60). In this talk, the actions and potential motivations of the characters, as tied to the teenage category bound activities of “looking cool” and gaining recognition, are layered into the setting and affect how the players choose where they will go and what portions of the world will continue to be cooperatively built and constituted through their play.

The players choose the cool option for their run and proceed with play by travelling to the Golden Jungle, where further detail of the setting is revealed and co-constituted as they interact with it. The settings and actions exist within and through each other as aspects of the gestalt contexture of this group’s gameplay, and the interplay of settings (where), player characters (who), and actions (what) in interaction demonstrates how the players create, use, and share information to locate themselves in the fictional world that is the setting for the social activity of storied play. Similar information is given and layered in interaction to locate players within the setting for later runs.

5.3.3 (Im)Material Constraints on Decisions

Across the excerpts in this chapter, the interplay between in-character and out-of-character knowledge and the material impacts on interaction are apparent. Information is exchanged within the game, and game documents (e.g., Mikey’s list of locations) are used to inform moment-by-moment interaction as locations of play are described and constituted with reference to locations on the game map. In making decisions about where to go on a run, the players are constrained by the imaginary equipment that they are required to have to visit a

dimension. The game map (see Figure 5.2) provides a material representation of the layout of the multiverse and each dimension's environmental properties. These properties affect what is possible in the world as well as what is possible for these players, at this point in time, based on what equipment they have.

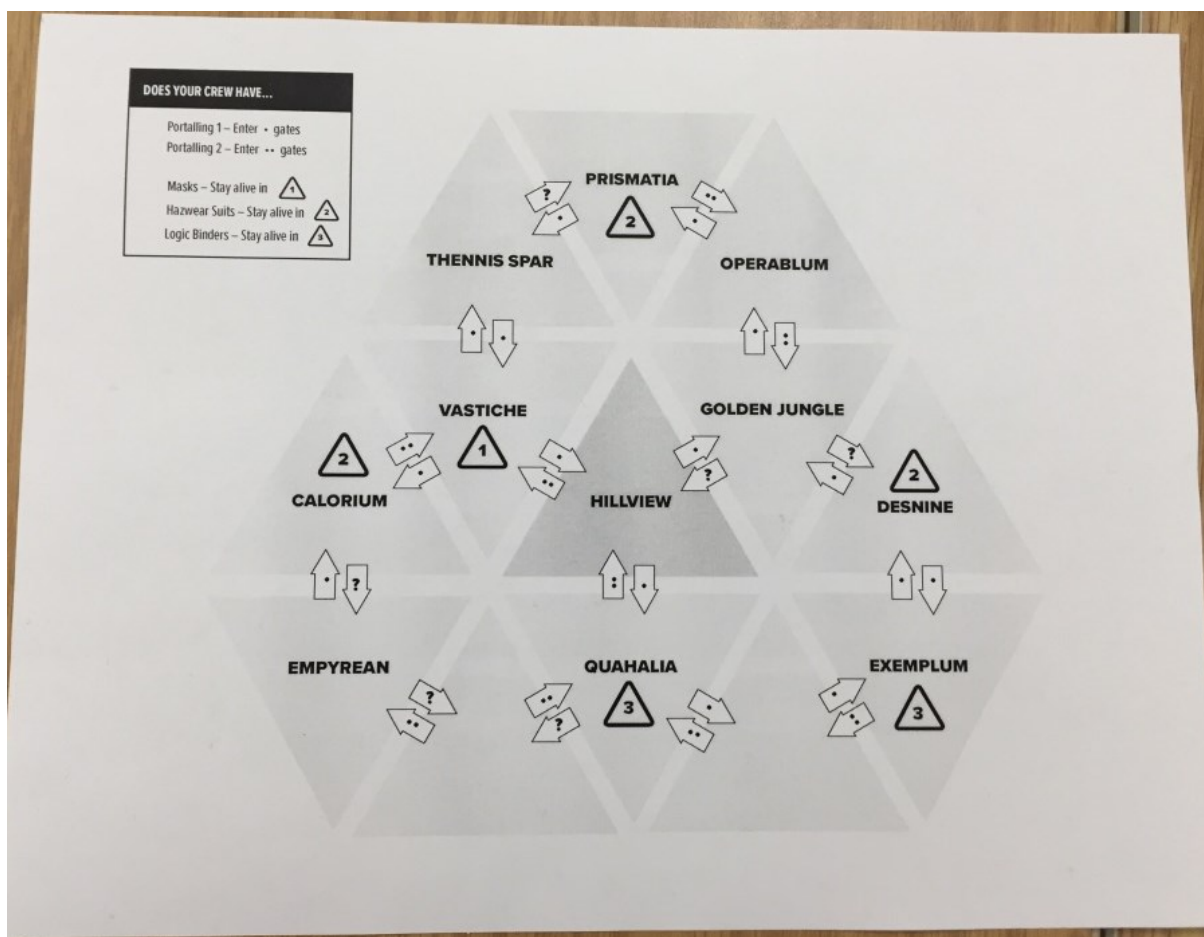


Figure 5.2 *Slugblaster* Game Map (Triangle Version Used in Game 1)

In Excerpt 5.9, below, the players directly index the map as they decide upon where to go for their second run. The players are constrained by what routes are available to them, as shown on the map (above), and what equipment is required by them to survive in the atmosphere of their imagined location. The necessary equipment (with-what) is intimately intertwined with the location (where) that they can choose to go.

Excerpt 5.9 "Spitting out ideas"

Participant Group: Group 1, Slugblaster, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Yeah, exactly, so, um, so yeah, so if you guys, um, I'll
 2 start again, just spitting out ideas, so there's the,
 3 there's the water park. It's still being seshed. This
 4 time someone finally, they did um, they landed a trick.
 5 They did like a, a front () on, on the, to, to a melon
 6 grab on the slide, and it's sick, and everyone's talking
 7 about it, and apparently, the kid you did that got a
 8 Myper spon, sponsorship the next day. So, apparently
 9 Myper tweeted out that they're really interested in this
 10 water park spot, and they like, think it's the spot to
 11 watch. Um, besides that though, there's, there are people
 12 tryin'a do a speed run, um, through, um, where () (go on
 13 here) ((looking at map)) There are people tryin' to do a
 14 speed run through Operaebulum, um, and like, tryin to beat
 15 each others records. Um, there ar:e, what else, what else
 16 have we got? I'll just tell, I'll just tell you what
 17 these places are and maybe that will even give you ideas.
 18 ?: [Hmm
 19 J: [Mmm
 20 M: Prismatia is the plane of light. Um, [it's just sort of a
 21 orbiting, yeah, yeah, you'd need a suit.
 22 E: [Oh, but we can't go
 23 without a suit (there).
 24 M: That's another thing you guys can do. You could do a run
 25 to try to get these pieces of gear.
 26 E: I would like to do tha:t.
 27 B: [Mhm
 28 B: Yeah.

With reference to Excerpt 5.9, above, as Mikey describes options, "Prismatia is the plane of light" (line 20), Emily interrupts with overlapped speech to note that they need specific gear,

“a suit” (lines 22-23), which is indicated on the game map. Emily demonstrates her understanding of the imaginary world and the physical game materials through this interruption, and Mikey adjusts to say that they “could do a run to try to get these pieces of gear” (lines 24-25). The with-what of required gear is situationally relevant to the decision making in the moment. As game master, Mikey gives them an option of a place to explore, which Emily recognizes as problematic based on the equipment they currently possess. The map and mechanics of the game are operationalized through the players’ decision-making utterances. The world depicted in the game map and described in Mikey’s prepared notes is reconstituted and built upon conversationally, as the players engage with a complex array of documents through out-of-character, real behaviours (e.g., pointing at the map), and in-character imagined experiences – all occurring simultaneously as group members decide upon a route and travel within the game world.

5.4 Discussion

In this chapter we have seen ways that players build and draw upon common ground as they collaboratively locate themselves within the fictional settings of play, intersubjectively reconstituting those settings based on game materials (e.g., published modules, game master scripts and notes) and their own knowledge of gaming. As they do so, they shift between talk that is more goal-oriented and institutional in nature and talk that is more ordinary, i.e., based on less directed, peer-to-peer talk. The players orient to their roles (as game master and players / characters) and both the real setting (the table where they are playing as real people) and the fictional setting (where the imagined story occurs through roleplaying characters). This analysis of ways that common ground is built and drawn upon and the ways that players negotiate shifts

between primary, game-based, and fantasy frames provides insights that contribute to bodies of work in LIS on information behaviour and MCS on immateriality.

The concept of common ground, and my CA-influenced, small stories approach to analyzing how it is built and oriented to, provides in-depth examples of Huvila's (2022) making and taking of information and Cox's (2012, 2013) information-in-social-action as information is created and used turn-by-turn as a part of gameplay. The game masters present information they have prepared (sometimes original information, and sometimes taking from published game materials) and players take and reframe that information as they play. The taking is multi-layered because the games themselves have rules and settings in published (or in the case of the group playing *Slugblaster*, soon to be published) materials that are taken and adapted. They build and draw upon common ground, establishing a world while also engaging in ordinary conversation and building social bonds, in keeping with how common ground involves both informational and affiliational imperatives (Enfield, 2006, 2013b), which drive the talk.

Although players may directly seek information by asking questions, information is discursively created and used in other ways to support gameplay (i.e., to co-create and inhabit a fictional world). The use and co-creation of information occurs at a micro-level, turn-by-turn in talk. As Prigoda and McKenzie (2007) established in the context of a knitting group, group activities can involve both casual and serious leisure. In the recorded talk discussed in this chapter, the participants shift between casual and goal-oriented talk and real and imaginary frames. These shifts occur with fluidity and demonstrate ways that the players establish and use shared knowledge for both the everyday activities of creating and engaging with an imaginary world in TRPG play and for maintaining their ongoing social relationships. The examination of frame shifts and common ground in the manner I have presented here could be extended to

examine other contexts of everyday information behaviour, building upon the need to further understand information in everyday contexts as called for by Ocepek (2018b). Here, I have demonstrated “social practices that are possible” (Peräkylä, 2021, Generalizability of Research Findings section, para. 8), practices that are used to create and engage with fictional worlds in everyday contexts. These practices are sufficiently orderly and systematic in the way they occur in talk that they can serve as a basis for future analytic generalizability when considering ways that people create and orient to common ground in the realms of fiction and media.

The context of TRPG gameplay is information-rich and demonstrates how information is used to co-construct an imagined place, which also makes it a perspicuous setting in which to study how imagined materialities can be co-constructed and oriented to. While there is previous research in MCS and other fields that examines fans and making and collecting (e.g., the special issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* on materiality and object-oriented fandom edited by Rehak (2014), and Heljakka’s (2017) work on adults and collecting), my work’s focus on the construction of materiality through talk in gameplay shows the central importance of material culture in the development of, and engagement with, fiction. In this way, my work is supported by prior MCS literature, particularly those works that consider imagined materialities in design-based talk (e.g., Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Lystgaard Due, 2018; Murphy, 2005) while substantially extending this work into an understanding of how imagined materialities occur within the everyday lives of non-designers. My examination expands theoretical discussions of immateriality that have previously dealt with objectification and religion (e.g., Bille, 2010; Engelke, 2005), or absence and death (e.g., Meyer, 2012), to also consider fictional worlds and their construction as social practices of gameplay, and how theses (im)material spaces and places

are constructed through the informational and affiliational imperatives of common ground that are oriented to and accomplished through turns of talk.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has established the integrated nature of the socio-material qualities of the imagined fictional setting of *Slugblaster* and *Storm King's Thunder*, as the game worlds were elaborated and reconstituted throughout the discursive negotiation between real phenomena and experiences and the imaginations of the participants. The players begin to jointly build and evaluate aspects of a potentially common, albeit imaginary, world – guided by their game master's words, and supported by the prepared documents (lists, maps, etc.) that are referenced as situationally relevant to the action at hand. Such actions build and draw upon common ground as the players orient to the who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing, where, and with-what of gameplay. World-building occurs in interaction at a micro-level turn-by-turn as the socio-material environments are described, adapted, and collaboratively engaged with. Through the use of attention-focusing openings, recaps, references, small story descriptions, evaluations, and intertextual and category-resonant talk, players draw on perceptions of the possible, guided by the constraints of lists and maps, as together they define and detail the emerging nature of their imagined world.

In this chapter, I focused on openings, recaps, and runs as points in play where the imagined world is constructed, with analysis that demonstrates how game masters can shift between types of talk (ordinary and institutional) to move from less formal demonstrations of friendship and peer engagement, into the recaps and activities of goal-oriented gameplay. Group 1's first ever game of *Slugblaster* provided avenues to examine how Mikey provided scripted descriptions and worked to build common ground with the players. That is, to begin the game,

Mikey both established and then drew on common ground by explaining the game to his players and using illustrative examples that he anticipated the players would understand. By making such information available to the players they were, in turn, and at a micro-level, able to take his suggestions, and jointly build upon them by contributing relevant examples of their own. The recaps in *Storm King's Thunder* incorporated small stories and fine-grained shifts between types of talk, demonstrating the complexity of interaction as players shift between ordinary talk and goal-oriented talk. The players constantly move between and intertwine the materiality of their real world and past experiences with the (im)materiality of the game to establish common ground. This common ground is established and then extended outwards, to newly conceived places and activities (while bounded by texts (e.g., game master scripts) and representations (maps)). Through turns of talk, each speaker orients themselves and their listeners to who-they-are, what-they-are-doing, where-they-are, and with-what-objects-they-use. The following two chapters will delve deeper into how materialities are layered within the players' activities as both out-of-character (real) gameplayers and in-character roleplayers. These chapters examine aspects of the goal oriented, institutional nature of the TRPGs, and how the roles and forms of authority that occur within and through gameplay are associated with different claims to knowledge, as these inform the collaborative sense of setting and play.

Chapter 6: Institutions and Improvisation – Roles, Rights, and Authority

In the previous chapter, I examined the ways that real and imagined materialities are layered and oriented to as the fictional game world is constructed through play. I focused on how the game masters and players created and drew on common ground to understand and collectively build and locate themselves in the world of the games they were playing. In this chapter, I continue my analytic focus on the co-construction of the (im)material worlds of the games through an examination of some of the ways that rights, obligations, and expectations are implicated in the materialities of play and how rights and obligations to know are negotiated and demonstrated in the creation and sharing of information during play. This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- How do player /character and game master roles and their identity-tied rights to know affect how information is shared and used in the talk of gameplay that constructs fictional worlds moment-by-moment?
- How is in-character and out-of-character knowledge negotiated in play?

Central to this analysis are the CA concepts of institutional talk and epistemic asymmetries. Such asymmetries are apparent as rights to know and obligations to share knowledge are oriented to in interaction – these rights and obligations can be tied to places and identities in context (Stivers et al., 2011). In the first section of this chapter “Framing the Analysis,” I further explain the CA concepts of institutional talk and epistemic asymmetries as they are used in the analysis in this chapter. In the following section, “Negotiating Authority and Asymmetries,” I focus on epistemic asymmetries and the ways that identities (or status as a member of some category) and their tied rights and expectations are demonstrated and negotiated in gameplay, specifically with regard to how players create and engage with the fictional world’s

(im)materiality. In the second section of this chapter, “Epistemic Ecologies,” I continue this discussion, but with more attention to the community and group context and the (im)material aspects of the collaborative action of gaming in the epistemic ecologies of these TRPG groups.

6.1 Framing the Analysis

Two key analytic concepts from CA, institutional talk (also discussed in the previous chapter) and epistemic asymmetries, are explained in this section. These concepts sensitize me to the nuances of the negotiation of roles and authority in the talk of TRPG play. The asymmetric rights to know that are negotiated in the talk have implications for how the fictional worlds of the games are constructed moment-by-moment.

6.1.1 Institutional Talk

In this chapter, I build on the previous chapter’s consideration of shifts between ordinary and institutional talk to examine the constitution of the imagined worlds of TRPGs as a part of the gestalt contextures of interaction. As previously outlined in Chapter 3’s methodology section, *institutional talk* is talk wherein participants have particular roles through which they orient to the achievement of goals, usually within a specific interactional setting (e.g., talk that occurs within the institutional situation of education often happens in a classroom). As noted in the previous chapter, the concept of institutional talk as completely distinct from ordinary talk has been critiqued as arbitrary, with some of the difficulties delineating between the two “types” of talk noted by, e.g., Heritage (2005, p. 107). However, also as demonstrated in Chapter 5, institutional talk is useful as an analytic concept to highlight shifts between turns of talk that are more goal-oriented, organized, and based on role-based asymmetries in power (e.g., as between the game master and players); and those instances of talk where the power balance is more equal, as in ordinary conversation between peers. In the analysis in this chapter, I consider how

expectations, rights, and obligations to know, as these are derived from and through the context of the goal-oriented actions of the players, affect how the fictional world is built and constituted during play. The players might be peers with each other in real life, but they roleplay characters according to the rules of the game. As such, the game itself is a kind of institutional context that is overlaid on real-life relationships, as the rules constrain players' expectations for knowledge, as well as what is considered appropriate behaviour for their individual characters. Participant identities (i.e., as players and as game master), and their specific character roles have different statuses and claims to knowledge, with specific rights, obligations, and expectations tied to them. These identities are *omnirelevant*¹⁴ to the game context, i.e., they are relevant throughout the interaction of the gameplay and evident in the ways that participants orient to their own, and each other's, (fictional) identities. For example, in *Slugblaster*, the players select a character type to play, and those types remain omnirelevant; they are consistently oriented to in and through the interaction.

Excerpt 6.1, below, contains an example of the ways that a fictional character is understood by the real person playing him. Here, Marshall stops and amends his utterance, to correct his character's potentially angry or annoyed reaction to a joking assessment by Blaine's character, Brooz, who is questioning Marshall's character's use of the rocket board instead of his own effort ("too hard to climb up, I suppose" (lines 13-14)). Marshall remembers, and others know, that his character is supposed to be "chill" and so does not like to "work that hard" (line

¹⁴ Fitzgerald et al. (2009) describe omnirelevant devices as membership categories that can be used at any point in an interaction to accomplish an activity. When something happens that makes the device appropriate, it cannot be excluded; the device is oriented to, and in doing so, the members acknowledge its contextual relevance to the situation (Sacks, 1995). Sacks's (1995) example is of a therapy session where the omnirelevant device is therapist / patients. For my research, the omnirelevant devices include those relevant to the play (game master / players), to the roleplay (character attitudes; teenagers / parents), and to the playtest (designer / testers).

14). Through his talk, Marshall demonstrates that he recognizes the constraints imposed on him as a player by the expectations associated with his character, as he makes a self-repair¹⁵ in his talk, to indicate his awareness that he should orient to and so perform his “chill” identity.

Excerpt 6.1 “I’m chill”

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

-
- 1 M: K, so a four, a four or five is you, it’s a success with
 2 consequence, so you, you get up there, no problem. You do
 3 exactly what you say you’re gonna do, but, um, but, your
 4 rocket board is pretty noisy, and so I’m gonna mark this.
 5 ((colours in clock))
 6 L: ((chuckles)) [It’s, it’s a shitty rocket board, it’s not
 7 great.
 8 E: [Uh-oh, the clock is full.
 9 M: [Yeah.
 10 B: [You couldn’t a just, you couldn’t of just climbed up.
 11 L: No, I have a rocket board ((points at B))
 12 B: ((shakes head)) Too hard to climb up, I suppose.
 13 L: Whatever, there man, you can end up in the d- oh, I’m
 14 chill. You’re right, I don’t like to work that hard.

In the following sections of analysis, I further demonstrate how identities are oriented to when making claims to knowledge of the imaginary world or when invited to share knowledge of the world. These analyses examine how the authority and status of different roles have implications for the on-going constitution of the imagined materialities of play. Within social

¹⁵ Repairs in talk are when a speaker or other interactant makes a correction in conversation. Repairs can be self-initiated or other initiated. For a nuanced discussion of research on repairs see Kitzinger (2013).

interaction, participant experience, identity-tied rights, and forms of social obligation can produce asymmetries of knowledge (or asymmetries in the extent to which a person's knowledge is considered valid). Drew and Heritage (1992, p. 49) give examples of such epistemic asymmetries through their work on doctors' interactions with patients in the institutional context of the medical system. Taking a more general approach that is not necessarily restricted to institutional talk, however, any interaction that has a question / answer structure (where the asking participant is seeking information and the other has information and is answering) has aspects of knowledge asymmetry. My focus in this chapter is on examining the implications of epistemic asymmetries for the ways that game members understand the materiality of the imagined world as features of this world are established in interaction. As will be discussed, the ability to recognize and establish what one another knows, and thereby to distinguish the extent of common ground shared, is important when interacting in and creating the materiality of a fictional, imagined space.

6.1.2 Epistemic Asymmetries

Epistemic asymmetries occur in interaction when one speaker has more interactionally relevant knowledge than the other. In the TRPG context, the game master may be expected to have greater knowledge and control of the material environment; however, interaction is collaborative and negotiated in the moment, with consideration for the distribution of who has rights to know and share information about different aspects of the material environment. In a discussion of epistemics in conversation, Heritage (2013a) presents an "epistemic gradient" between K+/K- where one interactant has a more knowledgeable (K) position than the other (p. 376). Epistemic gradients are related to territories of information where a *territory of information* encompasses "not only who knows what and in what way, but also who has rights to know it and

express it” (Heritage, 2013a, p. 375). In interaction, the same information can fall within both interactants’ territories of information to differing degrees, placing them at different points on an epistemic gradient from not knowing to knowing (Heritage, 2013a).

Heritage (2012b, 2013a) presents the epistemic gradient and related concepts of epistemic status and epistemic stance as a way to offer nuanced descriptions of what occurs in interaction.

Epistemic status “involves the parties’ joint recognition of their comparative access, knowledgeableability, and rights relative to some domain of knowledge as a matter of more or less established fact;” it encompasses what is known, how a person knows it, and their rights and obligations to know it (Heritage, 2013a, pp. 376–377). In some knowledge domains, or institutional contexts, this status is established and enduring (Heritage, 2013a, p. 377), e.g., status based on incumbency in a procedurally consequential membership category, such as therapist / patient, as seen in Sacks’s (1995) discussion of omnirelevant identities. In a TRPG, such omnirelevant, procedurally consequential categories are the game master and player / character identities. While epistemic status is considered to be omnirelevant, epistemic stance is a related concept that takes into account the moment-by-moment and unfolding nature of interaction. As such, *epistemic stance*, encompasses how relative knowledge is negotiated in conversation and may not match expected rights and obligations affiliated with a particular epistemic stance or institutional role (Heritage, 2013a).

Epistemic status and stance are important to the way talk is organized in a number of ways. For example, if one participant’s expected knowledge is relevant to a conversation, confirmation may be sought by another participant (Heritage, 2010; Heritage & Raymond, 2012), and divergences between status and stance may occur as conversation progresses (Hayano, 2011; Heritage, 2012c; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006). The

negotiation of epistemic status and stance; and the associated rights and obligations to know, create, and share knowledge; is additionally layered in domains / communities where fictional and imaginary realities are being instantiated (e.g., TRPGs, acting / theatre, make-believe play).

6.1.3 Epistemic Ecologies

While the term epistemic asymmetries refers to perceived differences in knowledge between interactants, insofar as these differences impact the interaction at hand, the term “*epistemic ecologies*” (Heritage, 2013a, p. 394, emphasis added), as applied in my research, refers to how player relationships and character roles relate to one another and also to the ways in which both real and imagined materialities are negotiated in the game-based interaction. Heritage (2013) uses this term for his conception of community-based epistemics wherein objects and material environments are included in the concept of community (a concept based on Goodwin’s (1994, 1997, 2010) studies of archaeological practice), rather than on dyadic interactions.

Much research on epistemics and knowledge claims focuses on the individual’s rights to knowledge or on dyadic interaction (see Heritage, 2013a, p. 394; Sierra, 2016, p. 33); however, as demonstrated in the analyses in this chapter, in TRPG interaction, group and community knowledge is also important, as is knowledge of physical settings and material objects. Together these epistemic ecologies can be considered to be “setting-specific properties of a community” (Heritage, 2013a, p. 394). Heritage (2013, p. 371) also notes that there has been sociological interest in the area of epistemic ecologies in relation to social distribution of knowledge-forming epistemic communities (such as interest or hobby groups). In this ecological vein, where the relations between organisms and environments are of concern, C. Goodwin (2010) has argued

that cognition itself is distributed between participants in interaction, rather than being an abstract process contained within each communicating individual's brain / mind.

Playing a TRPG is a group activity where the setting is collaboratively constituted through the instantiation and negotiation of the institutional imperatives of “doing-being”¹⁶ a TRPG player in the context of each particular group. While asymmetries of knowledge are not always explicit, they can be oriented to by examining the turn-by-turn talk that occurs when, for example, an invitation to create and / or share a perception of the imaginary setting is issued, or when a description of a fictional place is given and elaborated upon by others. In such collaborative situations, knowledge is built jointly, and the sociability of a game is accomplished through the ways in which asymmetries are negotiated.

Previous scholarly work has examined rights to know in the context of imaginative play. In examining naturally occurring talk in a particularly relevant context for my purposes, epistemics of children's make-believe, Sidnell (2011) notes that in some situations children recognize differences in authority over make-believe elements and organize their talk to propose speech by imagined characters rather than to assert it because the characters are not theirs, i.e., if the make-believe situation belongs to one child in the interaction, then action by another child may be proposed rather than asserted (Sidnell, 2011, p. 153). The children in Sidnell's (2011) study orient to territories of knowledge and the asymmetrical rights of knowing about imagined characters and events. In the context of TRPGs, Fine (1983) identifies different “awareness contexts” through which players / characters orient themselves, based on their awareness of other

¹⁶ “Doing being” is a term used in ethnomethodological studies that recognizes that norms are enacted. As Sacks (1984) described in a seminal work on being ordinary, a person does not happen to do things that are considered ordinary; they also know what typical action is. Examining how those norms are enacted in the moment is the study doing being ordinary (or as in my case, I am studying doing being a TRPG player and character in a fictional setting). For further discussion see Chapter 3 on “Ethnomethodological Underpinnings.”

selves (i.e., in-game character identities versus out-of-game player identities and their attentiveness to each other's knowledge as this knowledge relates to contexts of the primary real world, the game, and the fantasy in-character context) (p. 187). Similarly, Mitchell (2016) examines live action roleplaying games (LARPs), with consideration for how frames (i.e., shared perceptions of what is going on as outlined in Chapter 5, "Frames and Footing") shape participants' interpretations of what is happening and also help to manage the "organization of activity [i.e., talk and other behaviour] that specifies meaning and expectations" (p. 326). Mitchell's (2016) work explores LARP games where gamers act out the events of the game in the real spaces of real life, rather than the table-based settings of a TRPG. It should be noted that Mitchell (2016), like Fine (1983), collects data through writing ethnographic fieldnotes rather than having recordings of actual games; nevertheless, her work is relevant for mine as it sensitizes me to the ways that space and place within gameplay are managed by players. Epistemic nuances of interaction are constituted by participants turn-by-turn. My analysis in this chapter focuses on how the players collaboratively invite, create, and share knowledge of the game-world setting, thereby constructing its materiality through their interaction. In doing so, the players organize their action and interaction by orienting to relevant identities and rights to know in situ.

6.2 Epistemic Ecologies – Group 1 Slugblaster

This section of the chapter presents three analyses of play from Group 1 *Slugblaster*. The first subsection, "Incorporating a New Player / Character," focuses on bringing a new individual into the game and the ways in which game master and player rights to know are negotiated, followed by an examination of how the interaction impacts upon and builds the fictional world of the game. The second subsection, "Brooz's Closet – Building Character Owned Spaces and

Objects,” examines how epistemic stances and statuses are oriented to in talk as players / characters are invited to describe actions and spaces within their territory of knowledge with an example of the character Brooz’s closet. The third subsection, “Engaging with Authority of Roles and Game Materials” demonstrates how Mikey has designed the game materials to give players room to create and contribute to the world.

6.2.1.1 Incorporating a New Player / Character

Excerpt 6.2, below (which was previously introduced in Chapter 5 as Excerpt 5.2 with more of the preceding talk), is part of a longer sequence of talk that occurred at the beginning of the second *Slugblaster* game. The player, Sam, was not present for the first game, so Sam was not involved in the introduction at the start of the first game nor the character building that the rest of the group did at that time. Sam is brought in to join this second game, at the invitation of one of the other players (Emily), because another player, Jorden, had to step away. In the following interaction, Sam fills out the playbook (character sheet) to create a character and is focused on the playbook while the other players are involved in an ordinary conversation as real-life peers (concerning their car windows). The introduction of Sam’s character, Taisha, begins after this portion of informal conversation. Mikey shifts everyone into the game frame by asking the group questions that are oriented to the group, though also including himself in the group through using the term “we” (lines 1, 3). He does so by asking, “What do we want to do about Sam’s character?” (line 3). By asking this question, Mikey asserts his authority by selecting himself as the first speaker in this sequence of game-based talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992). This utterance shifts attention back to the specifics of the game, while also (through the use of the term “we”) referencing the collaborative nature of play and his expectation that others will contribute ideas to the evolution of Sam’s character.

Excerpt 6.2 Ordinary Talk Shift to Adding a Player / Character

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: this excerpt starts on line 15 because it was previously presented as part of Excerpt 5.2.

15 M: Ok, um, (.) do we want t:o (.)
 16 S: Kitty spsp
 17 M: What do we want to do about Sam's character? Do we want
 18 to find her, um, during the adventure, or do we want to
 19 just sort of ((motions hand)) have her in?
 20 L: U:h, let's, let's hear what she has and then we'll figure
 21 out the best way to throw her in.
 22 M: [Sure.
 23 S: [Thanks.
 24 M: Sam, why don't you tell us about your character?

Drew and Heritage (1992) and Enfield (2011) note the epistemic asymmetries present in question / answer sequences and in taking the first position or being the first to offer an opinion. In the excerpt above, while Mikey is taking a more knowledgeable (K+) position by indicating that the players should now attend to the game, he is also specifically inviting the group to decide how to incorporate a new character into their game. Mikey invites Sam to “tell us about your character” (line 10), building on Marshall’s turn in which he states that the group could hear more about the character in order to figure out “the best way to throw her in” (lines 6-7). Mikey’s agreement with Marshall’s suggestion (“Sure” (line 8)) gives Sam permission to make contributions in a way that frames Sam as having relevant knowledge about her own character.

This excerpt is followed by talk (not shown in the excerpt, for brevity) in which there is some negotiation and setting up of the character's background to work within the game. This process involves Sam presenting (and accounting for) a background for the character that subsequently has implications for some aspects of the material nature of the game's setting. Excerpt 6.3, in the following section, provides an example of this impact with particular emphasis on the on-going improvisation and construction of the setting.

6.2.1.1.1 Impacts on the Imagined World

In Excerpt 6.3, below, Mikey asks Sam what her character's "signature item"¹⁷ is. Sam has chosen a weapon, due to assuming that the game is based in a medieval setting rather than a sci-fi techno-fantasy setting (lines 7-8). When Sam states that she chose a war hammer (line 17), Mikey confirms "yeah, I think that works" (line 18). Sam describes the item, telling a small story of its appearance and sentimental value (lines 21-26), which Mikey takes up and works to incorporate into the game. He does so by describing (with back-and-forth with players) a new, potential part of the larger multiverse where the item could have come from and how Sam would have come across the item (lines 31-50). Here Mikey begins his own account, or small story, of how the war hammer makes sense within the game with the utterance, "I have an idea" (line 29). This utterance allows him to both retain and claim the authority of game master (it is his idea and his overall idea of the game), while also collaboratively developing the plot in ways that include Sam's chosen item and Sam's authority to know about her character. Throughout this continued exchange about the character and their background, Sam indicates her overt agreement, approval, and attention through a range of brief responses ("Mhm" (lines 32, 40, 44, 54); and "Yes" (lines

¹⁷ Each character has a signature item chosen (or created) by their player during the character creation process.

37 and 51)). During this exchange, Marshall makes a collaborative interjection to suggest a location (“Gundam Forest” (line 35)), which Mikey agrees with by repeating the location (line 36) while also leaving room open for a possible extension to this idea (“and stuff” (line 36)).

Excerpt 6.3 Sam’s War Hammer

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 2

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

S = Sam (Taisha)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Cool. And, and what about your signature item? [What'd
2 you pick for-
3 S: [My signa-
4 , yeah my signature item, like, I j, I basically, I chose
5 a weapon.
6 M: Mhm
7 S: A:nd, so, like I, I wasn't sure if we were going medieval
8 or, or not.
9 M: Oh, it's like sort of like sci-fi stuff. [But, but
10 S: [So, oh-k,
11 that's fine.
12 M: it's sort of techno-fantasy, so I'm sure there is a way
13 to, uh-
14 S: Ok, so basically, yeah.
15 L: Plasma sword, yeah.
16 M: If you have a sword, that's probably fine. ((chuckles))
17 S: I was going with a war hammer, but ok.
18 M: [Yeah, I think that works.
19 E: [Ye:ah.
20 B: [Yes.
21 S: So, like, yeah, and those () so she basically has this
22 like, very old, and like, beaten, you know war hammer.
23 You know, the blade is made out of, out of () iron, and
24 the handle is made out of, you know, old, like, dark oak
25 wood, wood, and it has a locket, like wrapped around it
26 with a picture of her daughter.
27 M: That's so cool. K,

28 S: Yeah.
 29 M: I have an idea. [So, in, um
 30 S: [(Cool)
 31 M: so in the multiverse there ar:e
 32 S: Mhm
 33 M: more, advanced civilizations and old, ancient, dead,
 34 advanced civilizations, as you guys have seen () like
 35 L: Gundam forest.
 36 M: the Gundam forest, and stuff,
 37 S: Yes.
 38 M: so I think this is something (.) Ok, I have an idea. What
 39 if before you
 40 S: Mhm
 41 M: got pregnant and had a baby, what if you were sort of,
 42 you were in this scene, in the Slugblaster adventuring
 43 scene
 44 S: Mhm
 45 M: and, you had, and, enough that you had found one of
 46 these, like, [cool items
 47 S: [Rare items, yeah.
 48 M: Rare items, so you [have this sort of like, alien, um,
 49 S: [Mhm
 50 M: war hammer thing
 51 S: Yes.
 52 M: Then you got pregnant, your, and all that had to go put
 53 on hold.
 54 S: Mhm

The interaction in Excerpt 6.3 demonstrates some of the ways that expected knowledge and rights are negotiated and epistemological stances are instantiated in ongoing interaction. Sam's epistemic status as a player / character gives her rights to have relevant knowledge of her character's background, motivations, possessions, and experiences. However, these aspects of the character are being imagined and intersubjectively adapted in the moment as the group simultaneously incorporates the player, Sam, and her imagined character, Taisha, into play. As we have seen, Mikey, as game master, has enduring rights and obligations related to his status as the inventor of the setting and arbiter of what is allowable. However, Mikey has also noted in his interview with me, where he recounted a big story of the *Slugblaster* world, its development, and

the playstyle he encourages within it, that he tries to give players room to see where they take things. That adaptability is clear through the stances demonstrated in Excerpt 6.3, where, for example, Mikey hedges his assertion of the game as “like” sci-fi and works to develop a narrative that allows the game to incorporate Sam’s suggested item (“I’m sure there’s a way to, uh-” (lines 12-13)), i.e., there is a way to include Sam’s idea of the war hammer).

The epistemic gradient for who is more knowledgeable about the situation (in Excerpts 6.2 and 6.3) could be described as K+ for Mikey relating to the world (and K- for Sam), but it is also simultaneously K+ for Sam relating to her character and K- for Mikey. Within their respective territories of imaginative information, Mikey is closer to the world, as its creator, and Sam is closer to her character. Their epistemic statuses are instantiated as more nuanced stances throughout this interaction, which distributes the rights to know and share to both Sam and Mikey, ending in a co-constitution of the setting that creates new hypothetical planes in the world (and includes other players in this construction as through Marshall’s suggestion the pre-existing “Gundam Forest” (line 35) could also meet this need of having historical artifacts). The rights to know and share information being oriented to by Mikey and Sam here are their rights to know about the imagined material environment of the game, based on their roles as game master and player / character, and their knowledge of other games (i.e., Sam chose the weapon due to familiarity with games based in a more medieval setting). These kinds of knowledge impact how the imagined materiality is described and constituted through small stories in the players’ conversation. In the imagined world, there are planes of existence containing material objects of past real civilizations (e.g., war hammers) as well as completely fictional items (e.g., plasma swords). Real, past phenomena need to exist alongside the fictional for Mikey’s story and the material engagements of Sam’s character concept to work, with both story and materialities

created through the small stories of moment-by-moment interaction by the players (particularly, here, by Mikey and Sam).

As briefly noted above, other players' stances and statuses are relevant to the conversation (Excerpt 6.3), and so they contribute to the epistemic ecology of the game that is growing as they play. For example, Marshall finished one of Mikey's statements about dead advanced civilizations at lines 33-34 with an example from their previous game's experience, "Gundam forest" (line 35). ("Gundam forest" is a description of the Golden Forest, which was the imagined plane of existence they traveled to in the first run of the first game.) This locational term for a fictional place serves an important role as it references a previous game, and so reminds the players of already established common ground and prior experience of most group members (except Sam who was not at the first game). By stating "Gundam forest" (line 35) as a place on an imagined plane where Sam's signature object could have originated from, the group reconstitutes and expands the current game setting, thereby helping to draw Sam into a greater history of play.

6.2.2 Brooz's Closet – Building Character Owned Spaces and Objects

Another example of epistemic asymmetries related to character / player knowledge is in Excerpt 6.4, below, that demonstrates further ways that participants control the (im)material environment based on the epistemic rights of the players / characters. The excerpt is from the first *Slugblaster* game, and it opens with Mikey working through the list of things that happen as the players start a run. He ends this opening utterance (a small story that outlines how characters might meet up) with an invitation / question to describe how their characters get ready: "So describe your characters briefly getting ready. What they would do?" (lines 8-9). In the course of the subsequent turns, Blaine describes what his character, Brooz, is wearing and gives a very

specific explanation of his closet (lines 84-92), providing detail that is within Blaine’s control (as the player roleplaying the character Brooz). This information would be a part of Brooz’s territory of information because Brooz could be expected to know what his own bedroom and closet looks like. However, note that this sequence of talk is not a monologic description. It is collaborative, with proposals from both Mikey and other players incorporated into the description, e.g., Jordan contributes “Under Armour” as an example of clothing the character might have (line 64), and Mikey agrees, “Right, ‘cause you’re rich” (lines 90-91). The co-construction of this imagined materiality – both closet and clothing – help the group to build the materiality of their imagined world (for extended context of Excerpt 6.4 that includes the excised lines, see Appendix E.7).

Excerpt 6.4 Brooz’s Closet

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Yes. K, first you guys clear stress. You guys are so
 2 excited for this party. Um, describe (.) describe your
 3 characters, like, getting ready to go for this thing at,
 4 like, in the evening. If they're sneaking out of their
 5 house, or, or, or, whatever you're gonna do. When you
 6 guys are gonna meet up at the spot. So again, you're
 7 gonna meet up back at the gas station because you know
 8 you're gonna have to go through the Golden Jungle. So
 9 describe your character's briefly getting ready. What
 10 they would [do
 11 J: [Mm

((49 lines excised for brevity. See full transcript in Appendix E.7))

61 B: So he's, like, picking out his, like, he, like, he like
 62 opens his closet, like, he like
 63 M: [Yeah.
 64 J: [I imagine he owns, like, nothing but Under Armour
 65 clothes.
 66 M: [((breathy chuckling))
 67 B: [Oh, absolutely, and like, Axe body spray.

((16 lines excised for brevity. See full transcript in Appendix E.7))

84 B: But he, [he, he waves a gesture by the wall
 85 E: [But
 86 B: and it, like, the wall, like, dissolves [in a way
 87 M: [Yeah, yeah
 88 B: and, and it's just like this long, like, it's this
 89 closet, and it's just like, like, [bike suit, bike suit,
 90 bike suit, bike suit,=
 91 [((group chuckles))
 92 B: =bike suit, and they're all [like arranged by colour.
 93 M: [Right, 'cause you're rich.
 94 That's right.

As we see in the above excerpt, Jordan prefaces her idea of the kinds of items Brooz would own with “I imagine” (line 64), thereby proposing, rather than asserting the kinds of items that Brooz would own. Jordan’s utterance acknowledges both the fictional setting, and that Blaine has epistemic rights over his creation (Brooz). As noted earlier, this action of proposing is a type of behaviour that has been observed by Sidnell (2011) in the context of children’s make believe, with children differentially demurring knowledge of a fantasy setting, according to who had first established it. Blaine’s turn confirms Jordan’s proposal and expands it (line 67). The players’ references to “Under Armour” clothing (line 64) and “Axe” body spray (line 67) are utterances that link the in-game world of the characters to the out-of-game knowledge of the players, who are familiar with those products in the real world. Here, these utterances by Jordan and Blaine build on previously established aspects of the character Brooz, to add specific

inferences to the general category of a person who would use those items. For further details on how this discussion develops see Appendix E.7.

In Excerpt 6.4 above we have seen how small details layer together real-world products and items and the fictional environments and imagined material objects that can be interacted with through play. Players move between, and co-create, their understandings of what is going on (in both the real and imagined worlds), in ways that both develop their fictional characters and maintain their peer-level social relationships that extend beyond the game. The two examples above indicate ways that the players orient to rights and expectations of knowledge and hierarchies of status, related to game-playing roles as game master and players / characters. The participants co-construct meaning and take stances – about both real and imagined settings – that enable them to move the game forward according to different rights or obligations to know about the world and setting (with Mikey having specialist knowledge) and that also allow them to maintain and establish friendly relationships (the group had not played together before). By collaboratively telling stories through jointly building descriptions, making suggestions, and telling jokes, the fictional world that is introduced by Mikey is developed through input from all players.

6.2.3 Authority of Roles and Game Materials

In TRPG play, gamers have particular identities or roles with institutional imperatives associated with them, e.g., the game master plays an omnipotent role, managing and refereeing the game with final authority through providing the setting and basic storyline (Cover, 2010, p. 6; Fine, 1983, pp. 72–73; Wizards of the Coast, 2014a, p. 5). These management rights are associated with incumbents in the category of game master, which has an inherent status; however, this right is not absolute as it can be influenced by specific game documents and

mechanics as well as the playstyle preferred by the group. Those category-bound rights are also negotiated and re-constituted in situ with players. For example, Mikey has designed *Slugblaster* with flexibility for (future) game masters to adapt the multiverse setting by providing blank dimensions on the game map. Mikey also provides opportunities for players to create objects and backgrounds that suit their own conception of teen “coolness” by providing examples (with a last option always being “Something Else” with a blank that can be filled in, see Figure 6.1).

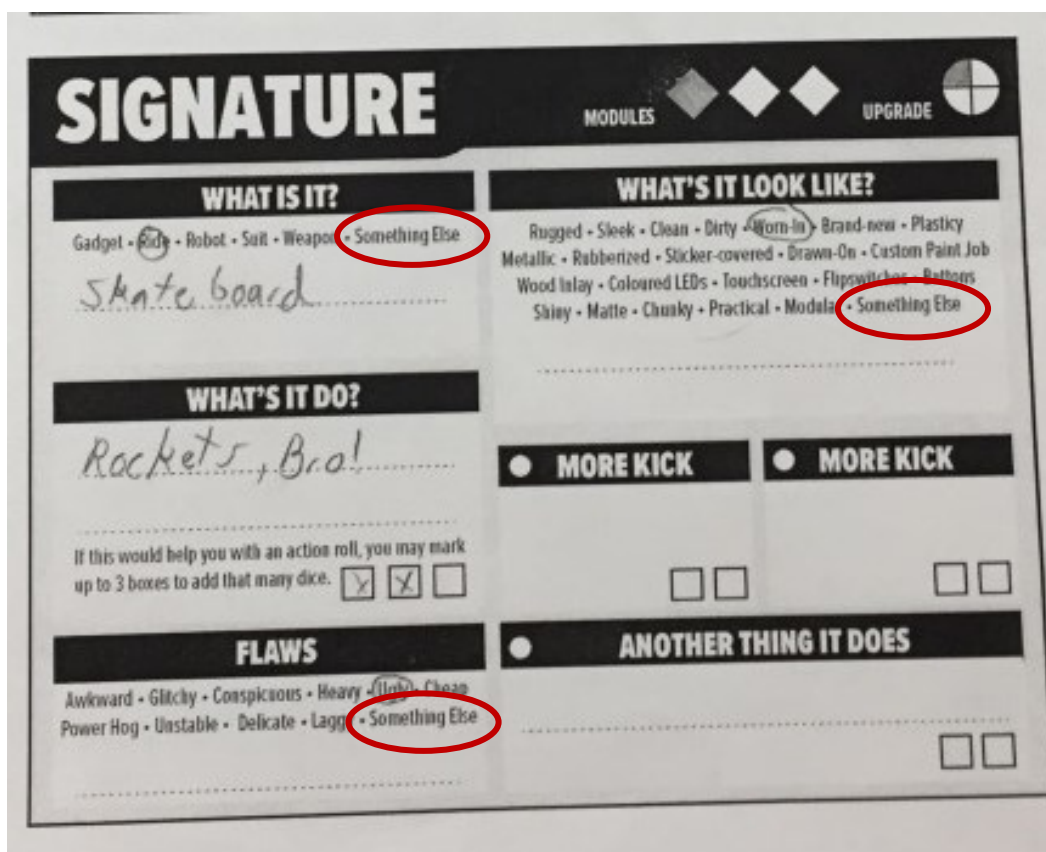


Figure 6.1 Close Up of a Playbook with “Something Else” Options Circled

Both the game master and players have rights to know and adapt the game setting, but it is a game and world that originates with Mikey as its author. In his words:

It's like, it's not my job to say no to players, but it is my job to like, start them, hh hh start them as close to, th:e, what to my vision as I can and then let them spread out from there I think, so, yeah. (.) (Mikey, game master interview)

Mikey's explanation and the game materials, in combination with the Excerpts 6.3 and 6.4 in the previous subsections, demonstrate the complex interplay of material objects and published materials with player / character-tied rights to knowledge in moment-by-moment play. The epistemic ecologies of TRPGs are complex and interesting as both real and fictional materialities are implicated within and through them.

6.3 Epistemic Ecologies – Group 2 Storm King's Thunder

As has been seen through the preceding excerpts of talk, TRPG play is done in groups with complex interactions between spoken and written language (including maps as representations) and with real and imagined environments and objects. The fictional world of play is established in rule documents and the mind of the game master and through improvised knowledge and information practices. This section presents extended analysis of one excerpt (Excerpt 6.5, below) from Game 1 of Group 2 *Storm King's Thunder*. In the first subsection, "Negotiating In-Character and Out-of-Character Knowledge," the analysis demonstrates some ways that knowledge is used, both in-character and out-of-character, as participants account for what they know (as they explore an imagined dungeon) and blur distinctions between their identities as real people and imagined characters through utterances that shift between ordinary conversation between peers and the more institutional talk that enables the goals of the game to be met. The same excerpt also provides evidence of intertextual references (further discussed in Chapter 7) and the extemporized, collaborative construction of the imagined material environment, such that this environment is reconstituted and extended from what has been outlined (and mapped) in the published game documents being used. In the second subsection,

“Authority to Access Game Materials and Shape Encounters,” the analysis is focused on the game master role and implications for how the outcome of a potential encounter in Excerpt 6.5 could be negotiated. Lastly, in the third subsection, “Agency of Intertwined (Im)Materialities,” I focus on the complexity of the epistemic ecology that is created in Excerpt 6.5, as the imagined world and projected actions within it are affected by the initial description of a fictional object that is interpreted through the players’ real-world knowledge.

Excerpt 6.5 presents a portion of play from Group 2 (*Storm King’s Thunder*) involving some of the group of players in the in-character events of the story. In the talk preceding this excerpt, the group has reached a door in the imagined setting, a door that they do not know how to open. The members split up into three groups of two players each: two groups explore in the hopes of finding something that will help them to open the door, and a third group takes a short rest. In this excerpt, two of the characters, Casia (played by Julia) and Druik (played by Richard), are exploring a tunnel they found through a crack in the wall. As they play, the game master, Jo, describes the environment as he refers to the map of the dungeon in the *Storm King’s Thunder* book (in the portion of the video recording that precedes Excerpt 6.5, Jo flips to the map as a reference, as play switches away from one of the other groups who are exploring, to focus on Druik and Casia). When Druik and Casia get fifty to sixty feet into the imaginary tunnel, they reach strands of what Jo after calls “not rope” (lines 20-21). This description is interpreted by Julia as “silk” (line 24), indicating that they have found “Shelba’s den” (line 26). There is some conversational back and forth as the players clarify and agree, turn-by-turn, that the spider’s name is “Shelob” (who is the spider who attacks Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*) (lines 28-34). At this point, Richard / Druik wants to go back to the group (line 38), but Julia / Casia’s curiosity is piqued (line 40).

Excerpt 6.5 "Not rope"

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)

B = Bonnie (Misery)

R = Richard (Druik)

Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)

E = Emily (Sebastian)

Ju = Julia (Casia)

1 J: So, um, you guys wander down a straight and narrow path
2 Ju: Should we be stealthing?
3 R: Yes.
4 J: K, stealth check
5 Ju: () stealth. ((chuckles)) I'm wearing mithril so I don't
6 have a disadvantage. (.) However, I did roll a crit fail.
7 R: Seventeen.
8 C: Oh so, you, you (easily)
9 Ju: I slipped on ice. ((chuckles))
10 C: [You trip, yeah.
11 Ju: Just like a good, whoo! ((motions)) Ass over tea kettle.
12 (.)
13 J: You slip down and then your sound kinda carries down the
14 tunnel.
15 Ju: () ()
16 R: Fun
17 Ju: What are the odds there's nothing down there?
18 R: I mean, slim. ((chuckles)) ((Ju joins in))
19 J: K, so you guys continue to make your way down and you get
20 about fifty or sixty feet in, you start seeing strands
21 of, uh, not rope.
22 (.)
23 R: ((whispered)) not rope
24 Ju: Is it, like, [a, u, I knew it, it's silk.
25 J: [()
26 Ju: There's a fuckin' sh, found Shelba's fuckin' den man. Is
27 that her name?
28 E: Sheba
29 Ju: Sheba
30 E: No
31 J?: Shelob.
32 E: Shelob.

33 Ju: [Shelob.
 34 R: [Shelob.
 35 Ju: ((chuckles))
 36 E?: What's Sheba from?
 37 C: Oh, I was thinking it was um,
 38 R: [Alright, I don't like this. Let's go get everyone else.
 39 Jy: [()
 40 Ju: My curiosity is piqued. ((chuckles))
 41 J: () going no, no, no.
 42 Ju: ()
 43 R: [I've been at this for, like almost, seventy years now.
 44 C: [What's Hagrid's spider's name? Aragog. It's Aragog.
 45 J: It's a pop top ((to S in kitchen))
 46 Ju: I'm just going to, uh, not poke my head in but take a
 47 good scan with my dark vision and see if I can see any
 48 movement.
 49 J: With your range of sixty feet and it, like, windey tunnel
 50 you don't see very far.
 51 B: [()
 52 B: I heard talk of spiders. ((as she returns to her seat
 53 with a drink))
 54 Ju: Should, should we, (get them in a fight thing) or should
 55 we just ignore it?
 56 R: I think let's go see if they've made progress with the
 57 door. And if not, we'll go see what's down there.
 58 Ju: That's fair.
 59 C: That way you can come and get us.
 60 Ju: We'll head back to the party.
 61 C: I'd probably be awake by now.

6.3.1 Negotiating In-Character and Out-of-Character Knowledge

A close consideration of the group's talk in this excerpt indicates that, as players, Richard and Julia have realized that they are headed into a potentially dangerous situation with a giant spider, like Shelob. In-character as Casia, Julia is intrigued and does not necessarily have access to her player, Julia's, knowledge in order to know to fear a large spider that is presumed to be present. The character Druik is more cautious, and his player, Richard, gives a reason that accounts for Druik having the necessary knowledge to be careful: "I've been at this for, like almost, seventy years now" (line 43). With his lengthy experience, Druik, as a character within

the fictional world, could be expected to know that strands of silk could indicate a dangerous giant spider. The players have out-of-game knowledge (i.e., knowledge from playing previous games and knowing various fantasy-based storylines) that they have deemed relevant to the current situation, indexing such knowledge through the intertextual reference to Shelob. Christie also makes a similar, intertextual reference to “Aragog” (line 44), a giant spider from *Harry Potter*.

This player-based knowledge, derived from playing other games and knowing other stories, informs participant understandings of the current game’s imagined material setting. The knowledge is brought into the game as the narrative moves forward, such that it becomes relevant, in-character knowledge (e.g., when based on his character’s previous experience with these types of in-game activities Richard justifies his character, Druik’s, awareness that they should be cautious). Richard’s comment, “I’ve been doing this for, like almost seventy years now” (line 43), implies that the knowledge his character has acquired is relevantly bound to his imagined character’s social category of being an experienced adventurer. The excerpt above provides an example of how in-character and out-of-character knowledge is used as procedurally relevant in the interactional sequences through which the game is played, specifically as Richard’s out-of-character knowledge is usefully transferred to his character, Druik. In a discourse analytic examination of ways that players incorporate themselves into games, Hendricks (2006) has noted this ability of gamers to blur or seamlessly switch between in- and out-of-character knowledge as they make utterances that were relevant to either (or both) the in-game character and / or to the real players enacting the characters.

6.3.2 Authority to Access Game Materials and Shape Encounters

Physical documents play a role in this game; specifically in the case of the “strands of, uh, not rope” utterance (Excerpt 6.5, line 21) where a map and text in the published *Storm King’s Thunder* module are relevant. In the video recording I have from which Excerpt 6.5 is taken, as Jo describes the path that Casia and Druik are exploring, Jo can be seen to look at the map of the dungeon provided for the *Storm King’s Thunder* game (see Figure 6.2 below). This game’s imaginary world is represented in various forms, such as the published module and maps provided by the game master, and those instantiations are being referenced throughout play as they become relevant to the game’s interaction. Jo, as game master, has privileged access to these materials, i.e., the players cannot see or consult the map of the spider tunnel as Jo conceals it behind a screen (see Figure 6.2). Note that at other points in play Jo creates representations of portions of maps, or edited versions of them, that the players can see and thus use as they talk. Additionally, at times Jo allows players to access and physically move material representations of themselves as characters on a gridded mat for battle.¹⁸ As is demonstrated through the example in Excerpt 6.5, the gestalt contexture and epistemic ecology of the game’s interaction are complex, with elements of the imagined material setting associated with, and derived from, real-world knowledge, game documents, and improvised imagination as the play progresses through the interplay of revealed, constituted, and adapted information.

¹⁸ In other games, like *Gloomhaven* played by Group 1, the game materials play an even larger role in the interaction. *Gloomhaven* does not have a game master, and the world is revealed mechanically as the players succeed at completing scenarios (and get additional locations as a reward). The *Slugblaster* group referred to a map of the dimensions of the multiverse, and Mikey also used images on his laptop at various points to add to his descriptions.



Figure 6.2 Jo Consulting the Map Behind His Screen

It is notable that nowhere in the “not rope” exchange in Excerpt 6.5 (lines 19-61), where giant spiders are presumed to be waiting down the tunnel, does the game master, Jo (who has knowledge of what the published module states is awaiting the players in the tunnel), confirm the players’ suspicions. As a researcher, I know from reading the published game module book (Wizards of the Coast, 2016, p. 127), from participating in informal, unrecorded conversations post-game, and from a recorded interview with Jo, that spiders would have been there, but their presence is not confirmed in the game-based utterances. In my post-game interview, Jo noted that there is an element of “metagaming” happening in the talk of Excerpt 6.5. *Metagaming* is where players use knowledge that their in-game characters would not have, to affect the in-game outcomes. Richard, in character as Druik, gave a justification to bring in this kind of knowledge (line 43), and Jo allowed the players to decide to avoid the encounter with the spiders by not interceding as they did so (lines 55-57). Further, in his interview with me, Jo noted that the

spider encounter was not essential to the story, so he allowed the players / characters to miss it. Jo also indicated that, if the players needed something from the encounter to enable future action or progression through the module, or if he wanted them to have the experience for another reason, he would have found another way to introduce it. For example, Jo suggested that “if they’re just wandering through a forest a trap-door spider or something could happen (.)... just literally grab one of the players and pull them underground” (game master interview, Jo). Jo also noted that he tries to keep a straight face when players use outside knowledge to guess something he has planned, and he may try to goad them into going forward regardless of the nature of their out-of-character knowledge or how they might use it, as he notes here:

It’s fun, and I know a couple different D&D players who have, like, ‘Wow, this guy is totally a Vampire.’ Yeah, that’s not supposed to be revealed though. ((chuckles)) (.) So generally I just try to keep my cool and not let my face show that they guessed right (.) so I can goad them into going in. –Jo (game master interview)

Jo’s epistemic status as game master gives him access to materials and control of the world in a way that could allow him to manipulate the world to force the interaction with the spiders, despite the players’ and characters’ knowledge of spider silk, but in this instance he does not. His big story, reflective interview with me provides insight into his status and authority to control the world, while the interaction with the others during the game demonstrates how game masters and players share knowledge and intersubjectively construct the fictional setting (and their subsequent actions, or lack thereof, within it) during play. The published game materials used and the imagined objects that are described by Jo in this interaction come together with the players’ previous experiences and knowledge to demonstrate a complex epistemic ecology.

6.3.3 *Agency of Intertwined (Im)Materialities*

Epistemic statuses and stances and the rights to know and share information are not the only elements that are applicable here. The imagined and described material environment itself is a source of information that helps to shape action. Excerpt 6.5, as discussed above, provides an example of the agency of the imagined environment as it is described in talk. The interaction that unfolds is based on an inference from a description of “not rope” as an item in the tunnel that is being explored. The players / characters’ actions in the moment are organized around the inferred expectations arising from the (im)material environment and the knowledge of the players / characters as they communicate it. References to such potentially real-world items (“strands of, uh, not rope” (line 21); interpreted as spider silk) become imaginatively transferred to the fictional environment and elaborated on with references to the fantasy spiders, Shelob and Aragog. In this way, the inferred characteristics of an imagined material arise from expected qualities of real phenomena (spiders’ webs) and fictional phenomena (giant spiders’ webs like Shelob’s) to inform the game’s collaboratively and discursively developed (im)material setting.

This extended discussion of Excerpt 6.5 demonstrates how rights to know are tied to epistemic statuses and stances of player and game master roles, which also involve in-character and out-of-character knowledge. Further, the agency of the materiality of the environment is implicated in how knowledge is shared and how the fictional world is constituted through the talk. Some kinds of knowledge may be gleaned from the imagined material setting through the character’s direct observation of what is going on (e.g., the character is seeing the silk, but in the game that seeing occurs by the game master verbally describing the environment to the players). The imagined material environment and players’ paths through it are affected by their interactions, the unfolding events (that happen through sequential talk), and other forms of

knowledge that are brought into the game from outside of it. All such information is made relevant through the utterances that constitute the game at hand. Through interweaving knowledge derived from the past, with expectations and inferences concerning the narrative orientation of the game as it is being played, participants both engage with and collaboratively build the epistemic ecology of the game world.

6.4 Discussion

In this chapter, I have presented analyses of ways that epistemic asymmetries occur in TRPG talk and how rights to know are negotiated in on-going play. The examples discussed in this chapter present ways the players orient to and negotiate rights and expectations of knowledge as these are related to roles tied to their statuses as game master and player / characters. An important aspect of this discussion is demonstrating how epistemic ecologies are group or community creations, suggesting that the TRPG space can be understood as a context wherein the cognition involved in story making is not solely the property of an individual but instead is a shared, social, or distributed phenomena. Charles Goodwin (2010) argues that communication occurs in embodied environments through the “mutual constitution of actors, things and communities within the ongoing organization of activities” (p. 104), which provides a way to define an influential and widely discussed conceptualization of cognition as social and distributed (as in C. Goodwin, 1997; Hutchins, 1995; Latour, 2005, pp. 60n, 200n, 210–211; Lave, 1988, p. 1; Suchman, 2007, p. 230). As demonstrated in this chapter, the TRPG context provides insights into how the distribution of collaborative action (talk, texts, and representations) is almost continuously engaged with in and through participants’ knowledge of real and imagined material phenomena and environments. As players tell small stories within their talk and otherwise orient to, account for, and enact epistemic stances and statuses, they

create, reference, and share information that makes up the complex ecologies of the TRPG worlds. The materiality of the fictional world is both shaped by, and shapes, on-going interaction. Insights from this analysis contribute to the fields of information behaviour in LIS and discussions of immateriality in MCS.

Previous research in LIS has identified the need to examine orally based information (Solomon, 1997; D. Turner, 2007, 2009, 2010), and my work contributes to efforts to address this need through informative actions in the talk of TRPG play. Other LIS work has demonstrated the usefulness of CA, e.g., McKenzie (2009) on interaction between midwives and clients, and Barriage and Searles (2015) on children's information practices in family interactions. My work, as emerging from an ethnomethodologically influenced, CA-based approach, and attending to the concepts of institutional talk and epistemic ecologies, allows me to contribute to this area of LIS scholarship on information behaviour through offering insights into how micro-level information behaviours occur in conversations in the leisure context of TRPG play.

Through focusing on the everyday context of TRPGs, my work shows how both fictional and real identities (both characters and players) are simultaneously located in imagined and actual places. By examining ways that rights to know and share are negotiated in on-going interaction, my research makes a contribution to studies of information construction and communication through talk in the area of everyday information behaviour in LIS. Taking a collectivist approach to understanding information behaviour (as described by Talja et al., 2005; Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007; Given & Kelly, 2016), we can see how the particular identities of the players and their tied knowledge are negotiated and constructed collectively through their activities. Information practices are embedded within and occur through collective social

activities like TRPG play, and the shared meaning of the activity is apparent in the rapport between the players. The type of analysis I have undertaken herein could be extended to further contexts, e.g., concerning how everyday information behaviour occurs in other situated instances of ordinary talk, particularly those instances that have contextual overlaps with talk in work-based settings and other institutional contexts.

In terms of contributions to MCS, there is an established body of work on the live practices of design and talk (e.g., Sandino, 2006; Oak, 2011; Nicholas & Oak, 2018; Matthews et al., 2021), and on how objects and environments are designed, with imagined objects being an important aspect of talk (e.g., Lystgaard Due, 2018; Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Murphy, 2005; Oak, 2000). My work contributes a new context to such scholarship in MCS, that of TRPGs and their play in everyday life. Further, while virtual (digital) worlds have been examined and theorized within the context of MCS (e.g., Bardzell, 2008; Lehdonvirta, 2010; Nagy & Koles, 2014), my focus is on an imagined space that does not have the same digital representation as a virtual world (as in a video game or simulation). TRPGs are a context where imagined materialities are built through talk (and reference to game objects) rather than through viewed imagery. My analysis presents a consideration for how the fictional context adds complexity to interactions as both fictional and real identities and objects are part of the epistemic ecologies of the interactions of gameplay, thereby contributing to the literature on immateriality and imagined objects in MCS in contexts that do not involve extensive visual (digital) representations; rather, much of the world is intersubjectively built and re-constituted through talk. Therefore, my research is a substantial contribution to recognizing the importance of the shared imagining of material knowledge as such knowledge is constructed and communicated through talk.

6.5 Conclusion

In the examples from TRPGs discussed in this chapter, both the real, material world and the imagined fictional world are simultaneously oriented to and mutually constituted. Knowledge and information about material environments (e.g., from prepared game documents and past experiences of the game world and from of the real world and other works of fiction) are brought to bear through on-going embodied, and communicative action as the players co-construct the imagined material settings. Participants need to understand the setting to play, and so the game master's knowledge is important to the game's initiation and at crucial moments throughout. Additionally, (as discussed in Chapter 5) common ground has to be built and drawn upon so that the game is experienced by the game master and players as a collaborative construction. The creation of common ground both enables players to feel invested in the game while also cementing affiliative ties that may exist between players outside of the game context.

In this chapter, I discussed excerpts of characteristic talk from TRPGs to demonstrate ways that players orient to the institutional and omnirelevant identities (epistemic statuses) of player and game master and the stances they take as interaction unfolds. Considering TRPGs as a particular kind of institutional interaction, where goal-oriented, directive play occurs alongside and through ordinary talk provides insights into the goals, constraints, and inferential frameworks relevant to the gaming context. Epistemic asymmetries and institutional roles are apparent in the talk as it unfolds, but participants also work to maintain a sense of camaraderie and collaboration, as interaction is organized around an interplay between player and character identities and their on-going in-situ relevance. Rights to know and share are apparent in how players invite, propose, and account for actions, including descriptions of imagined material contexts. The spaces and places of TRPGs are immaterial within the fictional worlds created, but

the games occur within real physical locations and in direct engagement with material things (tables, chairs, maps, rulebooks, etc.) and with references to other fictional worlds (e.g., that of *The Lord of the Rings*). The materiality of the real and imagined environments of play, and players' constant, shifting engagements with them, are continuously co-constituted through the joint creativity of social interaction, as demonstrated in this chapter.

Having established how the game master and players create and index common ground, and how the materiality of the imagined world of the game is informed by epistemic asymmetries and collaborative actions, the next chapter focuses on references in conversation, specifically to the ways that intertextual media references and references to real world objects are used to inform and constitute the imagined world of the games. Together, these three data analysis chapters shape an understanding of the complex ways that fictional worlds are built moment-by-moment through social interaction. The ongoing interactions between real and fictional worlds as demonstrated herein, involve taken-for-granted but complex interactions, interactions through which players draw and create common ground through referencing information and forms of knowledge acquired from past, diverse experiences that they use to co-create new, imagined settings.

Chapter 7: Informing Interaction – Intertextuality, Real and Imagined

This chapter investigates how the historicity of human experience and the use of references (e.g., references to other works of fiction, category resonant terminology, shared small stories) allows players to create, layer, adapt, and share stories through TRPG play, building and engaging the socio-material world of the game at the micro-level, turn-by-turn, as they do so. There are three sections in this chapter followed by a concluding discussion. This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- How are objects, people, and places referred to and categorized in TRPG talk?
 - How do these formulations inform the materialities of play?
 - How do references to shared stories and intertextual media references impact the construction of fictional worlds?

In the first section of this chapter, “Framing the Analysis,” I further consider the concepts of sequentiality in talk; small stories, particularly shared stories; and intertextuality as the phenomena identified within my data. In the second section of the chapter, “Collaborative Category Work,” I use Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) to analyze ways that categories are used and inferred in talk in and through small stories to build an intersubjective understanding of the imagined worlds of games. In the third section, “Laminations and Embeddedness,” I examine how materiality and intertextuality are implicated in the shifting frames of player talk and other activities that serve to layer together perceptions of material reality with those of the imagination. These materialities of play are created in part through micro-information behaviours as players formulate references through sequential turns of talk. There are two aspects of this discussion (that overlap in actuality, but that I have separated for clarity and as required by the linear presentation of a conventional, text-based dissertation): first, the imagined / fictional world of the game’s characters; and, second, the actual / physical worlds

of the players. These are separate worlds (one is imagined and the other exists as tangible, or potentially tangible, reality); however, their existence and histories are not mutually exclusive. These real and imagined worlds are experienced in the play of TRPGs and are intertwined as information crosses and interweaves through the borders of reality and fiction. During TRPG play, experiences of materiality, both real and imagined, are created (when improvised or told for the first time), referred to, and retold, with the game emerging through these ongoing intersections. This interweaving of socio-material experience through and with narrative occurs at various temporal scales (i.e., of recent and longer ranging experiences and narratives) as social group histories and campaign narratives are spun together.

Play occurs across time with information about what is going on created and shared between participants through their talk. In some elements of that talk common ground is created. Utterances include both retellings and references of past experiences and knowledge acquired as well as talk that includes projections of action in an imagined future. In gameplay, fictional settings exist primarily through participant talk and so are momentary and ephemeral as they are created and adapted through play, rather than being exhaustively detailed in game materials. While these moments were captured in my data as instances of recorded interaction, for the players, these scenarios of fictional place and action primarily exist in their memories, albeit memories supported by game materials, and notes they have taken. As a game proceeds through the situated action of moment-by-moment play, participants draw on and reference these memories to continuously establish the imaginary setting. By drawing on the past – the small-story retellings that help to create the imaginary worlds – participants use knowledge gained through past imagined and real-life experiences to justify the forthcoming actions of the ongoing, dramatized play. Material objects, both physically instantiated (e.g., player notes, maps) and

imagined, and fictional environments, are referenced as they become situationally relevant in the context of the game. In this way, the (im)materiality of the settings is a complex layering of ongoing, intersubjective imaginings and real-world understandings as the players simultaneously exist, both in-character and out-of-character.

7.1 Framing the Analysis

This section discusses sequentiality in interaction, the related issue of small stories, and intertextuality (i.e., references to things that were outside of the fictional world of the game), and how these were used as an informative resource by players throughout the games. In my analysis I examine how these references were formulated as small intertextual stories that are collaboratively constructed through sequential talk.

7.1.1 Sequentiality in Interaction

As was first noted in Chapter 3, the sequential turn-taking nature of talk-in-interaction is how intersubjective meaning is collaboratively created by participants. Accordingly, how actions happen in and through turn taking is a central element of CA studies. The ways in which a speaker hears, interprets, and constructs a turn in response to another speaker's previous turn, so that each participant reveals their continuously shaped understanding of what is meant, is known as the "next turn proof procedure" (Sacks et al., 1974). In this way, a participant's turn is the proof of how they heard the previous turn (e.g., if a turn is heard as a question, then it is likely that the next turn will be produced as an answer (Schegloff, 1972, 2007a)). It is through considering how speakers understand and thereby react to each other that CA analysts seek to avoid importing only their own interpretations into their analyses.

Enfield (2013b) draws attention to the temporal nature of this sequentiality through the concept he calls *enchrony*, which he notes is "something like 'conversational time'" (p. 28); that

is, the dynamic, sequential relation between an instance of communicative action and its response. For Enfield (2013b), action and its response are in effect a unit in time, since they cannot be defined separately. In a temporal sense, enchrony is “a primal driving force for the ever-forward progression of social interactions” (Enfield, 2011, p. 285). In the TRPG context, an invitation by a game master to another player to describe an action or place would typically be followed by a turn in which an appropriate description was made (e.g., in Chapter 6, Excerpt 6.4 when Mikey asked the players to “describe your characters briefly getting ready” (lines 8-9)). In conversation, time unfolds linearly, from the past to the present in terms of utterances, but these utterances may involve people retelling past experiences and recontextualizing those past experiences so that they are meaningful in the interaction at hand. The current topics and actions of a conversation recursively engage with memory as for example, stories from past games are referenced in the current game as such stories become situationally relevant.

7.1.2 Shared Small Stories

At the micro-level of turn-by-turn interaction, *small stories* are comprised of actions in talk (such as descriptions and/or accounts) and, in TRPGs, these occur through utterances that may refer to either or both realms of the real and the imagined. The small stories concept, as an analytic tool was introduced in Chapter 3, and the term refers to “those brief, situated instances of narrative, usually about fairly recent events, that occur as sequentially ordered, talk-in-interaction” (Oak, 2013, p. 182; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007). Such short accounts are in contrast to longer, biographical narratives that are found, for example, in researcher-generated interviews with participants. Small stories may be short, for example, a phrase offered as an account or justification, or they may be constituted by a single word, if that word is understood as standing in for a longer story. Georgakopoulou (2007), who has studied small stories from

recorded talk (and also from email exchanges, though I am focusing only on talk-based small stories), presents four types of small stories: stories to be told, breaking news, projections, and shared stories.

My analysis in this research focuses on *shared stories*, which are stories that “are oriented to in interactions as familiar either because they have been told in the past or because the events reported in them are known to all or some of the participants, regardless of whether they have been narrativized in the past or not” (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 50). In the case of TRPG activities, these shared stories are a part of on-going gameplay interaction that involves storylines that can be thought of as taking place over several temporal arcs, including: the overarching campaign of the game as it is played over many sessions, the current scenario being played at the moment, the group history of this and other games, and individual histories of past experiences. In the game context, shared stories may reference events on any of these temporal arcs. They may be embedded within other stories as relatively brief retellings of past stories or as a one- or two-word summary or “punchline” rather than as a full retelling (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 50). The TRPG context also adds an interesting layer to the experiences being referenced and the purposes those references serve in the talk because there are the two prongs of the fictional and real worlds (and character and player speaker identities) to be considered, in which the real materialities can be references in small stories that inform the imagined materialities of the game world. These shared stories have an intertextual element, as described in the following section.

7.1.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality as a concept arises from the work of Bakhtin (1981) on the dialogic nature of language and his conceptualization of repetition in language, and from Kristeva’s (1986) later

interpretation and discussion of Bakhtin's work that describes any text as "the absorption and transformation of another" and where words are mediators of social and historical environments and regulators between diachronic and synchronic time (p. 37). Intertextuality, as I define and use it here, refers to repetition in both spoken and written discourse, including repeated words or phrases, retellings, etc. in ways that index previous texts (stories, conversations, etc.) in the current moment. Discourse analytic and conversation analytic approaches to studying intertextuality in interaction have demonstrated intertextuality in repeated sections of talk (e.g., Gordon, 2009 on the talk of family members) and in the use of intertextual media references (e.g., Sierra, 2016, 2021 on intertextual references amongst friends). A type of intertextual reference is an *intertextual media reference*, which I define for my purposes here as a reference in talk to other identifiable works, as these are disseminated in mediated forms such as, publications (e.g., text-based works of fiction, of literature), films (e.g., movies, television), and widely available forms of material culture (e.g., toys). Some intertextual media references may span types of media (known as transmedia (Harvey, 2015)) and materiality, e.g., the stories and characters of Star Wars that are communicated through films, books, and TV shows, and through material form as toys).

In the talk of a TRPG, a game player's previous experience and knowledge of such media can be spoken of through terms that create or reference a shared understanding of a known story. I use the term "shared" because it is understood that hearers will understand what is being referenced, with or without the speaker giving additional contextual detail, making them shared stories in Georgakopoulou's (2007) small story sense. These shared stories can be abbreviated to a phrase that is recognized as within the common ground of the group (as the example of "Shelob," see Excerpt 6.5, in Chapter 6), or even to a single-word "punchline" that stands in for

the retelling of a story (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 50). Intertextuality has been investigated as a resource for making meaning and for binding people together into a social group (e.g., Gordon, 2009), with intertextual references often involving a shift in a frame in talk that is recognizable to others. As mentioned in Chapter 5's discussion of frames and footing, frames in talk enable people to "interpret what is going on in interaction (joking, arguing, commiserating, etc.)" (Sierra, 2016, p. 5). The recognition by players in a TRPG that a frame has been shifted (e.g., from a real life with ordinary talk primary frame to a fantasy frame within the game) is demonstrated in sequential talk as players seamlessly move back-and-forth between such shared understandings. These discursive actions demonstrate how players experience participation in the game as a form of membership in particular groups (i.e., membership both as characters in this game at this point in time and as players in a real world) located in particular places and contexts. The players negotiate a kind of sequentially managed, shifting, double membership in both real and fictional settings.

In order to undertake an analysis of intertextual references and shared stories as they occurred in live gameplay, I reviewed the first recorded game from each group and noted and excerpted any outside reference where "outside" refers to anything outside of the fictional world of the game that was not game documents or out-of-character discussions of game mechanics for the game being played (however, references to the documents or materials associated with other games were considered to be outside references). This chapter is based on analysis of selected examples from the corpus of 70 excerpts of "outside references" that I identified in the data (Game 1 for each of the three groups).¹⁹ While it is possible that there may be more than 70 "outside references" in the games I examined, I have identified 70 robust instances by noting

¹⁹ Group 1 had 31 references, Group 2 had 16 references, and Group 3 had 23 references.

when players signaled a reference as such and responded to each other through next turns that indicated their recognition of a reference. Given that, in CA, the next turn proof procedure requires the analyst to identify an utterance based on how it is taken up or responded to in sequence by the participants (Heritage, 2021), it is possible that I may not have identified the full number of references were actually made since a hearer's response to a speaker's reference might not have demonstrated how the reference was meaningful (i.e., if a speaker made a reference in a turn that was not remarked upon or taken up in a subsequent turn). The number of outside references I note also does not include references to shared retellings of in-game history or events because these were not sufficiently intertextually "outside" the domain of the game playing setting that I was interested in studying (i.e., those would be recaps as discussed in Chapter 5). Each of the excerpts may contain more than one turn at talk in which a reference was included, depending on whether or not the reference was further elaborated upon or taken up by other participants in their subsequent turns at talk.

The following sections in this chapter examine the formulation of outside references and their implications for the imagined setting of games. For this analysis, I examine category work that established the world through small stories in which the intertextual references were uttered. My analysis considers the ways in which these references were occurring within the on-going, in-character narrative, and how they were contributory actions to shift a frame to other aspects of the on-going talk of the game (e.g., enjoyment and humour—which I argue are part of the social imperative of common ground, as defined by Enfield (2006), in TRPGs). Also, I consider the influence of real objects as their properties are translated into the fictional materialities of the game as those objects are referenced in the talk of gameplay. Experiences of the players were

indexed in references through their talk to inform their intersubjective construction of the socio-material world of the game.

7.2 Collaborative Category Work

The imagined materiality of the fictional world of play is collaboratively constructed through the talk of play. This section uses excerpts from the introductory portion of the first *Slugblaster* game wherein Mikey is orienting the players to the game and fictional world, as he created it. The excerpts demonstrate how the players' interaction creates an intersubjective understanding of the imagined world. Recording the first time this group played the game allowed me to capture how players who were unfamiliar with the fictional world were able to engage with it and co-construct it through their play. In these excerpts, Mikey and the players orient to who-they-are-and-what-they-are-doing, where, and with-what. One way that such orientations occur is through what MCA refers to as category work. As outlined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, MCA considers how participants in talk use category resonant / implicative language to situate their understandings. In the case of TRPGs, players use terms associated with social categories (e.g., teenagers) in ways that both help to describe people (in this case, fictional people), and that enable speakers to “account for, explain, justify and make sense of people’s actions” (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015, “Harvey Sacks and MCA” section, para. 1). Such category work occurs through “category resonant” language, i.e., talk that is inference-rich in its suggestions of appropriate characteristics that are bound to the social category (Stokoe, 2012, p. 280). In the terms of MCA, these bound characteristics of the social categories indicated are called “*predicates*,” which refers to characteristics, qualities, rights, skills, etc. that are associated with a category (Hester & Eglin, 1997a, p. 5); or they are referred to as category bound actions (Reynolds & Fitzgerald, 2015). Excerpt 7.1 below (also discussed in a different analytic context

in Chapter 5 as Excerpt 5.1), demonstrates the category work conducted within the introductory portion of the first *Slugblaster* game.

Excerpt 7.1 All on the Same Page

Participant Group: Group 1, Slugblaster, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: this excerpt was previously presented as part of Excerpt 5.1. The full transcript for the introductory portion of *Slugblaster* is in Appendix E.1.

1 M: Um, ok well then, I'll just, uh, I guess we, well, we're
 2 gonna, so we're gonna, we're gonna make characters? I'm
 3 hoping it takes (.) about thirty minutes. That's what it
 4 sort of has taken, but (.) that can (always) change. And
 5 then we'll d:o (.) uh, and then we'll play a bit, and the
 6 we'll, yeah, we'll see how far we get, s:o
 7 L: Excellent
 8 M: U:m (.) I':m going t:o just (.) ((gets up)) before we (.)
 9 make characters I'll just make sure ((sits again)) we're
 10 all on the same page as to \$what we're actually playing\$.
 11 So I'm gonna read, uh, just the intro to Slugblaster (.)
 12 just (as) sort of, get you guys, yeah, so you know what
 13 you're playing. So, um, ok, U::h, ((looks at screen,
 14 likely begins reading)) it's a game about bored small-
 15 town teens sneaking into other dimensions. [Solder up
 16 your ray gun, print some armour in=
 17 L: [Sweet
 18 M: =your Dad's garage, grab your hover board, and watch out
 19 for metaterrestrials as you (.) try to make a name for
 20 yourself in the highly competitive punk rock world of
 21 interdimensional action sports. It's dangerous, it's
 22 stupid, it's got parent groups in a panic, and it's the
 23 coolest [thing ever.
 24 ?: [((some suppressed chuckles from more than one
 25 player))

As Mikey introduces the players to *Slugblaster* in Excerpt 7.1, he uses category resonant terms in his turns at talk, and that language is itself derived from a script he has prepared to introduce the game. While not all of his talk is immediately taken up or extended by the players, the descriptive information he provides helps to orient the players to his fictional world and the types of actions appropriate to characters within it, thereby establishing common ground that is oriented to later in the talk. This introductory segment of the game is intertextual, as parts of the prepared script are referenced in the current moment, shaping and informing forthcoming gameplay. Mikey uses descriptive terms appropriate to the membership category of teenagers, including the following predicates: that they would be “bored” in a “small town” (line 14), that they might use “hoverboards” (line 18), and that they would be aware of “punk rock” (line 20). These types of language choices draw on presumed common ground from the real world, where participants might recognize that teenagers in small towns could be bored. Mikey extends such intersubjective inferences into the creation of a fictional world they inhabit that includes “metaterrestrials” (line 19) and “interdimensional action sports” (line 20-21). In this way, *category resonance* is a resource for creating understandings that are shared, and that may act as bridges of meaning to new concepts.

Category resonance is also a resource for creating shared understandings that are flexible in that categories and their bound actions are not always explicit (Schegloff, 2007b; Stokoe, 2012). Such flexibility means that room is left for both interpretation from the players’ own experiences and for the continued building of shared meanings that emerge through the game’s on-going interaction. In the TRPG context, the category resonant and intertextual nature of language allows the players to sustain play in a jointly constructed, flexible space that holds together knowledge of real materiality alongside imaginative conceptions of imagined

materialities. Such category and referential work demonstrates the informational and social imperatives of creating and maintaining common ground and the complexity and simultaneity of the gestalt contextures of play.

7.2.1 “Sick tricks” and “Parkour” – Defining Teenagers’ Actions and Explorations

In MCA, category bound actions are activities that are linked to category membership (Lepper, 2000; Reynolds & Fitzgerald, 2015). Such actions may be associated and overlap with the concept of predicates (as discussed above), which includes characteristics and skills that pertain to a category. In terms of character actions and imagined material environments in *Slugblaster*, the descriptions given by Mikey do more than introduce novel forms of (im)materiality to the world of the game, they also set up expectations of how characters will act and interact with each other, with the imagined objects in the fictional world, and how the players understand what is possible within the fictional world of the game.

Excerpt 7.2, below, is an example of collaborative world-building for gameplay through the layering of category resonant language and examples that bring together possible character actions with the materiality of the imagined world of *Slugblaster*. As such, the material items and actions referenced simultaneously create social contexts (hence, the use of the term “socio-materiality” in this analysis). The following excerpt demonstrates the in-situ construction of context as the players orient to who-they-are (“a skateboarding crew” (lines 81-82)) and what-they-are [or will be] -doing (e.g., “find cool places” (line 83), “do sick tricks” (line 84), “do risky things” (line 100)). Through their talk, the players collaboratively build a small story projection of possible actions in *Slugblaster*. Mikey directs team members to what they should orient to by making suggestions of what teens in this world might do (e.g., “exploration is part of something you might be interested in” (lines 91-92), “they do these risky things...it’s the drugs and vaping”

(lines 97, 102)). These actions are acknowledged (laughter at line 105) and also extended by other group members as they contribute their own suggestions as to how characters might behave (e.g., Emily adds “do sick tricks” (line 84), and Jordan suggests “Clone yourselves” (line 88)). In this way, the participants enter into an interaction that gradually extends Mikey’s perception of his imaginary world, into a fictional world that is created and engaged with by all members of the group. Turn-by-turn, as the players make and take information (e.g., their subsequent contribution to the talk of terms such as “sick tricks” (line 87)). They develop ideas such as cloning themselves (line 88), which is an idea that draws upon Mikey’s references to sci-fi from an earlier point in his introduction to the game. As they talk, the players collaboratively build the world through the intersubjective development of small stories that project imagined ideas for action by the *Slugblaster* characters that will be subsequently created roleplayed by the participants.

Excerpt 7.2 Cinnamon Challenge and Parkour

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: this excerpt begins at line 88 because it is part of the introduction to *Slugblaster* in the first game. The full transcript is included in Appendix E.1.

88 M: Yeah, you, you:’re think of yourself as like, like a
 89 skateboarding crew, right? Like your mission i(h)s to go
 90 find cool places and do (.) [and dick around (from)
 91 there.
 92 E: [Do sick tricks. ((chuckles))

93 M: [Yes. [Like that's it.
 94 J: [((joins chuckling))
 95 L: [() sick tricks on (it, yeah)
 96 J: Clone yourselves.
 97 E: [((chuckles))
 98 M: [Yeah, exactly. Like that's sort of thing, like um, like,
 99 you know, exploration is part of something you might be
 100 interested in, but also just like (.) the teenagers in
 101 this world, just like other teenage pursuits, like, uh,
 102 like vaping and hhh Dun[geons and Dragons and stuff (.)
 103 teenagers,
 104 B: [(chuckles))
 105 M: they're, they do these risky things 'cause that's how
 106 they blow off steam, right? And that's how they, like,
 107 they have lots of reasons. (They) form their identity.
 108 There's lots a reasons teenagers do risky things, but,
 109 and, and this is no different. In this world Slugblasting
 110 is the risky (.) it, i, it's the drugs and vaping and
 111 skateboarding, and, and, um, what's that thing where,
 112 it's the cinnamon challenge
 113 [and the (.) and the climbing (.) the, you, [those, did
 114 you=
 115 J&E: [((laughter))
 116 J: [Parkour?
 117 M: =see (that) [thing (with)
 118 E: [()
 119 M: Parkour but it was like, they took parkour and they just,
 120 just cut out just the insane part.
 121 J: (Mm)
 122 M: So there was this thing where Russian teenagers were just
 123 going to the top of towers and just hanging off of them?
 124 E: [O::h, yeah
 125 J: [((chuckles))
 126 L: [Oh yeah, Russians hangin' off buildings [is like a
 127 whole=
 128 M: [Yeah!
 129 L: =subgenre.
 130 M: [K, so yeah. [yeah
 131 E: [And like (planking) and like weird things, [same diff.
 132 M: K, so you guys get the idea, [um
 133 L: [They've, they've upgraded
 134 that, now they're jumpin' off.

In Mikey's second and third turns in Excerpt 7.2, above (lines 98-103, 105-112), he continues his explanation of the types of activities that teens would do in the world of

Slugblaster, and then he begins to ask, “and what’s that thing where [...] and it’s the climbing” (lines 11-112), to which Jordan overlaps with the suggestion “Parkour?” (line 116), making the construction of the world collaborative. Mikey confirms Jordan’s suggestion by repeating it at line 119, and he further explains “just the insane part” (line 120). Mikey adds a real-world example of “Russian teenagers” who were “going to the top of towers and just hanging off of them?” (lines 122-123). This description is taken up by Marshall, and he describes Russians hanging off buildings as a “subgenre” (lines 126-127, 129). This sequence of conversation is a collaborative construction of the setting, told through jointly managed references to real-world activities that are a small story about real Russian teenagers. Through their turns at talk, the players collectively orient to the who-we-are-and-what-we-are-doing (in this case what they will be doing as characters) in the fictional setting of the game. Through the seamless weaving together of information about real world activities with what is possible in the fictional world, the players intersubjectively construct the socio-material (and immaterial) world of the *Slugblaster* game.

7.2.2 “Stuff,” “Like,” and “Sort of” – Suggesting Types of Activity

Through small stories, such as those in the talk of Excerpt 7.2, the players make and take information about the world (i.e., Mikey makes an initial description that the players take and collaboratively expand upon). This collaborative imagining to build the socio-(im)material world of the game is also demonstrated as Mikey gives examples of teenage activities and more open-ended suggestions (e.g., “and dick around (from) there” (lines 90-91)), as well as in his orientation to, and incorporation of, player suggestions and utterances. For example, in Excerpt 7.2, above, Mikey confirms the players’ suggestions; as is indicated in his affirmative statement, “Yeah, exactly” (line 98), which is in response to Jordan’s contribution of an appropriate activity

“Clone ourselves” (line 96). Mikey immediately follows his agreement with more examples of possible activities (e.g., “exploration” (line 99), “vaping” (line 110)) that are hedged with discourse makers: “like,” “sort of,” and “and stuff” (lines 98-103). In this way, Mikey offers suggestions rather than explicit directives concerning the fictional world and possible activities within it. In particular, his use of the discourse marker, “like” indicates the potential for looseness in how his talk is interpreted (Andersen, 1998, p. 153), as it serves as a hedge against making a definitive statement (Gribanova & Gaidukova, 2019).

In his talk, Mikey is using the inferential nature of categories and presumed common ground. He is giving examples of behaviours and activities “like” those he suggests, thereby opening his game to collective interpretation and contribution. Jayyusi (1984) has described a similar phenomenon as the creation of “type categories,” e.g., “Hell’s Angel type” (pp. 22–23). Jayyusi (1984) elaborates with different nuances of this ad hoc construction of type categories (as organized through a reference to a group or through reference to descriptors or properties) and how such references are used in talk, specifically within membership categorizations of people. In the example from the group playing *Slugblaster*, in Excerpt 7.2, above, Mikey implies loose category bound features in his hedged examples (e.g., “like vaping and hhh Dungeons and Dragons and stuff” (lines 102-103)). These ad hoc and implicative category types are used as an indeterminate resource to inform the imagined socio-material world of the game by building and drawing on common ground while also leaving room for adaptation and improvisation.

7.2.3 “Touchstones” – Building Types

Excerpt 7.3, below, demonstrates how Mikey uses lists of category-resonant examples to encourage inferential, shared understandings of the game world. The excerpt begins with Mikey slightly laughing before noting that the imaginary world he has worked to prepare “is a lot like

ours” (line 135-136), making knowledge of the real world relevant to the players as a starting point for their understanding of the game. From the outset of the game (approximately five minutes before), the player, Marshall, has been listening to Mikey’s descriptions, and he interjects to offer a comment that builds on the previous turns, “That sounds very Rick and Morty-esque, you know what I mean” (lines 147-148). (Rick and Morty is an animated science fiction television show.) Mikey responds in strong agreement and then turns to his computer to read a list of items from his written script (lines 149-157). That list, as a text, is made relevant and vocalized in response to Marshall’s utterance, which both builds on Mikey’s previous turns and asks a question that seeks a response from Mikey (“you know what I mean?” (line 148)). The list Mikey reads is of “touchstones” (line 151), which give the players a sense of what the world and game are like. By reading out a portion of his previously prepared script that provides “touchstones” (line 151), Mikey gives the players further descriptive information about the world he has devised, using a portion of a script. Such published and game master-prepared documents, influence the creation and negotiation of the imaginary world and are revealed and referenced as they are situationally relevant.

7.2.3.1 Occasioned Use of Scripted Lists

Mikey’s list of touchstones are type categories that he creates by listing examples of things that fit a category descriptor. For example, one of the touchstone categories is “stuff about young people like Big Hero Six, Iron Giant, Stranger Things, and Paper Girls” (lines 151-153). As a list, these terms not only relate to the social category that Mikey is engaging with (young people); they also have intertextual elements because they are titles of fictional works. By naming these works as tied to a category, Mikey’s list acts as inference-rich information, providing players with media titles they will recognize and explaining that this game and

fictional world have aspects that are like what would be found in in these named works. The lists prepared by Mikey contain presumed common ground that the players confirm in their turns of talk (and gesture), e.g., “Heck yeah” (line 159) and nodding (line 164). Together Mikey’s lists of touchstones in his turns at talk (lines 149-157 and lines 160-163) present the players with familiar resources that are common ground for further creating and sharing the imagined spaces and places of the game.

The touchstones that Mikey lists are not all people and action-based, instead extending out to reference a wide set of instances from imaginary worlds (e.g., “interdimensional stuff” (line 153)) to familiar media genres experienced in the real world (e.g., “Coming-of-age movies” (line 156)). Mikey’s utterances bring these diverse contexts together in turns that are designed to both describe his world and to invite others to share in it. This openness to collaborative construction is emphasized by Mikey in his turn that follows the reading of the lists as he explains that with previous playtesters he has enjoyed “letting you guys just take it however you want it to go” (lines 171-172) and that they can either ask him (line 174) or “just make something else up yourself” (lines 175-176). Together they are building common ground as they begin to play the game, but they can improvise as it proceeds. Through such turns at talk, Mikey and the players form and continuously inform the socio-material aspects of the *Slugblaster* game and its fictional setting.

Excerpt 7.3 Touchstones

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: this excerpt begins at line 135 because it is part of the introduction to *Slugblaster* in the first game. The full transcript is included in Appendix E.1.

135 M: So um, ((chuckles)) um, the world is, um, a lot like
136 ours(?) Slightly different, so some of the brand names
137 are, like different. That's the kind of world, you know,
138 so you, you, they're, don't feel bad about bringing stuff
139 in with our brand names, but you can also, like make up
140 your own, or, in the final game I'll have a whole list of
141 like, I have a, I have a whole document filled with just
142 made up candy [that I made up
143 E&B: [(chuckles)
144 M: =for some reason. Like Smarmle Bars and
145 [stuff like that. So, um
146 B: [M::::::::::[::m Smarmle Bars.
147 L: [That sounds very Rick and Morty-
148 esque, [you know what I mean?
149 M: [Yeah, yeah. There's the, yeah, some of the
150 touchstones, ((turns to computer)) actually I have
151 that(?) Some of the touchstones a:re (.) stuff about
152 young people like Big Hero Six, Iron Giant, Stranger
153 Things, and Paper Girls. Interdimensional stuff, like
154 Black Science or Rick and Morty. Funny stuff, like
155 Futurama, Douglas Adams, or Neal Stephenson. Weird stuff,
156 like Adventure Time and Saga. Coming of age movies, this
157 is my new thing, man, coming of age movies.
158 ?: Mhm
159 E: [Heck yeah.
160 M: [Like mid-nineties, Eighth Grade, Edge of Seventeen,
161 Breakfast Club, all those, um, all subcultures, um, yeah.
162 That kind of stuff, so, ((turns back to group)) you guys
163 get the idea.
164 E&L: [(nod)
165 ?: [Mhm
166 M: S:o. u:m, u::h, ch ch ch ch, anything else that I just (
167), so yeah, um (.) as Blaine knows I have a lot of this
168 world in my head, but the thing that I've had the most
169 fun with as I've been like playtesting previous versions
170 with him and stuff is like, uh, (.) giving you guys just
171 the general sense and then letting you guys just take it
172 however you want it to go? Because, so don't, don't worry
173 if, like, you don't know (.) all the stuff in the world.
174 You can either ask me if you want to see if I have

175 something? Or you can just make something else [up
 176 yourself.
 177 E: [((nods))

Lists and their use as a resource in conversation have previously been studied in CA (e.g., Jefferson (1990) on three-part organization of lists, Lerner (1994) on responsive list construction, and Selting (2007) on prosody of list construction). However, in this instance Mikey is reading from pre-written lists, that have a particular intertextual and categorical nature within the talk. Interestingly, after the last list of “coming of age” movie titles, Mikey stops reading and adds, “That kind of stuff, so, ((turns back to group)) you guys get the idea” (lines 162-163). Such a turn ending is what Jefferson (1990) and Selting (2007) would call a “generalized list completer,” which can be used to complete a three-item list with a non-specific third item, or, as in this case, to demonstrate that the list is non-exhaustive, meaning there are more relevant items that could be included in the list (Jefferson, 1990). Mikey adds this generalized completer after he finishes reading and looks back up towards the players (line 162), as a way to emphasize the inference-rich nature of his lists. In using this scripted list, Mikey uses his authority as game master and his epistemic rights to control game materials and the world he has created (as discussed in Chapter 6), to guide players’ understanding of the world, while also organizing his talk in a way that invites the players’ own interpretations.

7.2.3.2 Examples and Economy of Reference

Drawing on the work of Sacks and Schegloff (2007 [1979]) on preference and organizing references to persons in talk, Enfield (2013a) explains two conversational preferences that are relevant to Excerpt 7. 3, above: 1) minimality or economy: using the simplest reference possible, ideally one word — for people, a first name; and, 2) recognition: giving a reference that will be recognized (pp. 438-439). These preferences require the speaker to balance the possibility of over-telling and under-telling (Enfield, 2013a). In TRPGs over-telling (e.g., by a game master)

information about characters and / or actions would reduce the agency of the players to contribute their own ideas to the game while under-telling would give players too little information to go on. Further, with consideration to making direct reference to people in talk, Levinson (2007) notes how the preferences for economy and recognition are also layered with references to previously acquired knowledge and to other shared understandings. In Excerpt 7.3, above, Mikey uses the inferential nature of talk as a resource through which he states a series of type categories that he expects the others will recognize, while being general enough in his list to leave room for his players to interpret and adapt as they collaboratively build the imagined world of play. In framing the touchstones as loose type categories (through phrases such as “Weird stuff, like” (lines 155-156)), Mikey is trying to give enough information in his references for the players to understand what his imagined world is like while also not over-telling or under-telling. Throughout gameplay, participants judge the extent of detail they should give. They do not always offer the most minimal information because sufficient detail is needed to create a sense of “vibe” or atmosphere for the game world. In Excerpt 7.3, Mikey refers to particular examples with qualifying statements, including: “stuff about young people” (line 151-152), “interdimensional stuff” (line 153), “funny stuff” (line 154), “weird stuff” (line 155), “coming of age movies” (line 156), and “all those, um, all subcultures” (line 161). In these instances, Mikey does not economically select just one reference, but instead he gives a briefly descriptive list that implies categories or types (types of people, types of places, types of activities, types of interactions). A key takeaway to note is that, in relation to the creation of a “vibe” for the game, Mikey is also suggesting to others, and thereby melding into the developing story, “tropes,” works of media, and “genres” to inform what the imaginary world is like.

The world of *Slugblaster* has a material structure that is multi-dimensional, as in *Rick and Morty* (animated TV show) and *Black Science* (comic book series) (see line 154) and is filled with young people and subcultures. There is an advantage to listing as a way to inform the imagined materiality of the game world in that Mikey increases the likelihood that participants will recognize at least some of his multiple examples, and so he further helps to create a general sense of common ground. Additionally, the listed terms serve to layer together a more nuanced sense of socio-material aspects of the fictional world for the gameplay to come. The examples Mikey had prepared in advance and then reads out to the others when Marshall's question makes them relevant, are selected and taken up in play, thereby demonstrating both the making and taking of information as the imagined world is constituted through the "continuous information flows" (Huvila, 2022, p. 529) that are the situated actions of play.

As demonstrated with the excerpts from introductory portions of play, category examples and category resonant and implicative language are treated as informative and generative of the on-going interaction of play. The players' use of category resonant language as situationally relevant, as demonstrated here, helps to answer my research questions about how the fictional world is built and engaged with and what information behaviours are involved. In the moment-by-moment actions of a game, the world is built and adapted through direct examples and resonant, inferential utterances that inform players' on-going understandings of the setting and the action at hand.

7.3 Laminations and Embeddedness

Intertextual references can be understood as kinds of shared stories that are used by the players to intersubjectively build a sense of the imagined material worlds and their characters' actions within it. These references complicate a conception of the fictional world (and character

activity within it) as separate from the real world because knowledge of one context can be used to interpret the present moment in the other. Players / characters can orient to their out-of-character identities when speaking or their in-character identities. Hendricks (2006) has examined these shifts through focusing on pronoun use in the talk of games and has demonstrated that players may describe in-world character actions in different ways, e.g., as the character (I do this) or as the player (my character does this); further, he notes that there can sometimes be difficulty differentiating between when a player is speaking in-character or out-of-character. During game play, participants' talk engages their inhabitation of both fictional and real worlds, with shifts between these contexts or frames (as discussed in Chapter 5, "Frames and Footing") often occurring seamlessly. Intertextual references to fictional works outside of the current game world can be woven into the on-going play, effectively layering real-world experiences with other works of fiction into the in-game understanding of the imagined world.

In TRPGs, it is apparent that intertextual references and shared stories can be used by players to shift or layer their in-character and out-of-character identities and (the fantasy and game frames) by drawing on shared knowledge of the real world (primary frame). In the forthcoming examples, I examine how, within turns of talk, shifts occur between frames and how they can be "laminated" (Goffman, 1974, p. 82). A *lamination* is when more than one frame is layered into an interaction, which adds complexity to what participants understand is going on (Goffman, 1974). Lamination may happen through "rekeying" talk (i.e., changing the tone or "key") of what is being said and so changing what is understood as going on (Sierra, 2016, p. 5). Many of the intertextual media references I identified in my data are such laminations. They are used to further a shared understanding of the fictional material setting and / or actions within it through the use of informative descriptions and to add humour and enjoyment to the gameplay.

I argue that such intertextual references serve both the informational and the affiliational imperatives of common ground (as described by Enfield, 2006, 2013b) where the economy of a reference (e.g., use of title or brief shared retelling), that is oriented to as understood, demonstrates closeness, shared knowledge, and group membership. Sierra (2016) has found that intertextual media references involve epistemic shifts (as the knowledge required to understand the reference is outside of the current context) and serve to demonstrate interpersonal involvement and build social bonds. Such a reference may be brief (only last a turn or two) or may involve a longer shift and lamination if it is taken up and continues to be oriented to as conversation proceeds. In this manner, such a reference is a shared story, (in Georgakopoulou's (2007) small story sense). Laminations and rekeyings also occur with shifts and blurring of distinctions between in-character and out-of-character speakers and intended hearers. In particular, I note that these shifts can evoke memories of the shared, physical experiences of real materiality (and of imagined materiality as in intertextual references to other fictional works), with players applying their experiences in the current interaction to further build their intersubjective understanding of the fictional setting.

7.3.1 "Suit-jamas" – Intertextuality in Imagined Near Environments

In Excerpt 7.4 below, Marshall makes a reference to a work of media from outside the context of the *Slugblaster* world. He refers to the Barney Stinson character from the fictional TV show *How I Met Your Mother* at line 94 (more context of the excerpt is in Appendix E.7). Marshall's comment creates a lamination that is offered, and perceived of by other players, as humorous, as he compares Blaine's description of the character Brooz's closet to that of the Barney Stinson character. In doing so, Marshall references knowledge acquired of fictional materiality from one context (a TV show) and layers it into the fictional materiality of another

context, the game world at hand. Blaine demonstrates shared understanding by continuing the joke and extending the reference through the term “suit-jamas” (line 97), where suit-jamas are a garment that looks like a man’s suit, but is actually a set of pajamas, that is worn on the TV show by the Stinson character. This reference to a garment worn by a character on *How I Met Your Mother* draws aspects of a TV program’s material environment into the fictional space of the *Slugblaster* game to build the intersubjectively imagined place that is Brooz’s closet. Such intertextual references, particularly intertextual media references, laminate the on-going game situation in ways that are generally received as being humorous (e.g., indicated through chuckles or slight laughter within responses (lines 100-101)), thereby reaffirming the similarities of knowledge between players in ways that help to create and maintain the common ground that both reaffirms social bonds and enables the game to proceed.

Excerpt 7.4 Suit-jamas

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

Note: this excerpt begins at line 83 because it is part of the discussion of Brooz’s closet. The full transcript is included in Appendix E.7.

83 B: But he, [he, he waves a gesture by the wall
 84 E: [But
 85 B: and it, like, the wall, like, dissolves [in a way
 86 M: [Yeah, yeah
 87 B: and, and it's just like this long, like, it's this
 88 closet, and it's just like, like, [bike suit, bike suit,
 89 bike suit, bike suit,=

90 [((group chuckles))
 91 B: =bike suit, and they're all [like arranged by colour.
 92 M: [Right, 'cause you're rich.
 93 That's right.
 94 L: Like Barney Stinson's suit closet.
 95 B: Exactly, [yeah.
 96 L: [Yeah, cool
 97 B: [It's just suit-jamas as well.
 98 M: [You guys, um haven't, haven't been to, you've never been
 99 to this spot, um
 100 L: [That's () () suit jamas (...) ((chuckling))
 101 B: [((chuckles))
 102 M: And um, so you're gonna clear four stress.

7.3.2 “A Shrubbery” – “Great” References and Repeated Tellings

At times, the pleasure gained through making intertextual references is explicitly acknowledged as a significant element of gameplay. We see this type of acknowledgement in Game 1 of the *Storm King’s Thunder* group (Excerpt 7.5 below), where Emily states that “the references are great today” (line 6). I noticed many descriptive and joking references throughout that recording, with the references occurring with sufficient relevance and enjoyment to be explicitly noted and assessed as “great” by a player. One of these joking references that particularly stands out because it gets repeated, is that of the “shrubbery” (lines 1-5). In the game, the in-character players find a Giant’s sack with a wagon wheel, a “frozen shrubbery bush” (line 1), and other items within it. As we see below, the word shrubbery gets an excited reception with multiple repetitions (lines 1-5).

Excerpt 7.5 “A Shrubbery”

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King’s Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):
 J = Jo (Game Master)
 B = Bonnie (Misery)
 R = Richard (Druik)
 Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)
E = Emily (Sebastian)
Ju = Julia (Casia)

1 J: You find a very frozen shrubbery bush.
2 E: hhh! A [shrubbery.
3 C: [A shrubbery.
4 Ju: A shrubbery.
5 B: A shrubbery.
6 E: [The references are great today.
7 J: [A wagon wheel.
8 B: (What)?
9 J: A wagon wheel.
10 B: Like [a, a
11 J: [A physical wagon wheel ((motions))
12 B: Ok, a chocolate
13 Ju: ((chuckles)) [marshmallow
14 J: [Thirty feet of hempen rope.
15 B: Thirty feet of hempen rope.
16 C: Oo, () rope.
17 B: This sounds just like a peasant go lost in here.
18 J: [A bronze gong.
19 Jy: [(clues) ((points at ceiling))
20 C: ((chuckles))
21 J: [and
22 Ju: [Oo, we have a gong.
23 J: a uh, (sheet) ((as he consults book))

The shrubbery is a one-word reference that stands in for a longer, shared story that was experienced in the players' past, real lives (as with the prior discussion of the TV show character, Barney Stinson, this shared story also references a work of fiction). In this case, the word "shrubbery" is an intertextual media reference to a segment from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (wherein a character in the film, King Arthur, is required to find a shrubbery and bring it to a knight who is guarding an enchanted forest). In the TRPG interaction in my data, the

single word “shrubbery” stands in for a small but significant storyline within the film.²⁰

Additionally in Excerpt 7.6, the term “wagon wheel” is also joked about through drawing on a non-game reference to the popular, real-world chocolate-covered marshmallow snack (lines 12-13). However, the reference to the shrubbery receives more uptake. It is repeated by other players through several turns at talk after its first mention (lines 2-5), which is also part of the joke because the term is repeated in the *Monty Python* film itself. It is repeated again later when the character, Misery, who found the shrubbery, returns to the rest of the group (Excerpt 7.6, lines 2-3), and again in the out-of-character debriefing conversation at the end of the game. The multiple repetitions occur in a way that is oriented to by all as humorous and amusing. The shrubbery itself plays no plot-related role in the narrative of the game, *Storm King's Thunder*, other than to add detail to the scene, but the players derive enjoyment from its mention through their shared previous experience and knowledge of the Monty Python film.

Excerpt 7.6 “A Shrubbery” Again

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)

B = Bonnie (Misery)

R = Richard (Druik)

Jy = Johnny (Ash)

C = Christie (Cronk)

E = Emily (Sebastian)

Ju = Julia (Casia)

-
- 1 J: And she's also dragging a wagon wheel behind her.
 2 B: And a shrubbery.
 3 J: And a shrubbery.

²⁰ The way that the word “shrubbery” was repeated seemed to indicate some kind of significance so, while I was not familiar with the term, I looked it up and realized it was a media reference.

4 R: ((shakes head))
 5 J: Tied in some spokes on the wagon wheel.
 6 C: Oh, and, and the rope.
 7 B: And the rope. That's what I, that's what I'm dragging
 8 everything with, the rope.

7.3.3 *The Burlap Sack – Projecting and Retelling through References*

Momentary frame shifts or laminations that communicate humour can be tied to the situation at hand with varying levels of embeddedness in the on-going interaction. By “embeddedness” I mean the extent to which a small story is “an entity unto itself, separate from prior, concurrent, and subsequent discourse, is related to turn organization, thematic content, and rhetorical structuring” (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 36). Distinct from a detached story that participants hear as quite separate from the ongoing talk, an embedded story is usually co-created with others, or at least oriented to by them, as a speaker makes a relevant comparison, furthers an argument, or in some other way develops whatever is the main topic of participant talk (Georgakopoulou, 2007). The informative action taking place and the level of embeddedness within the on-going play can vary with differing degrees of lamination, e.g., the word “shrubby” is part of the informative description of items found in the fictional story of the game, but it does not play any other role in the narrative, so it seems the item was intentionally embedded to evoke the Monty Python film. Likewise, at another point in the *Storm King’s Thunder* game seen below (Excerpt 7.7), as Misery prepares to return to the group with the giant’s sack containing the shrubby and other items (lines 1-2), the players take a series of turns during which they reference the cartoon television series, *Scooby-Doo* (which also exists in other forms of media, e.g., movie and novel adaptations).

In Extract 7.7 below, Johnny makes a reference to an object that exists within the game: a sack (line 2), which is being used by the character Misery to carry the shrubby and other items. The participants develop the material properties of the sack and what can be done with it over

multiple turns in which they specify the size of the sack (in relation to what can be carried in it) and therefore how it can be used, as well as what it is made of. After the imagined, physical properties of the sack have been defined (lines 26-28), Johnny references the TV cartoon *Scooby-Doo* (line 29) because catching things in a burlap sack resonates with activities that would occur in an episode of *Scooby-Doo* (where the dog, Scooby-Doo, and his teenage friends, would solve mysterious crimes that seemed to be committed by supernatural beings, but were actually done by disguised humans). The first reference to *Scooby-Doo* is met by laughter (line 30) and is then built on, through others' turns at talk, wherein a small story develops in which the game's characters are briefly reframed as members of the "Scooby-Doo gang" (line 36) who "always encounter the monster first" (lines 46-48).

Excerpt 7.7 *Scooby-Doo*

Participant Group: Group 2, *Storm King's Thunder*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

J = Jo (Game Master)
 B = Bonnie (Misery)
 R = Richard (Druik)
 Jy = Johnny (Ash)
 C = Christie (Cronk)
 E = Emily (Sebastian)
 Ju = Julia (Casia)

1 B: No, I keep it all in the sack and just carry...
 2 Jy: How did a wagon wheel fit in a sack?
 3 J: It's a Giant's sack.
 4 R: It's a giant sack.
 5 Jy: Oh.
 6 Ju: So, you're going to drag that motherfucker.
 7 J: Like a giant carried it and dropped the sack.
 8 Jy: K, I'm not carrying no wheel. I'm just carrying that,
 9 wait how big is the spear, the ice spear thing or
 10 whatever?
 11 J: ((starts motioning size))

12 Ju: Sounds like a wand, but it's like a giant wand.
13 Jy: K, I'll just double hand carry it. That's all I'm
14 carrying. I'm just gonna.
15 Ju: Make sure you have gloves on please.
16 Jy: Yeah.
17 B: Ok, I will carry everything else.
18 J: She's just gonna drag away a (wagon wheel).
19 Ju: How much leather was in, made, made that giant sack.
20 'Cause you could probably make some sick armour.
21 J: It's more like a burlap.
22 Ju: [Damn.
23 B: [Oh.
24 Ju: (...)
25 Ju: Anyway
26 B: How () how big is it? Can we catch things in it?
27 Ju: () or like (the rats).
28 J: You can definitely catch...
29 Jy: This is getting so much more and more like Scooby-Doo.
30 ((laughter))
31 Jy: Let's split the, split the...
32 Ju: We split into pairs.
33 J: Split the party and find ridiculous things.
34 Jy: Yeah.
35 E?: Yeah.
36 Ju: So wait, if we're the Scooby-Doo gang
37 E: ...corridor could run through one door to another door
38 and like do...
39 J: What is Sebastian doing right now?
40 R: Clearly we're Shaggy and Scooby. We're going in the
41 creepy crevice.
42 Ju: Yeah, but [nobody asked us to we (just volunteered).
43 E: [Sebastian's with Cronk.
44 C: We're just chillin'
45 J: You're just chillin' havin' a short rest?
46 R: Yeah but Shaggy and Scooby in the [first encounter always
47 encounter the monster first because they go into the
48 weird place.
49 J: [Do you guys have
50 anything you want to talk about while they're doing this
51 shit?
52 Ju: This is true. I bet there's sandwiches in there.
53 R: ((moves like laughing with mouth full))
54 E: You're not much of a talker ((laughs))
55 C: He's not much of a talker.

The shared story above, which involves references to *Scooby-Doo* is not only a mention of the fictional work. It is taken up and further elaborated and collaboratively recontextualized in the moment to compare the group's immediately previous actions to the formulaic elements that they recognize from a typical *Scooby-Doo* episode narrative (i.e., the group of characters splitting up, and Shaggy and Scooby exploring a "creepy crevice" (lines 40-41), and then encountering monsters (lines 46-48)). The players retell their actions as a collaborative venture that adds to the enjoyment of the game, demonstrated by the laughter (line 30) when the reference to *Scooby-Doo* first occurs and then the group's further extended engagement with the reference. In this part of the interaction, the players recast the game's setting and their actions within it, e.g., the tunnel where they encountered the "not rope" (Excerpt 6.5, discussed in Chapter 6) as "the creepy crevice" that Shaggy and Scooby would be the ones to investigate (Excerpt 7.7, line 46). Such an intertextual reference to *Scooby-Doo* indicates some in-depth knowledge of more than just one episode of the cartoon TV show. This layering and moving between imaginary worlds provides enjoyment as the players develop the game through a series of turns, shifting from one series of actions (exploring and finding the sack in the game world) as separate groups within the game, to rejoining to form one group as they proceed to investigate a large room together. The extended intertextual reference to *Scooby-Doo* ties together the events of the fictional narrative (in-character) with the real players' (out-of-character) enjoyment in framing the storyline events in the context of the TV cartoon show *Scooby-Doo*, thereby incorporating an out-of-character humorous element to the on-going interaction of the game.

7.3.4 "Sodium Extremist" – Real and Fictional Salt

The last example of lamination I will present focuses not on fictional intertextual media references, but on real material properties being referenced and translated into the fictional world

of play. Shared stories and references to outside-of-game experiences and objects index aspects of those objects, experiences, and environments, whether they be the physical properties of an object like salt (see Excerpt 7.8, below) or the more generic aspects of a list of media titles (see “Collaborative Category Work” earlier in this chapter) that serve to imply types of materiality and environments for the fictional setting of the game. As material objects and their related experiences are made situationally relevant to the play at hand, they inform the (im)material environment of the game world. The intertextual and referential nature of talk is used by players as a resource to build shared, imagined spaces and places that are still flexible enough to accommodate each person’s interpretation. In the excerpt below from Game 1 of the *Slugblaster* group, Emily asks if her smart character can be carrying salt because the character’s key characteristic is tied to knowledge of science (lines 1-2 and 4-5).

Excerpt 7.8 Salt and Science

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 E: Since I’m like the smart person, um, is there any chance
 2 that I just have, like, some salt or something in my bag?
 3 M: Yeah
 4 E: ‘Cause slugs are weak to salt. [I know that because of
 5 science.
 6 M: [Roll.
 7 M: () so, for any, so for knowing
 8 ((some chuckles))
 9 M: to see if you know something or to see if you have
 10 something
 11 E: Yeah

12 M: You roll two d6 [and depending what you roll [you'll have
 13 it or whatever
 14 E: [ok
 15 E: [You'll tell
 16 me whether or not I have it? Ok.

((13 lines excised for brevity. (See full transcript in Appendix E.8)

30 M: Yeah, and you pull out, yeah, you pull out, like,
 31 concentrated salt serum, so
 32 E: Yeah, I'm like, I take this with me everywhere for
 33 science purposes.
 34 M: Yeah
 35 L: For science.
 36 B: And for lunch.
 37 M: [Sodium, sodium extremist or something, sodium, I don't
 38 know
 39 E: [And for lunch.
 40 L: I-iodized salt from Wendy's or something. [Something
 41 super shitty.
 42 M: [((laughs))
 43 M: Ok so you pull that out, and what are you gonna do with
 44 it?

In Excerpt 7.8, above (full transcript of this excerpt is in Appendix E.8), Emily asks Mikey out-of-character (i.e., not in-character within the fantasy frame of play), whether or not she can have the salt in the game frame (lines 1-2). She relies on her real-world knowledge of salt, its physical and material properties from the primary frame, to provide her with the information of how salt would affect a slug. That knowledge is then applied to the fictional situation at hand, which involves a giant quantum slug attacking the players in-game (in the fantasy frame). Emily wants her character, Ariel, to have salt to use on the quantum slug. In asking the question of Mikey (in his role as game master), she is also finding out if the properties of salt and its potential to have an effect on a quantum slug in the imagined world will be confirmed as possible. Mikey has Emily roll a die to see if her character has brought salt in her bag (lines 4-16). In this way, salt and its effect on slugs in the real world is interwoven into the fictional

world in this moment as Emily draws from her own knowledge and experience and accounts for how it would be known by her character. In doing so, her reference accomplishes an epistemic frame shift between knowledge contexts of real and imaginary (similar to the epistemic shifts described by Sierra (2016) in relation to intertextual media references). Here, Emily's referencing of real-world knowledge demonstrates the layered nature of the historicity of experience in TRPG play, where knowledge from real past experiences can impact activities performed in the game's imagined material environment. In this case, what is known in the real world (salt's properties) leads to an item becoming present in the fictional world, with those real-world properties carried forward. This example is not an intertextual media reference, but it demonstrates the intertextual and continuous nature of knowledge and influence of real materiality in the gestalt contextures of play.

Once it is determined that Emily / Ariel has the salt (lines 30-33), the properties of salt and what it is used for is oriented to again, this time in a humorous lamination as Emily says, "for science purposes" (lines 32-33), which Mikey confirms (line 34), and Marshall echoes (line 35). Blaine then interjects with "and for lunch," (line 36), which Emily repeats (line 39). The actual form of the salt that gets used by Emily / Ariel is left somewhat undetermined; as it is introduced as "serum" (line 31), and later "I-iodized salt from Wendy's" (lines 40-41) is suggested as a joke based on a reference to a real-world fast-food chain. That joke is also incorporated into the fantasy action as Mikey states "you pull that out" (line 30) and asks what she wants to do with it. The players derive enjoyment from the interaction, and from the jokes, which extend the references to, and suggested material forms for, the in-game salt. The trajectory of interaction is not necessarily directly from point A to B (i.e., characters get attacked by a quantum slug and

work as a group to kill it). Rather, the interaction is layered with changes in footing through out-of-character references and humour that extend and enrich the (im)material world of the game.

7.4 Discussion

In this chapter, I have presented analyses of intertextual references as small, shared stories that are told during sequential interaction of TRPG play. Through collaborative category work and laminating the fantasy frame of play with intertextual media references that are interpreted by participants as humorous, the players share information and build the world of play at micro-level, turn-by-turn, in the talk of demonstrably enjoyable gameplay. Group members use both the inference-rich nature of categories and category implicative phrases, as they give explicit examples, while also leaving other information provided more generalized and open to interpretation. By explicit and implied extrapolation and invitations to co-tell, participants make and take information and demonstrate their intersubjective understandings. Throughout their play, the participants demonstrate enjoyment – indicated through laughter and through developing each other’s intertextual references and laminations or frames across sequential turns, rather than shutting them down. The purpose of such references is not purely informative (i.e., to describe a particular type of gateway); instead, they are a part of the social action of play and provide pleasure through a kind of continuous reminder of what the players have in common. These shared stories build upon what Enfield (2006) describes as the affiliational imperative of common ground where one way to maintain relationships is through maintaining incumbency in a membership category. In the case of intertextual media references, this is a broad category of people familiar with popular fictional narratives, e.g., *Monty Python or How I Met Your Mother*. Making references to such shared experiences (as in the repeated reference to the sack with the shrubbery at three different points within Game 1 of *Storm King’s*

Thunder) is a way for members of the group maintain their relationships with each other. The importance of such shared references in gameplay can be understood as similar to Pomerantz and Mandelbaum's (2005) description of how making oblique references to shared experiences is a way to maintain incumbency within a group. The analyses in this chapter contribute to the fields of information behaviour in LIS and discussions of immateriality in MCS, particularly through the close-grained examination of talk as it unfolds in the social practices of gameplay.

Previous research in LIS has examined fun contexts and fandom (e.g., Forcier, 2017; Price & Robinson, 2017), virtual and live action roleplaying games as information systems (e.g., Harviainen, 2007; Harviainen & Vesa, 2016), and sense-making of TRPG players (Atmore, 2017). However, there has been little work that has examined TRPG play as it occurs (e.g., Atmore's (2017) work employed interviews rather than recordings of naturally occurring talk). The TRPG context is a perspicuous setting for examination of everyday information behaviour because it involves the making and taking of information from previous experiences of both real world and fictional environments to intersubjectively create a new setting in moment-by-moment play. By examining the recorded natural language of TRPG play, it is possible to analyze how fictional objects and places are operationalized, through intertextual media references, to inform the action of the current moment, and to create moments of pleasure and humour in the ongoing situation.

My research provides insights into how fictional worlds and media can be treated as informative and embedded into on-going talk. Similar methods could be extended to analyze this type of phenomena in other contexts and inform theories of everyday information behaviour by describing how interactions with information unfold. The informative practices within gameplay not only collectively construct meaning, they also contribute to the on-going interaction,

affiliation, and enjoyment derived by the players. TRPG play is enjoyable because, at least in part, “the references are great” (Emily, player quote). The group builds social bonds through using and recognizing the shared meanings of such references. Knowing about the group’s history and in-jokes as well as having broader knowledge of relevant media genres demonstrates group membership and meaning derived from the activity itself over time. Through their situated actions of play, the group creates a sense of community and shared joy in the activity. As Schallerger (2018) argues, the medium of the TRPG provides opportunities for personal and group growth, to build a sense of community and continuous memory, and to develop critical and mental skills. This co-constitution of context and activity by a group over time – its gestalt contexture – aligns with collectivist understandings of information behaviour with an emphasis on the importance of the group setting.

The examination of intertextual references in talk also contributes to scholarly investigations of immateriality within the field of MCS. For example, intertextuality and fictionalized materiality have been examined in the context of cosplay (creating costumes that are representations of characters in fictional works) (Hale, 2014), and continued engagements with fictional works through the collection and creation of aesthetic objects have been examined (e.g., Heljakka, 2017; Hills, 2014), but not in the context of on-going talk. Studies of material culture that specifically address immateriality have dealt with topics such as: objectification and religion (e.g., Bille, 2010; Engelke, 2005), absence and death (Meyer, 2012), finance theory (Miyazaki, 2005), and the creation of atmospheres (Bille et al., 2015). Further, Rodrigues de Mello, Ordovás de Almeida, and, Dalmoro (2021) have brought the concepts of absence and engagement with fictional worlds together in their examination of cosplay and consumption. However, it seems that the issues of immateriality and the co-construction through talk of

fictional materialities in gameplay is not dealt with in previous scholarship. Through examining intertextual references in the social interaction of gameplay, it is possible to examine how objects are not only created and collected to represent and engage with fictional worlds through the physical actions of gameplay; those fictional worlds are also substantially created through the social practice of talk that references materiality in diverse ways in and through the sequential actions of play.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented an analysis that focused primarily on how intertextual references are a resource for the framing and layering of understandings and information, particularly concerning the real and imagined materialities that are significant to gameplay. This layering is accomplished through collaborative category work and shifts in footing and frames between a fantasy frame, and a primary (real world) frame, with shifts in interactional footing occurring as participants move into and out of character. Shared stories that are often associated with intertextual media references can bridge different experiences and temporalities, with knowledge acquired through past experiences of gameplay, media, and real-life understandings of material environments brought to bear on the current game's imagined, material environments. The fictional worlds where the gameplay is set are constituted (and re-constituted) in gameplay through the intermingling of interactional frames within which real and fictional materialities are referenced. Intertextual references as a kind of shared story become meaningful resources that evoke both the materiality of past moments of personal embodiment and shared media experiences as well as a character's actions within the imagined setting.

As intertextual references happen by drawing on past narratives of gameplay, they span different temporal arcs, including the narratives each group tells within their game. Since the

concept of time in CA tends to focus on the sequentiality of present talk to examine how utterances occur and are responded to, my examination of extracts of talk was able to explore how real and fictional materialities are intertwined through such sequentiality. As demonstrated in my analysis, referencing a shared story can be an important part of gameplay, with what is shared often relying on assumptions concerning shared experiences and knowledge of materialities. Further, shared stories may also be from other narrative media, e.g., from other fictions experienced in the real world through watching TV or a movie or playing other games, and then whose references are subsequently imported into the imaginary world of the game. In TRPGs, assumptions of familiarity with the visual and material aspects of stories from other sources occur alongside references to real experiences acquired through living in a real material world. Together these are recontextualized in interaction in ways that enable gameplay to draw on information acquired in the past in ways that are presently meaningful and rewarding, thereby stimulating players to desire to continue to play in the future.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This interdisciplinary research is situated in the fields of human ecology and library and information studies. Given human ecology's engagement with people's near environments—both social and material—the human ecological approach to material culture studies that I engage with here explores people's discursive relationships with objects and places (whether real or imagined) as they collaboratively tell stories and construct worlds through TRPG play. This exploration demonstrates ways that the talk of gameplay helps develop and affirm social bonds (as through building common ground (Enfield, 2006, 2013b) and conviviality (Goebel, 2015)), both between participants in gameplay and to wider aspects of culture (i.e., media, other forms of fiction, etc.). Through considering approaches from information behaviour research in LIS, especially those studies that examine discursive action and attention to the minutia of everyday information use, this research offers both a fine-grained consideration of the micro actions of gameplay, and insights into how those relate to Huvila's (2022) making and taking of information that shapes the ways meanings are communicated and understood. This research begins to address Ocepek's (2018b) call for more detailed studies of everyday information behaviour by examining information creation turn-by-turn in talk.

I used this interdisciplinary foundation to examine the construction of the (im)material worlds of TRPG games in situated contexts and in relation to the micro-information behaviours involved in those constructions. I adopted the term “(im)material” throughout to emphasize the intersections and overlaps between both the real (physical, material) and the imagined realms through which the fictional worlds of play are created. These fictional worlds are engaged with in real space as actual players are seated around a table, and they talk in ways that demonstrate that their understandings of the fictional world are influenced by experiences of the real, material world. The fictional worlds themselves are imaginary and immaterial, though they are at least

partially instantiated through representations in published game documents, player notes, scripts, maps and other materials. Additionally, as demonstrated in this research, the fictional worlds are represented ephemerally as they are constructed turn-by-turn in conversation. The talk itself is ephemeral; however, the collaborative construction of memory, ongoing story, and setting is continually reconstituted through play.

The research questions that framed this study are restated here as follows:

- How are fictional worlds constructed and interacted with in tabletop roleplaying games?
 - How are aspects of actual and fictional materiality managed discursively between game players to create intersubjective understandings?
 - How do players create and draw upon common ground to build an intersubjective understanding of the fictional world of play?
 - How do player/character and game master roles and their identity-tied rights to know affect how information is shared and used in the talk of gameplay that constructs fictional worlds moment-by-moment?
 - How is in-character and out-of-character knowledge negotiated in play?
 - How are objects, people, and places referred to and categorized in TRPG talk?
 - How do these formulations inform the materialities of play?
 - How do references to shared stories and intertextual media references impact the construction of fictional worlds?

To address these questions, I used a research methodology grounded in ethnomethodology, and the related areas of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. With this discursive foundation, I further applied the insights offered by taking a big and small story approach with a focus on the small stories. Through small stories in conversation, aspects of

imaginary worlds are made meaningful enough for shared play, which continues for many sessions, potentially extending many years.

To conduct this research, I collected both the natural language of gameplay in the form of video recorded games and researcher-generated talk through interviews with players. I recruited three groups of players as case examples (referred to as “sites” here, since single-case analysis in CA refers to the analysis of a single excerpt of talk). The site examples allowed me to study aspects of materiality in gameplay in-depth through investigating Group 1’s playing of *Slugblaster*, Group 2’s playing of *Storm King’s Thunder*, and Group 3’s playing of *Gloomhaven* (a legacy game that provided initial data). In the analyses presented in this dissertation, I focused on how the (im)material worlds of the game were constituted through the sequential talk and the micro-information practices used by players to create intersubjective understandings of the fictional worlds where the games were set. Each of the three analysis chapters in Part III had a different analytic focus and used transcript excerpts to show how the (im)materialities of TRPG fictional worlds are constituted in the talk of gameplay.

8.1 Summary of Findings

Chapter 5 addressed my questions about how aspects of fictional and actual materialities were managed discursively as players located themselves within the game by creating and drawing on common ground. This was accomplished in shifts between ordinary conversation and more institutional, goal-oriented talk that brought everyone together to play. Opening portions of games require a shift from more general socializing to more institutional (goal-oriented) talk of gameplay, and game masters accomplished this with use of statements calling everyone’s attention to play, which began with the discourse marker “oh” in the examples that were analyzed. Recaps were used in reorienting players to what had occurred in previous games

before play began for a new session, but there were also smaller-scale recaps mixed into ordinary talk, with more frequent switching between out-of-game ordinary conversation and goal-oriented gameplay. Game materials, like the *Slugblaster* dimension map and Mikey's script, were treated as informative when players were deciding where to go, and they contributed to decision making and goal setting in the gameplay.

Chapter 6 addressed my research questions about epistemic asymmetries and institutional roles as they were oriented to in the talk of gameplay. The epistemic status and authority implied in the title of game master is not necessarily absolute as players and game master orient to differing rights to know in play. Players have more control over knowledge pertaining to their characters, as when Sam created a character with a war hammer, and Mikey highlighted the possibilities of their being places she had previously visited where she could have acquired such an item. An example from *Storm King's Thunder*, where the "not rope" is assumed to be spider silk from a spider like Shelob or Aragog, demonstrates the complexity of epistemic ecologies in TRPG play. In that instance, a player was able to legitimize their use of out-of-character knowledge as in-character knowledge so that the group could avoid engaging with the imaginary spiders. Through the game-based interactions, information concerning the materiality of the real world and other fictional contexts can be shared and adapted in the moment to construct shared understandings of the material environment at hand.

Chapter 7 addressed how the intertextual references of small, shared stories can be used to laminate frames of interaction. For example, a joking reference can be used to shift from the fantasy frame to the in-group knowledge of a joke, the layering of which allows social ties between players to be continuously confirmed. This type of interaction occurred when Bonnie's character, Misery, had a shrubbery in a bag and the players' made repeated references to it to

echo happenings from the film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The chapter also examined how category work could be used to encourage players to infer their own meanings. One way this inferential language was used was in lists of intertextual references to create loose type categories (e.g., interdimensional stuff) that allowed scope for players' own imaginations to build on the game master's concepts. Intertextual references in gameplay could also laminate the fantasy frame of in-character play through humorous references to other fictional media (e.g., TV shows such as *Scooby-Doo*). Further, the players own experiences and knowledge derived from the real world of physical properties are able to be referenced and intertwined into the imagined world of play. For example, salt was brought into a game of *Slugblaster* with the understanding that its real-world ability to cause problems for slugs (in the primary frame) would transfer to the world of fantasy (in the fantasy frame). Each of these examples demonstrates how the imagined materiality of the game is built during play through inference-rich small stories.

The methods used by players that I identified in the three analysis chapters in Part III are micro-information behaviours being used turn-by-turn in the talk of gameplay. In these analysis chapters, I did not present an exhaustive list of ways that information is created and used; rather, I focused on ways the (im)material worlds of play can be constructed and oriented to, how roles and authority can be implicated in those processes, and how materialities are informed by intertextual references that are made situationally relevant in the talk of gameplay.

8.2 Scholarly Contributions

This research contributes to understandings of fiction's relations to everyday life in the disciplines of human ecology, particularly in relation to the field of a human ecological MCS, and LIS. My interdisciplinary approach allowed for novel considerations of information and (im)materiality through an analysis that employed an ethnomethodologically grounded, CA-

oriented, big and small stories approach, with an analytic focus on the small stories. The findings of my research demonstrate ways that TRPG players construct and orient to the (im)material worlds of games, how epistemic asymmetries and ecologies are implicated in interaction, and how the continuous and intertextual nature of experience is made relevant and informative to create shared understandings. The micro-information behaviours examined in this research demonstrate ways that fiction and reality inform one another in the everyday activity of TRPG play.

8.2.1 Contributions to Material Culture Studies and Human Ecology

This research contributes to the field of MCS by providing insight into the ways that knowledge derived from experiences of real material things and places inform the creation and engagement with imagined, immaterial objects and environments, as such imagined items and contexts are constituted in and through talk. In the scholarship of MCS, studies that focus on immateriality are an emerging area, with some previous scholarship undertaken in relation to objectification and religion (e.g., Bille, 2010; Engelke, 2005), absence and death (Meyer, 2012), finance theory (Miyazaki, 2005), the creation of atmospheres (Bille et al., 2015), and absence and consumption in cosplay (de Mello et al., 2021). However, my work establishes a new context for examinations of immateriality within social practice – the worlds of TRPGs.

While imagined objects and environments have also been examined in areas of study that address materiality in talk, particularly in the study of design and innovation (e.g., Murphy, 2005; Oak, 2000, 2011; Landgrebe & Heinemann, 2014; Lystgaard Due, 2018), these works have considered the development of actual materiality for use by others (i.e., designed objects and buildings) and collaborative innovation, rather than the co-construction of imaginary places in fictional game worlds. In the context of considering materiality in fictional worlds, there has

been some work done on fandom and the creation and collection of material objects (e.g., Hale, 2014; Heljakka, 2017; Hills, 2014); however, unlike my work, that considers the sustained creation of immateriality over time, this previous scholarship has been more specifically engaged with, e.g., fan-created artworks and costuming.

In my research I brought together the aforementioned areas of MCS that influenced my approaches (i.e., materiality and talk, and materiality and fiction), with the aim to explore how discursive action engages with and creates materialities in the context of TRPGs. I was particularly interested in exploring how references to forms of materiality (including place) shape gameplay in the moment but also over time, as players' perceptions of games also involve their understandings of past play. My concern with both materiality and talk, and materiality and fiction enabled me to examine specific ways through which the imaginary worlds of TRPG play are created and negotiated. Although the descriptive, ethnomethodological approach I took was not intended to test or generate a theory, it demonstrated possibilities in social action (as discussed by Peräkylä, 2021). Such possibilities happen in orderly, sequential ways that are systematic enough to be used as the basis for analytic generalizability in future, CA-influenced research (e.g., on fictional objects and places in talk in other contexts).

The specific talk-based actions that my research participants engaged in to build fictional worlds can be investigated in other contexts of everyday engagements with immateriality to consider the on-going interplay between fictional and actual materialities in non-gaming, everyday experience. There is an on-going interplay between fictional and actual materialities in this particular everyday practice. Through examining this interplay, my study also contributes to human ecology more broadly by providing insight into everyday actions, between face-to-face participants in their near material environment, and by providing some ways that objects in a real

environment can be used to create shared understanding of a fictional world. This approach can be extended to other everyday contexts within a human ecological framework.

8.2.2 Contributions to Information Behaviour Research in LIS

Previous work on information behaviour has advocated for a discursive approach (e.g., Tuominen & Savolainen, 1997; Talja & McKenzie, 2007), and emphasized the importance of orally communicated information (e.g., Solomon, 1997; D. Turner, 2007, 2009, 2010). A few studies have taken a CA approach, e.g., McKenzie (2009) on midwives and clients, and Barriage and Searles (2015) on children and family interactions. My study contributes to this body of work that takes a discursive approach to understanding everyday information behaviour by examining the particular context of TRPGs as an everyday activity. My close-grained analysis allowed me to examine micro-information behaviours as they occurred turn-by-turn in talk. I argue here that such a discursive approach is a useful addition to understanding the ways that micro-information behaviours have been examined in LIS. Nahl (2007a, 2007b), for example, has used the term “micro” in studies of information seeking, drawing attention to minute information behaviours and flows of information in using computers, which she accomplished through discourse analysis of the accounts of action given by participants as they searched. Wu and Liu (Wu, 2005; Wu & Liu, 2003, 2011) have also used the term “micro” in examining information behaviours, particularly in the context of elicitation of information in dialogue. Focusing on micro-information behaviours draws attention to how such behaviours occur moment-by-moment rather than relying on after-the-fact retellings of information use.

My research also contributes to discussions of ways to approach and conceptualize information and information behaviour in LIS. In my analyses, I have demonstrated ways that players create and share information-in-social-practice, in keeping with Cox’s (2012, 2013)

concept that emphasizes that activities beyond direct information seeking are information-rich and should be examined in information behaviour research. Through play, TRPG players make and take information as game masters present worlds and scenarios (both of their own creation and taken from published game materials) and players take and adapt those descriptions. Such activities can be described as making and taking as in Huvila's (2022) conceptual apparatus for explaining the mobility of information and considering information as occurring through processes of becoming rather than simply being. These processes occur within a group context, through collective action. The value of the activity to the group and the joy derived from shared knowledge and collaborative play demonstrate the importance of considering collectivist approaches to understanding information behaviour (as described by Talja et al., 2005; Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007; Given & Kelly, 2016).

The micro-information behaviours I analyzed could also be described using Buckland's (1991b) "information-as-thing," information-as-process, " and information-as-knowledge" conceptualization as the game players referred to inscribed information in game materials (information-as-thing) and their own knowledge of gaming and previous experiences of fictional worlds as (information-as-knowledge), which was analyzable when that information was communicated through talk (information-in-process). The intersubjective construction of information can be described and analyzed through observing the talk and interaction of TRPG play. Bringing those observations back to broader conceptualizations of information can help to inform and continue discussions of the ways in which information continues to be studied within LIS.

Stories and imagination, as in TRPG play, are a part of our everyday lives as fiction and fictional worlds are relevant to people's daily lives and are a part of many leisure practices; yet,

despite their ubiquity, fictional worlds have been identified as an understudied area in information behaviour research (see Doty & Broussard, 2017; Forcier, 2017; Price & Robinson, 2017). In examining the fictional worlds of TRPGs, I contribute to a growing body of work on everyday and quotidian information behaviour as has recently been advocated for by Ocepek (2018b). Although leisure and fiction may sometimes be viewed as trivial (Stebbins, 2009; Forcier, 2017), leisure is an integral part of daily life, and such activities as TRPG playing and world-building require a significant investment of time and effort, qualifying them as activities that could be considered under Stebbins' (2007) category of serious leisure. Such practices are information-rich, and understanding some of the ways in which information interweaves material and immaterial reality and fiction in such contexts broadens our understanding of information and materiality as a part of everyday life.

TRPG play is a pleasurable activity involving both casual and serious leisure as players shift between goal-oriented gameplay and storytelling and more ordinary peer-to-peer conversation. It is what Mansourian (2020) would describe as an experiential leisure activity with performative aspects. Joy is derived from the collaborative play and construction of shared meaning. For example, participants in Atmore's (2017) research (who played the TRPG *Pathfinder*) highlighted the importance of enjoyment extending beyond an individual player. Gameplaying is a group activity, and its study can further understandings of collective contexts of information creation and use as well as fun and pleasurable activities. Accordingly, my research contributes to a growing body of literature on information and "fun" and leisure in LIS (e.g., Forcier, 2017; Hill & Pecoskie, 2017; Mansourian, 2021b; Price & Robinson, 2017) within the realm of everyday information behaviour, and explorations of situated materialities in conversation. Although the findings of this study are not necessarily generalizable, they provide

in-depth examination of collective information creation and use in situated context and add to a body of work that considers information, joy, and pleasure in leisure (e.g., Hartel, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010; Hartel et al., 2016; Cox et al., 2017; Mansourian, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). Social bonds are created and affirmed through shared knowledge in an activity that provides enjoyment, humour, and pleasure to the individuals involved as they collaboratively tell stories and inhabit worlds of play. The collective aspect of TRPG play is particularly interesting as the discursive activities allow for observation of meaning making in a way that is not so apparent in the more individuated experiences involved in reading and / or watching of fictional works (i.e., as TV shows or movies).

8.3 Challenges and Limitations

The design of this research presented several challenges and some limitations. The following sections explain some of these challenges and how they were addressed or provide opportunities for future research. These challenges and limitations relate to the scope of the research and the approach taken for the study, the complexity of the topic and insider knowledge I possess, and the generalizability of the results versus the value of in-depth analysis.

8.3.1 Scope and Approach

When I began to conceptualize this research project, I planned to use narrative inquiry as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as the main theoretical framework. However, I tested the approach in a pilot study (see Appendix A), and while this interview-based, big story perspective is useful, it lacked attention to the specificities of live practice at the micro-level that I caught my attention during the game I was invited to observe. Therefore, I chose to extend my methodology and analysis plan to include a consideration of small stories in talk in order to better address my research objectives. I wanted to have avenues for analyzing both worlds in-use

as well as big-picture understandings of worlds and practices as recounted in interviews. Using a big and small story approach was a way to address both of these concerns. However, as I collected data, I elected to focus primarily on the small stories to examine the richness and detail of behaviours in live play. Due to the limits of space in one dissertation, and the depth and analytic possibilities in the live, recorded games, I have opted to not conduct and report on a full, big story analysis. Pursuing an analysis of the big stories of researcher-generated interviews is an avenue for future research.

Ethnomethodological approaches are concerned with the practices, particularly in the case of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis, of talk-in-interaction (e.g., Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015; Lepper, 2000; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013; Stokoe, 2012). This concern means that the focus is on the ways that people perform actions in talk and thereby construct identities and meanings about the world in the moment in live situations that would have happened whether or not a researcher was in attendance (for examples see Georgakopoulou, 2007; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In contrast, big story reflections, such as those solicited by the researcher and constructed in narrative inquiry and some forms of ethnography, typically involve a great deal of collaboration between a researcher and the participants who co-construct narratives of the participants' experiences (as in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). As a researcher, I was both a removed observer (of the live games) and an interviewer of participants after the games have been played.

I was pleased to find that, although I mainly focused on the small story actions of live gameplay, the interviews I conducted with players were helpful as they drew my attention to specific practices that the players themselves thought I would find important as well as to aspects of gameplay that were not as apparent in the observed games. For example, in my interview with

Mikey, he shared how players' character choices surprised him and how he incorporated them into the world, and he reflected at length on the incorporation of Sam's character into their second game (the recording of how that happened live was analyzed in 5.2.2.1.1 "Adding a Player / Character" and 6.2.1 "Incorporating a New Player / Character"). Without Mikey's explanation, I would not have as complete an understanding of how the world of *Slugblaster* was initially created and how it can be collaboratively adapted through play. My research questions were better addressed by using both levels of researcher involvement in my research design to gain a fuller picture; however, in this dissertation, I focused on the richness of the small story data to better provide in-depth analyses of how information was created and exchanged to constitute the (im)material worlds of the games.

8.3.2 Complexity of Context and Insider Knowledge

As discussed in my methods chapter, I had to plan for how I would deal with my own background as a TRPG player. My own understandings and practices have some impact on my interactions, and understandings of those interactions, with my participants. I monitored my insider knowledge throughout and focused on the language used by the participants by using transcript excerpts to retain context. This insider knowledge is another reason why collecting natural language as an observer is important because I could maintain an ethnomethodological distance and focus on participants' ways of doing being TRPG players themselves, rather than on my assumptions of how they should behave, or existing theories. My insider knowledge was also an advantage. It was useful in recruiting participants, who were more comfortable participating in a study that was being conducted by a fellow gamer. My insider knowledge also allowed me to better understand the practices and terms used in the games, which are complex. Francis and Hester (2004) note that some ethnomethodologists studying specialized areas spend years

becoming competent in the area of study in order to better understand and explicate practitioners' knowledge as they do (p. 7). My gaming experience helped me to both build rapport with participants and to understand the specialized language and practices they used.

8.3.3 Generalizability versus Possibilities and Theoretical Contribution

My research questions asked how fictional worlds are constructed, with a focus on how the materialities of those worlds were constructed and communicated and on how complex practices and uses of information are implicated in those constructions and modes of communication. Addressing my questions involved in-depth examination of a small number of cases from three sites (the three game groups). The understandings acquired from these detailed considerations were used here to question and discuss theories of information behaviour and materiality, but they cannot be generalized to all instances of world-building in TRPGs or across all contexts of information-in-social-practice. The understandings outlined here are the beginnings of a potential range of explorations into ways that fictional worlds are created and engaged with in situated actions in everyday life. Although the results do not necessarily generalize to all gamers and their contexts, they do reveal “social practices that are possible” (Peräkylä, 2021, Generalizability of Research Findings section, para. 8). As such, they can be applied to questions about analytic generalizability in natural language research, particularly as it is done in institutional settings.

When doing research in a particular localized setting, practices and activities specific to that location reveal knowledge that could be used in other settings; meaning that research can provide examples of practices (i.e., “possibilities”) that could be used elsewhere even if the results cannot be considered statistically generalizable (Peräkylä, 2021). These possibilities can be used to extend scholarly conversations about methods and theory. For example, one approach

that I would like to engage with further is Georgakopoulou's (2007), work on identity-in-interaction (in which she used ethnographic data collected with a group of three women to demonstrate possible types of small stories). In this work, Georgakopoulou (2007) was able to compare the types of stories used in one context with another large set of email data collected in a different context to further discuss the types of small stories used in both sets of data. I could see my work as engaging with such perspectives so that the granularity of observation I employ in this research could be extended and adapted and used to contribute possibilities to further studies of small stories and information use in the emerging bodies of research on information behaviours and practices in LIS and materiality and immateriality in MCS.

8.4 Future Avenues of Research

In this research, I studied the specific context of TRPGs to examine ways that fictional worlds are created and engaged with. Future research could expand upon the findings in this context by using recordings posted to online services (e.g., Twitch and YouTube) to create a large corpus of data in order to compare behaviours across more sites of interaction. The methods could also be applied to other contexts. For example, the consideration of intertextual references between real and fictional works in the talk of gameplay could also be expanded to examine other areas of talk to understand ways that fiction and (im)materialities are more broadly incorporated into the everyday talk and actions of daily life. Currently in information behaviour research, serious leisure involves activities that are not understood as work. However, the definition of leisure activities could be complicated by the growing demand for content creation, whereby mediated representations (i.e., on YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, etc.) occupy a complex space between leisure and work. In this space Mikey's involvement in TRPG play began as a leisure activity and moved on to a situation where he was able to produce his game

for sale to the public. Future work could examine content creation and communities that create and use information provided on sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, Patreon), and the complexities of the category of leisure. In this study I have begun to describe ways that information (particularly as this information implicates materialities) is created and exchanged to build fictional worlds. Future avenues of work include examining additional contexts and building larger corpuses of examples to examine behaviours across contexts. The ways that common ground and epistemic ecologies are built and intertextual references are used in interaction can be further examined both in LIS and MCS.

8.5 A Last Word

This research was an adventure in interdisciplinarity through which I was able to examine how TRPG players, seated together in real world settings, shift in and out of ordinary conversation and goal-oriented game play. Through the shared action of their embodied talk, they make imagined materialities meaningful and perceptible enough to one another to ensure that the collaborative worlds they build are found pleasurable through their play. The micro-information behaviours examined in this research demonstrate ways that fiction and reality inform one another in the everyday activity of TRPG play. Thank you for joining my adventuring party in this examination of (im)materiality and intertextuality —I will end with the words of Emily, one of the *Storm King's Thunder* players: “The references are great today!”

References

- Andersen, G. (1998). The pragmatic marker like from a relevance-theoretic perspective. In A. H. Jucker & Y. Ziv (Eds.), *Discourse markers descriptions and theory* (pp. 147–170). J. Benjamins.
- Arafat, S., Buckland, M., Feinberg, M., Ibekwe-SanJuan, F., Shaw, R., & Warner, J. (2014). Pluri, multi-, trans- meta- and interdisciplinary nature of LIS. Does it really matter? *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 51(1), 42–46. <https://doi.org/10.1002/meet.2014.14505101010>
- Atmore, A. W. (2017). Just rol[l/e] with it: The sense-making practices of a tabletop roleplaying game community. *Information Research*, 22(4), 1–14.
- Attenborough, F., & Stokoe, E. (2012). Student life; student identity; student experience: Ethnomethodological methods for pedagogical matters. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 11(1), 6–21. <https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2012.11.1.6>
- Baker, N. (2017). Secondary world infrastructures and tabletop fantasy role-playing games. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Revisiting imaginary worlds: A subcreation studies anthology* (pp. 83–95). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *Dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.
- Bamberg, M. (2004). Talk, small stories, and adolescent identities. *Human Development*, 47(6), 366–369.
- Bamberg, M. (2006a). Biographic-narrative research, Quo Vadis? A critical review of “big stories” from the perspective of “small stories.” In K. Milnes, C. Horrocks, N. Kelly, B. Roberts, & D. Robinson (Eds.), *Narrative, memory & knowledge: Representations, aesthetics & contexts* (pp. 63–79). University of Huddersfield.

- Bamberg, M. (2006b). Stories: Big or small: Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 139–147.
- Bamberg, M. (2011a). Who am I? Big or small—shallow or deep? *Theory & Psychology*, 21(1), 122–129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354309357646>
- Bamberg, M. (2011b). Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity. *Theory & Psychology*, 21(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354309355852>
- Bardzell, S. (2008). Enchanted artifacts: Social productivity and identity in virtual material ecologies. *Artifact*, 2(2), 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17493460903020141>
- Barriage, S., & Searles, D. K. (2015). Astronauts and sugar beets: Young girls' information seeking in family interactions. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 52, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pr2.2015.145052010027>
- Bates, M. J. (2017a). Information. In J. D. McDonald & M. Levine-Clark (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (4th ed., pp. 2048–2063). CRC Press.
- Bates, M. J. (2017b). Information behaviour. In J. D. McDonald & M. Levine-Clark (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information science* (4th ed., pp. 2074–2085). CRC Press.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Ballantine Books.
- Bell, A., & Ryan, M.-L. (Eds.). (2019). *Possible worlds theory and contemporary narratology*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Bille, M. (2010). Seeking providence through things: The word of God versus black cummin. In M. Bille, F. Hastrup, & T. F. Soerensen (Eds.), *An anthropology of absence* (pp. 167–184). Springer New York. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5529-6>

- Bille, M., Bjerregaard, P., & Sørensen, T. F. (2015). Staging atmospheres: Materiality, culture, and the texture of the in-between. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 15, 31–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2014.11.002>
- Bolden, G. B. (2006). Little words that matter: Discourse markers “so” and “oh” and the doing of other-attentiveness in social interaction. *Journal of Communication*, 56(4), 661–688.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00314.x>
- Bolden, G. B. (2018). Speaking ‘out of turn’: Epistemics in action in other-initiated repair. *Discourse Studies*, 20(1), 142–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445617734346>
- Boni, M. (Ed.). (2017). *World building: Transmedia, fans, industries*. Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1zkjz0m>
- Bowden, H. M. (2019). Problem-solving in collaborative game design practices: Epistemic stance, affect, and engagement. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44(2), 124–143.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1563106>
- Bowman, S. L. (2008). *Role-playing: An ethnographic exploration* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Dallas]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Bowman, S. L. (2010). *The functions of role-playing games: How participants create community, solve problems and explore identity*. McFarland & Co.
- Briet, S. (2006). *What is documentation?: English translation of the classic French text* (R. E. Day, L. Martinet, & H. G. B. Angheliescu, Trans.). Scarecrow Press.
- Broussard, R., & Doty, P. (2016). Toward an understanding of fiction and information behavior. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 53(1), 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.2016.14505301066>
- Brown, B. (2001). Thing Theory. *Critical Inquiry*, 28(1), 1–22.

- Brown, B. (2003). *A sense of things: The object matter of American literature*. University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, B. (2015). *Other things*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Bubolz, M. M., & Sontag, M. S. (1988). Integration in home economics and human ecology. *Journal of Consumer Studies & Home Economics*, 12(1), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.1988.tb00462.x>
- Buchli, V. (2010). Presencing the im-material. In M. Bille, F. Hastrup, & T. F. Soerensen (Eds.), *An anthropology of absence* (pp. 185–203). Springer New York.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5529-6>
- Buckland, M. K. (1991a). *Information and information systems*. Praeger.
- Buckland, M. K. (1991b). Information as thing. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 42, 351–360. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4571\(199106\)42:5<351::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-3](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199106)42:5<351::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-3)
- Buckland, M. K. (1997). What is a “document”? *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 48, 804–809. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4571\(199709\)48:9<804::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-V](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199709)48:9<804::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-V)
- Bullard, J. (2014). Values and negotiation in classification work. *Proceedings of the Companion Publication of the 17th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing - CSCW Companion '14*, 45–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/2556420.2556820>

- Burnett, C., Merchant, G., Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2014). The (im)materiality of literacy: The significance of subjectivity to new literacies research. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(1), 90–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2012.739469>
- Butler, C. W., & Fitzgerald, R. (2010). Membership-in-action: Operative identities in a family meal. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(9), 2462–2474.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.03.006>
- Case, D. O., & Given, L. M. (2016). *Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior* (4th ed.). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Chabot, R. (2019). *The information practices of New Kadampa Buddhists: From “dharma of scripture” to “dharma of insight”* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Ontario].
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/6099/>
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Clayman, S. E., Heritage, J., & Maynard, D. W. (2022). The ethnomethodological lineage of conversation analysis. In D. W. Maynard & J. Heritage (Eds.), *The Ethnomethodology Program: Legacies and Prospects* (pp. 252–286). Oxford University Press; ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Clement, R. (2017). *Playing the story: The emergence of narrative through the interaction between players, game mechanics, and participatory fan communities* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Waterloo]. <http://hdl.handle.net/10012/12681>

- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, P. B. Elmore, A. Skukauskaiti, & E. Grace (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed., pp. 477–487). Routledge.
- Consalvo, M. (2009). There is no magic circle. *Games and Culture*, 4(4), 408–417.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009343575>
- Cover, J. G. (2010). *The creation of narrative in tabletop role-playing games*. McFarland & Co.
- Cox, A. M. (2012). An exploration of the practice approach and its place in information science. *Journal of Information Science*, 38(2), 176–188.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551511435881>
- Cox, A. M. (2013). Information in social practice: A practice approach to understanding information activities in personal photography. *Journal of Information Science*, 39(1), 61–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512469767>
- Cox, A. M., Griffin, B., & Hartel, J. (2017). What everybody knows: Embodied information in serious leisure. *Journal of Documentation*, 73(3), 386–406. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-06-2016-0073>
- Dalmer, N., & McKenzie, P. (2019). Noticing the unnoticed: Lines of work in everyday life information practices. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 56(1), 386–389. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.34>
- De Cunzo, L. A., & Dann Roeber, C. (Eds.). (2022a). *The Cambridge Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108622639>
- De Cunzo, L. A., & Dann Roeber, C. D. (2022b). Suitcases, selfies, and the global environment: Material culture, ateriality, and the new materialism. In L. A. De Cunzo & C. Dann

- Roeber (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (pp. 1–24). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108622639>
- de Mello, R. R., de Almeida, S. O., & Dalmoro, M. (2021). The emperor's new cosplay: The agency of an absent material on the consumption experience. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 24(3), 241–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2020.1756268>
- Department of Human Ecology, University of Alberta. (n.d.). *What do human ecology researchers study?* Department of Human Ecology. Retrieved October 10, 2022, from <https://www.ualberta.ca/human-ecology/index.html>
- Deppermann, A., & Pekarek Doehler, S. (2021). Longitudinal conversation analysis—Introduction to the special issue. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 54(2), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2021.1899707>
- Deppermann, A., & Schmidt, A. (2021). How shared meanings and uses emerge over an interactional history: Wabi sabi in a series of theater rehearsals. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 54(2), 203–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2021.1899714>
- Dervin, B., & Nilan, M. (1986). Information needs and uses. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 21, 3–33.
- Doležel, L. (2010). *Possible worlds of fiction and history: The postmodern stage*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Doty, P., & Broussard, R. (2017). Fiction as informative and its implications for information science theory. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 54(1), 61–70. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ptra.2017.14505401008>

- Drew, P., & Heritage, J. (1992). Analyzing talk at work: An introduction. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings* (pp. 3–65). Cambridge University Press.
- Ekman, S., & Taylor, A. I. (2016). Notes toward a critical approach to worlds and world-building. *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, 3(3), 7–18.
- Embodiment | imbodiment, n. (2022). In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60906>
- Enfield, N. J. (2006). Social consequences of common ground. In S. C. Levinson & N. J. Enfield (Eds.), *Roots of human sociality: Culture, cognition and interaction* (pp. 399–430). Routledge.
- Enfield, N. J. (2011). Sources of asymmetry in human interaction: Enchrony, status, knowledge and agency. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada, & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 285–312). Cambridge University Press.
- Enfield, N. J. (2013a). Reference in conversation. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 433–454). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Enfield, N. J. (2013b). *Relationship thinking: Agency, enchrony, and human sociality*. Oxford University Press.
- Engelke, M. (2005). Sticky subjects and sticky objects: The substance of African Christian healing. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Materiality* (pp. 118–139). Duke University Press.
- Ensslin, A. (2014). *Literary gaming*. MIT Press.
- Evaldsson, A.-C. (2014). Doing being boys with ADHD: Category memberships and differences in SEN classroom practices. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 19(3), 266–283.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2014.883783>

- Evans, B., & Fitzgerald, R. (2016). 'It's training man'! Membership categorization and the institutional moral order of basketball training. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 36(2), 205–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07268602.2015.1121531>
- Fast, K., & Örnebring, H. (2017). Transmedia world-building: The Shadow (1931–present) and Transformers (1984–present). *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(6), 636–652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915605887>
- Fine, G. A. (1983). *Shared fantasy: Role-playing games as social worlds*. University of Chicago Press.
- Fisher, K. E., Erdelez, S., & McKechnie, L. E. F. (Eds.). (2005a). Preface. In *Theories of information behavior* (pp. xix–xxi). Information Today.
- Fisher, K. E., Erdelez, S., & McKechnie, L. E. F. (Eds.). (2005b). *Theories of information behavior*. Information Today.
- Fitzgerald, R., & Housley, W. (Eds.). (2015). *Advances in membership categorisation analysis*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917873>
- Fitzgerald, R., Housley, W., & Butler, C. W. (2009). Omnirelevance and interactional context. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 36(3), 45–64.
- Fitzgerald, R., & Rintel, S. (2013). From lifeguard to bitch: How a story character becomes a promiscuous category in a couple's video call. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 40(2), 101–118.
- Forcier, E. (2017). Re(a)d wedding: A case study exploring everyday information behaviors of the transmedia fan. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 54(1), 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pr2.2017.14505401011>

- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2016). *Sociology and the new materialism: Theory, research, action*. SAGE Publications; ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Fox Tree, J. E., & Schrock, J. C. (1999). Discourse markers in spontaneous speech: Oh what a difference an oh makes. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 40(2), 280–295.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jmla.1998.2613>
- Francis, D. W., & Hester, S. (2004). *An invitation to ethnomethodology: Language, society and social interaction*. SAGE.
- Frasca, G. (2003). Simulation versus narrative: Introduction to ludology. In M. J. P. Wolf & B. Perron (Eds.), *The video game theory reader* (pp. 221–235). Routledge.
- Freeman, M. (2006). Life “on holiday”?: In defense of big stories. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 131–138.
- Freeman, M. (2011). Stories, big and small: Toward a synthesis. *Theory & Psychology*, 21(1), 114–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354309354394>
- Frohmann, B. (2004). *Deflating information: From science studies to documentation*. University of Toronto Press.
- Frohmann, B. (2007). Multiplicity, materiality, and autonomous agency of documentation. In R. Skare, N. W. Lund, & A. Vårheim (Eds.), *A document (re)turn: Contributions from a research field in transition* (pp. 27–40). Peter Lang.
- Frohmann, B. (2012). The documentality of Mme Briet’s antelope. In J. Packer & S. B. Crofts Wiley (Eds.), *Communication matters: Materialist approaches to media, mobility, and networks* (pp. 173–182). Routledge.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Prentice-Hall.

- Garfinkel, H., & Wieder, L. D. (1992). Two incommensurable, asymmetrically alternate technologies of social analysis. In G. Watson & R. M. Seiler (Eds.), *Text in context: Contributions to ethnomethodology* (pp. 175–206). Sage Publications.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2006). Thinking big with small stories in narrative and identity analysis. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 122–130.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction and identities*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2015). Small stories research: Methods—Analysis—Outreach. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 255–272). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Given, L. M., & Kelly, W. B. (2016). Collectivist information behavior: Mentoring circles as sites for knowledge creation. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 53(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pr2.2016.14505301059>
- Goebel, Z. (2015). Common ground and conviviality: Indonesians doing togetherness in Japan. *Multilingual Margins: A Journal of Multilingualism from the Periphery*, 2(1), 46. <https://doi.org/10.14426/mm.v2i1.57>
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (1st Northeastern Press ed.). Northeastern University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goodwin, C. (1994). Professional vision. *American Anthropologist*, 96(3), 606–633. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/aa.1994.96.3.02a00100>

- Goodwin, C. (1997). The blackness of black: Color categories as situated practice. In L. B. Resnick, R. Säljö, C. Pontecorvo, & B. Burge (Eds.), *Discourse, Tools and Reasoning: Essays on Situated Cognition* (pp. 111–140). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-03362-3_6
- Goodwin, C. (2000). Action and embodiment within situated human interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(10), 1489–1522. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00096-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00096-X)
- Goodwin, C. (2010). Things and their embodied environments. In L. Malafouris & C. Renfrew (Eds.), *The cognitive life of things: Recasting the boundaries of the mind* (pp. 103–120). McDonald Institute Monographs, David Brown Book Co.
- Goodwin, M. H. (1996). Shifting frame. In D. I. Slobin, J. Gerhardt, A. Kyratzis, & J. Guo (Eds.), *Social interaction, social context, and language: Essays in honor of Susan Ervin-Tripp* (pp. 71–82). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gordon, C. (2009). *Making meanings, creating family: Intertextuality and framing in family interaction*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195373820.001.0001>
- Gordon, C. (2015). Framing and positioning. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (2nd ed., pp. 324–345). Wiley Blackwell.
- Gorichanaz, T. (2015). Information on the run: Experiencing information during an ultramarathon. *Information Research*, 20(4), 149–160.
- Gorichanaz, T. (2017). The information of story: The genre and information activities of ultrarunning race reports. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 69(4), 460–474.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-03-2017-0071>

Greifeneder, E. (2014). Trends in information behaviour research. *Information Research*, 19(4).

<http://informationr.net/ir/19-4/istic/isic13.html#.Y0a4XuzMK3I>

Gribanova, T. I., & Gaidukova, T. M. (2019). Hedging in different types of discourse. *Training*

Language and Culture, 3(2), 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.6>

Gunderman, H. C. (2020). Geographies of science fiction, peace, and cosmopolitanism:

Conceptualizing critical worldbuilding through a lens of Doctor Who. *Literary*

Geographies, 6(1), Article 1.

Hale, M. (2014). Cosplay: Intertextuality, public texts, and the body fantastic. *Western Folklore*,

73(1), 5–37.

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13–

26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345>

Harris, A. (2016). Embodiment. In *Oxford Bibliographies Anthropology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199766567-0151>

Harris, R., Veinot, T., & Bella, L. (2010). A relational perspective on HIV/AIDS information

behaviour in rural Canada. *Libri: International Journal of Libraries & Information*

Services, 60(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.1515/libr.2010.012>

Hart, C., Schoolbred, M., Butcher, D., & Kane, D. (1999). The bibliographical structure of fan

information. *Collection Building*, 18(2), 81–89.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/01604959910265869>

Hart, J. (2012). *Fictional and historical worlds*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137012647>

Hartel, J. (2003). The serious leisure frontier in library and information science: Hobby domains.

Knowledge Organization, 30(3/4), 228–238.

- Hartel, J. (2006). Information activities and resources in an episode of gourmet cooking. *Information Research*, 12(1). <http://www.informationr.net/ir/12-1/paper282.html>
- Hartel, J. (2007). *Information activities, resources, and spaces in the hobby of gourmet cooking* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global) [Doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Hartel, J. (2010). Managing documents at home for serious leisure: A case study of the hobby of gourmet cooking. *Journal of Documentation*, 66(6), 847–874. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411011087841>
- Hartel, J., Cox, A. M., & Griffin, B. L. (2016). Information activity in serious leisure. *Information Research*, 21(4), 1–16.
- Harvey, C. B. (2015). *Fantastic transmedia*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137306043>
- Harviainen, J. T. (2007). Live-action, role-playing environments as information systems: An introduction. *Information Research*, 12, 1–12.
- Harviainen, J. T., & Hamari, J. (2015). Seek, share, or withhold: Information trading in MMORPGs. *Journal of Documentation*, 71(6), 1119–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-09-2014-0135>
- Harviainen, J. T., & Rapp, A. (2018). Multiplayer online role-playing as information retrieval and system use: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Documentation*, 74(3), 624–640. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-07-2017-0100>
- Harviainen, J. T., & Vesa, M. (2016). Massively multiplayer online games as information system: Implications for organizational learning. In *Simulation and Gaming in the Network Society* (pp. 199–214). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0575-6_16

- Hayano, K. (2011). Claiming epistemic primacy: Yo-marked assessments in Japanese. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada, & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 58–82). Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, C., Hindmarsh, J., & Luff, P. (2010). *Video in qualitative research: Analysing social interaction in everyday life*. SAGE.
- Heinström, J., & Spink, A. (2011). *New directions in information behaviour*. Emerald.
- Heizmann, H. (2012). Workplace information practices among human resources professionals: Discursive boundaries in action. *Information Research*, 17(3).
<http://www.informationr.net/ir/17-3/paper532.html#mck10>
- Heljakka, K. (2017). Toy fandom, adulthood, and the ludic age: Creative material culture as play. In J. Gray, C. Sandvoss, & C. L. Harrington (Eds.), *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world* (2nd ed., pp. 91–105). NYU Press.
- Helkenberg, D. L. (2019). *Narratives of sexuality in the lives of young women readers* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Ontario]. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/6284/>
- Hendricks, S. Q. (2006). Incorporative discourse strategies in tabletop fantasy role-playing games. In J. P. Williams, S. Q. Hendricks, & W. K. Winkler (Eds.), *Gaming as culture: Essays on reality, identity and experience in fantasy games* (pp. 39–56). McFarland & Co.
- Hepburn, A., & Bolden, G. B. (2013). The conversation analytic approach to transcription. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 57–76). Wiley-Blackwell.

- Heritage, J. (1984). A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 299–345). Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. (2005). Conversation analysis and institutional talk. In K. L. Fitch & R. E. Sanders (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social interaction* (pp. 103–148). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611574>
- Heritage, J. (2010). Questioning in medicine. In A. F. Freed & S. Ehrlich (Eds.), *“Why do you ask?”: The function of questions in institutional discourse* (pp. 42–68). Oxford University Press.
- Heritage, J. (2011). Territories of knowledge, territories of experience: Empathic moments in interaction. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada, & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 159–183). Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. (2012a). Beyond and behind the words: Some reactions to my commentators. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 76–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.646692>
- Heritage, J. (2012b). Epistemics in action: Action formation and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.646684>
- Heritage, J. (2012c). The epistemic engine: Sequence organization and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 30–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.646685>
- Heritage, J. (2013a). Epistemics in conversation. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 370–394). Wiley-Blackwell.

- Heritage, J. (2013b). Action formation and its epistemic (and other) backgrounds. *Discourse Studies*, 15(5), 551–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445613501449>
- Heritage, J. (2018). The ubiquity of epistemics: A rebuttal to the ‘epistemics of epistemics’ group. *Discourse Studies*, 20(1), 14–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445617734342>
- Heritage, J. (2021). Conversation analysis: Practices and Methods. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Heritage, J., & Clayman, S. (2010). *Talk in action: Interactions, identities, and institutions*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Heritage, J., & Raymond, G. (2005). The terms of agreement: Indexing epistemic authority and subordination in talk-in-interaction. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 68(1), 15–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250506800103>
- Heritage, J., & Raymond, G. (2012). Navigating epistemic landscapes: Acquiescence, agency and resistance in responses to polar questions. In J.-P. de Ruiter (Ed.), *Questions: Formal, functional and interactional perspectives* (pp. 179–192). Cambridge University Press.
- Hester, S., & Eglin, P. (1997a). Membership categorization analysis: An introduction. In S. Hester & P. Eglin (Eds.), *Culture in action: Studies in membership categorization analysis* (pp. 1–23). International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis & University Press of America.
- Hester, S., & Eglin, P. (1997b). The reflexive constitution of category, predicate and context in two settings. In S. Hester & P. Eglin (Eds.), *Culture in action: Studies in membership categorization analysis* (pp. 25–48). International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis & University Press of America.

- Hilbert, R. A. (2009). Ethnomethodology and social theory. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The new Blackwell companion to social theory* (University of Alberta Internet Internet Access; pp. 159–178). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hill, H., & Pecoskie, J. J. L. (2017). Information activities as serious leisure within the fanfiction community. *Journal of Documentation*, 73(5), 843–857. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-04-2016-0045>
- Hills, M. (2014). From Dalek half balls to Daft Punk helmets: Mimetic fandom and the crafting of replicas. *Transformative Works & Cultures*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0531>
- Hodder, I. (2012). *Entangled: An archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Hodder, I., & Mol, A. (2016). Network analysis and entanglement. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 23(4), 1066–1094. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10816-015-9259-6>
- Hofstetter, E. (2020). Thinking with the body: Embodying thinking as a practice in board games. In S. Wiggins & K. Osvaldsson Cromdal (Eds.), *Discursive psychology and embodiment: Beyond subject-object binaries* (pp. 247–273). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53709-8>
- Hofstetter, E. (2021). Achieving preallocation: Turn transition practices in board games. *Discourse Processes*, 58(2), 113–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2020.1816401>
- Hofstetter, E., & Robles, J. (2019). Manipulation in board game interactions: Being a sporting player. *Symbolic Interaction*, 42(2), 301–320. <https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.396>
- Housley, W., & Fitzgerald, R. (2002). The reconsidered model of membership categorization analysis. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 59–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879410200200104>

- Housley, W., & Fitzgerald, R. (2009). Membership categorization, culture and norms in action. *Discourse & Society*, 20(3), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926509102405>
- Housley, W., & Fitzgerald, R. (2015). Introduction to membership categorisation analysis. In R. Fitzgerald & W. Housley (Eds.), *Advances in membership categorisation analysis* (pp. 1–22). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917873.n1>
- Housley, W., & Smith, R. J. (2011). Mundane reason, membership categorization practices and the everyday ontology of space and place in interview talk. *Qualitative Research*, 11(6), 698–715. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111415960>
- Huizinga, J. (1949). *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Routledge.
- Hutchby, I., & Wooffitt, R. (2008). *Conversation analysis* (2nd ed.). Polity.
- Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the wild*. MIT Press.
- Huvila, I. (2022). Making and taking information. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 73(4), 528–541. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24599>
- Ingold, T. (2007a). Materials against materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002127>
- Ingold, T. (2007b). Writing texts, reading materials. A response to my critics. *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002176>
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2012). Toward an ecology of materials. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41(1), 427–442. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-081309-145920>
- Jayyusi, L. (1984). *Categorization and the moral order*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Jefferson, G. (1990). List-construction as a task and resource. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Interaction competence* (pp. 63–92). International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis & University Press of America; University Press of America.
- Jefferson, G. (Ed.). (1995). *Lectures on conversation: Harvey Sacks* (Vols. 1 & 2). Blackwell Publishing.
- Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13–31). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Jenkins, H. (2017). “All over the map:” Building (and rebuilding) Oz. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Revisiting imaginary worlds: A subcreation studies anthology* (pp. 172–191). Routledge.
- Jenson, J. (1992). Fandom as pathology: The consequences of characterisation. In *The adoring audience: Fan culture and popular media* (pp. 9–29). Routledge.
- Jewitt, C., Bezemer, J., & O’Halloran, K. (2016). *Introducing multimodality*. Routledge.
- Johannisson, J., & Sundin, O. (2007). Putting discourse to work: Information practices and the professional project of nurses. *Library Quarterly*, 77(2), 199–218.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/517843>
- Johnson, J. D., & Meischke, H. (1993). A comprehensive model of cancer-related information seeking applied to magazines. *Human Communication Research*, 19(3), 343–367.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1993.tb00305.x>
- Keating, E. (2015). Discourse, Space, and Place. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 244–261). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch11>

- Kinalzik, N., & Heller, V. (2020). Establishing joint imagined spaces in game explanations: Differences in the use of embodied resources among primary school children. *Research on Children & Social Interaction*, 4(1), 28–50. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rcsi.12417>
- Kitzinger, C. (2013). Repair. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 229–256). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Klein, J. T. (2010). A taxonomy of interdisciplinarity. In J. T. Klein & C. Mitcham (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (pp. 15–30). Oxford University Press.
- Knappett, C. (2007). Materials with materiality? *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 20–23. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002140>
- Konzack, L. (2017). The subcreation of J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and how it became transmedial culture. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Revisiting imaginary worlds: A subcreation studies anthology* (pp. 69–82). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kristeva, J. (1986). *The Kristeva reader* (T. Moi, Ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. SAGE.
- Landgrebe, J., & Heinemann, T. (2014). Mapping the epistemic landscape in innovation workshops. *Pragmatics and Society*, 5(2), 191–220. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ps.5.2.02hei>
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609268>
- Lee, L., Ocepek, M. G., & Makri, S. (2021). Creating by me, and for me: Investigating the use of information creation in everyday life. *Information Research*, 26(1). <http://www.informationr.net/ir/26-1/paper891.html>

- Lehdonvirta, V. (2010). Online spaces have material culture: Goodbye to digital post-materialism and hello to virtual consumption. *Media, Culture & Society*, 32(5), 883–889. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710378559>
- Leonardi, P. M. (2012). Materiality, sociomateriality, and socio-technical systems: What do these terms mean? How are they different? Do we need them? In P. M. Leonardi, B. A. Nardi, & J. Kallinikos (Eds.), *Materiality and Organizing: Social Interaction in a Technological World* (pp. 24–48). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199664054.003.0002>
- Lepper, G. (2000). *Categories in text and talk*. SAGE Publications.
- Lerner, G. H. (1994). Responsive list construction: A conversational resource for accomplishing multifaceted social action. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 13(1), 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X94131002>
- Lester, J. N., & O'Reilly, M. (2019). *Applied conversation analysis: Social interaction in institutional settings*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802663>
- Levin, H., & Gray, D. (1983). The lecturer's OK. *American Speech*, 58(3), 195–200. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/455226>
- Lindström, A., & Weatherall, A. (2015). Orientations to epistemics and deontics in treatment discussions. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 78, 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015.01.005>
- Lloyd, A. (2014). Informed bodies: Does the corporeal experience matter to information literacy practice? In *Information experience: Approaches to theory and practice* (pp. 85–100). Emerald Group Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1876-056220140000010003>

- Lund, N. W. (2004). Documentation in complementary perspective. In W. B. Rayward (Ed.), *Aware and responsible: Papers of the Nordic-International Colloquium on Social and Cultural Awareness and Responsibility in Library, Information, and Documentation Studies (SCARLID)* (pp. 93–102). Scarecrow Press.
- Lund, N. W. (2009). Document theory. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 43(1), 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aris.2009.1440430116>
- Lundh, A. H., Francke, H., & Sundin, O. (2015). To assess and be assessed: Upper secondary school students' narratives of credibility judgements. *Journal of Documentation*, 71(1), 80–95. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-03-2013-0035>
- Lynch, M. (1993). *Scientific practice and ordinary action: Ethnomethodology and social studies of science*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625473>
- Lynch, M. (2000). Against reflexivity as an academic virtue and source of privileged knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 17(3), 26–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760022051202>
- Lynch, M. (2001). Ethnomethodology and the logic of practice. In T. R. Schatzki, K. Knorr Cetina, & E. von Savigny (Eds.), *The practice turn in contemporary theory* (pp. 140–157). Routledge.
- Lynch, M. (2007). Law courts as perspicuous sites for ethnomethodological investigations. In S. Hester & D. Francis (Eds.), *Orders of ordinary action: Respecifying sociological knowledge* (pp. 107–119). Ashgate.
- Lynch, M. (2019). Garfinkel, Sacks and formal structures: Collaborative origins, divergences and the history of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. *Human Studies*, 42(2), 183–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-019-09510-w>

- Lystgaard Due, B. (2018). Co-constructed imagination space: A multimodal analysis of the interactional accomplishment of imagination during idea-development meetings. *CoDesign, 14*(3), 153–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2016.1263668>
- Mackay, D. (2001). *The fantasy role-playing game: A new performing art*. McFarland & Co.
- Mackey, M. (1995). *Imagining with words: The temporal processes of reading fiction* [Ph.D.]. University of Alberta (Canada).
- Maitre, D. (1983). *Literature and possible worlds*. Middlesex Polytechnic Press.
- Mansourian, Y. (2020). How passionate people seek and share various forms of information in their serious leisure. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association, 69*(1), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2019.1686569>
- Mansourian, Y. (2021a). Information activities in serious leisure as a catalyst for self-actualisation and social engagement. *Journal of Documentation, 77*(4), 887–905. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-08-2020-0134>
- Mansourian, Y. (2021b). Joyful information activities in serious leisure: Looking for pleasure, passion and purpose. *Aslib Journal of Information Management, 73*(5), 601–617. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-01-2021-0002>
- Matthews, B., Khan, A. H., Snow, S., Schlosser, P., Salisbury, I., & Matthews, S. (2021). How to do things with notes: The embodied socio-material performativity of sticky notes. *Design Studies, 76*, 101035. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2021.101035>
- McCabe, S., & Stokoe, E. H. (2004). Place and identity in tourist accounts. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*(3), 601–622. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.01.005>

- McGregor, S. L. T. (2011). Home economics as an integrated, holistic system: Revisiting Bubolz and Sontag's 1988 human ecology approach. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 35(1), 26–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00920.x>
- McGregor, S. L. T. (2020). Home ecology to home economics and beyond: Ellen Swallow Richards' disciplinary contributions. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, 112(2), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.14307/JFCS112.2.28>
- McGregor, S. L. T. (2021). Conceptualizing transdisciplinary human ecology. *Human Ecology Review*, 26(1), 159–178. <https://doi.org/10.22459/HER.26.01.2020.11>
- McHoul, A. W., & Watson, D. R. (1984). Two axes for the analysis of 'commonsense' and 'formal' geographical knowledge in classroom talk. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 5(3), 281–302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569840050305>
- McKenzie, P. (2003a). A model of information practices in accounts of everyday-life information seeking. *Journal of Documentation*, 59(1), 19–40. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410310457993>
- McKenzie, P. (2003b). *Connecting with information sources: How accounts of information seeking take discursive action. Paper 50*. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/fimspub/50>
- McKenzie, P. (2004). Positioning theory and the negotiation of information needs in a clinical midwifery setting. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 55(8), 685–694. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20002>
- McKenzie, P. (2009). Informing choice: The organization of institutional interaction in clinical midwifery care. *Library & Information Science Research*, 31(3), 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2009.03.006>

- McKenzie, P. (2020). Informational boundary work in everyday life. In A. Sundqvist, G. Berget, J. Nolin, & K. I. Skjerdingsstad (Eds.), *Sustainable digital communities* (pp. 96–103). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43687-2_8
- McKenzie, P., & Davies, E. (2021). Documentary tasks in the context of everyday life. *Library Trends*, 69(3), 492–519. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2021.0001>
- McKenzie, P., & Spoel, P. (2014). Borrowed voices: Conversational storytelling in midwifery healthcare visits. *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing*, 25(1), 26–47. <https://doi.org/10.31468/cjsdwr.36>
- Meyer, M. (2012). Placing and tracing absence: A material culture of the immaterial. *Journal of Material Culture*, 17(1), 103–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183511433259>
- Mikkonen, A., & Vakkari, P. (2016). Readers' interest criteria in fiction book search in library catalogs. *Journal of Documentation*, 72(4), 696–715. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JDOC-11-2015-0142>
- Mikkonen, A., & Vakkari, P. (2017). Reader characteristics, behavior, and success in fiction book search. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 68(9), 2154–2165. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23843>
- Miller, D. (2005). Materiality: An introduction. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Materiality* (pp. 1–50). Duke University Press.
- Miller, D. (2007). Stone age or plastic age? *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 23–27. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002152>
- Mitchell, L. (2016). Materiality, magic and belief: Framing the countryside in fantastical live-action roleplay games. *Ethnography*, 17(3), 326–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138115609376>

- Miyazaki, H. (2005). The materiality of finance theory. In D. Miller (Ed.), *Materiality* (pp. 165–181). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822386711-007>
- Mizer, N. J. (2015). *The greatest unreality: Tabletop role-playing games and the experience of imagined worlds* [Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University].
<https://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/156154>
- Mizer, N. J. (2019). *Tabletop role-playing games and the experience of imagined worlds*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29127-3>
- Mondada, L. (2007). Multimodal resources for turn-taking: Pointing and the emergence of possible next speakers. *Discourse Studies*, 9(2), 194–225.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445607075346>
- Mondada, L. (2012). Coordinating action and talk-in-interaction in and out of video games. In R. Ayaß & C. Gerhardt (Eds.), *The appropriation of media in everyday life* (pp. 231–270). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Mondada, L. (2013). Embodied and spatial resources for turn-taking in institutional multi-party interactions: Participatory democracy debates. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 46(1), 39–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.03.010>
- Mondada, L. (2016). Challenges of multimodality: Language and the body in social interaction. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(3), 336–366. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.1_12177
- Mondada, L. (2019a). Transcribing silent actions: A multimodal approach of sequence organization. *Social Interaction. Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality*, 2(1), Article 1.
<https://doi.org/10.7146/si.v2i1.113150>

- Mondada, L. (2019b). Contemporary issues in conversation analysis: Embodiment and materiality, multimodality and multisensoriality in social interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 145, 47–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.01.016>
- Montola, M. (2008). The invisible rules of role-playing the social framework of the role-playing process. *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 1, 22–36.
- Montola, M. (2012). *On the edge of the magic circle: Understanding pervasive games and role-playing* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tampere]. <https://urn.fi/urn:isbn:978-951-44-8864-1>
- Morriss, L. (2016). Dirty secrets and being ‘strange’: Using ethnomethodology to move beyond familiarity. *Qualitative Research*, 16(5), 526–540.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115598194>
- Moyer, J. E. (2007). Learning from leisure reading: A study of adult public library patrons. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 46(4), 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.5860/rusq.46n4.66>
- Murphy, K. M. (2005). Collaborative imagining: The interactive use of gestures, talk, and graphic representation in architectural practice. *Semiotica*, 2005(156), 113–145.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2005.2005.156.113>
- Nagy, P., & Koles, B. (2014). The digital transformation of human identity: Towards a conceptual model of virtual identity in virtual worlds. *Convergence*, 20(3), 276–292.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514531532>
- Nahl, D. (2007a). A discourse analysis technique for charting the flow of micro-information behavior. *Journal of Documentation*, 63(3), 323–339.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410710743270>

- Nahl, D. (2007b). Social-biological information technology: An integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(13), 2021–2046. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20690>
- Nevile, M., Haddington, P., Heinemann, T., & Rauniomaa, M. (Eds.). (2014a). *Interacting with objects: Language, materiality, and social activity*. John Benjamins Publishing Company; ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Nevile, M., Haddington, P., Heinemann, T., & Rauniomaa, M. (2014b). On the interactional ecology of objects. In M. Nevile, P. Haddington, T. Heinemann, & M. Rauniomaa (Eds.), *Interacting with objects: Language, materiality, and social activity* (pp. 3–26). John Benjamins Publishing Company; ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Nicholas, C., & Oak, A. (2018). Building consensus: Design media and multimodality in architecture education. *Discourse & Society*, 29(4), 436–454. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926518754415>
- Nilsson, B. (2007). An archaeology of material stories. Dioramas as illustration and the desire of a thingless archaeology. *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 27–30. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002164>
- Nishizaka, A. (2003). Imagination in action. *Theory & Psychology*, 13(2), 177–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354303013002002>
- Oak, A. (2000). It's a nice idea, but it's not actually real: Assessing the objects and activities of design. *Journal of Art & Design Education*, 19(1), 86–95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5949.00205>
- Oak, A. (2011). What can talk tell us about design?: Analyzing conversation to understand practice. *Design Studies*, 32(3), 211–234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2010.11.003>

- Oak, A. (2013). Narratives in practice: The small and big stories of design. In L. Sandino & M. Partington (Eds.), *Oral history in the visual arts* (pp. 181–188). Bloomsbury.
- Ocepek, M. G. (2016). *Everyday shopping: An exploration of the information behaviors of grocery shoppers* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin].
<https://doi.org/10.15781/T2028PC9B>
- Ocepek, M. G. (2018a). Sensible shopping: A sensory exploration of the information environment of the grocery store. *Library Trends*, 66(3), 371–394.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2018.0008>
- Ocepek, M. G. (2018b). Bringing out the everyday in everyday information behavior. *Journal of Documentation*, 74(2), 398–411. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-10-2016-0119>
- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Harvard University Press.
- Oliphant, T., Berry, T., & Norris, C. M. (2022). ‘In a perfect world doctors and the medical profession would accept people for who they are’: Women’s heart health information practices. *Information Research*, 27(2). <https://doi.org/10.47989/irpaper931>
- Olsson, M. (2005). Beyond ‘needy’ individuals: Conceptualizing information behavior. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 42(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1002/meet.1450420161>
- Olsson, M. (2010). The play’s the thing: Theater professionals make sense of Shakespeare. *Library & Information Science Research*, 32(4), 272–280.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2010.07.009>
- Olsson, M., & Lloyd, A. (2017). Being in place: Embodied information practices. *Information Research*, 22(1). <http://informationr.net/ir/22-1/colis/colis1601.html>

- Ooi, K., & Liew, C. L. (2011). Selecting fiction as part of everyday life information seeking. *Journal of Documentation*, 67(5), 748–772. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411111164655>
- Pavel, T. G. (1986). *Fictional worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Peräkylä, A. (2021). Validity in qualitative research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications; Kobo eBook.
- Pollner, M. (1991). Left of ethnomethodology: The rise and decline of radical reflexivity. *American Sociological Review*, 56(3), 370–380. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096110>
- Pollner, M. (2012). Reflections on Garfinkel and ethnomethodology's program. *The American Sociologist*, 43(1), 36–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-011-9146-x>
- Pollner, M., & Emerson, R. M. (2001). Ethnomethodology and ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 118–135). SAGE Publications; SAGE Research Methods ebook. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608337.n8>
- Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 57–101). Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, A., & Denvir, P. (2007). Enacting the institutional role of chairperson in upper management meetings: The interactional realization of provisional authority. In F. Cooren (Ed.), *Interacting and organizing: Analyses of a management meeting* (pp. 31–52). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Pomerantz, A., & Heritage, J. (2013). Preference. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 210–228). Wiley-Blackwell.

- Pomerantz, A., & Mandelbaum, J. (2005). Conversation analytic approaches to the relevance and uses of relationship categories in interaction. In K. L. Fitch & R. E. Sanders (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social interaction* (pp. 149–170). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611574>
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. Sage.
- Price, L., & Robinson, L. (2017). ‘Being in a knowledge space’: Information behaviour of cult media fan communities. *Journal of Information Science*, 43(5), 649–664. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551516658821>
- Prigoda, E., & McKenzie, P. J. (2007). Purls of wisdom: A collectivist study of human information behaviour in a public library knitting group. *Journal of Documentation*, 63(1), 90–114. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410710723902>
- Prown, J. D. (1982). Mind in matter: An introduction to material culture theory and method. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17(1), 1–19.
- Psathas, G., & Anderson, T. (1990). The ‘practices’ of transcription in conversation analysis. 78(1–2), 75–100. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1990.78.1-2.75>
- Punday, D. (2005). Creative accounting: Role-playing games, possible-world theory, and the agency of imagination. *Poetics Today*, 26(1), 113–139. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-26-1-113>
- Raymond, G. (2018). Which epistemics? Whose conversation analysis? *Discourse Studies*, 20(1), 57–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445617734343>
- Raymond, G., & Heritage, J. (2006). The epistemics of social relations: Owning grandchildren. *Language in Society*, 35(5), 677–705. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404506060325>

- Rehak, B. (2014). Materiality and object-oriented fandom. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0622>
- Reynolds, E., & Fitzgerald, R. (2015). Challenging normativity re-appraising category bound, tied and predicated features. In R. Fitzgerald & W. Housley (Eds.), *Advances in membership categorisation analysis* (pp. 99–122). SAGE Publications; SAGE Research Methods ebook. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917873.n5>
- Richardson, B. (2002). Ellen Swallow Richards: “Humanistic oekologist,” “applied sociologist,” and the founding sociology. *The American Sociologist, Fall*, 21–57.
- Riley, M. O. (1997). *Oz and beyond: The fantasy world of L. Frank Baum*. University Press of Kansas.
- Riley, M. O. (2017). L. Frank Baum’s A New Wonderland: The beginning of it all. In M. J. P. Wolf (Ed.), *Revisiting imaginary worlds: A subcreation studies anthology* (pp. 151–171). Routledge.
- Rintel, S. (2015). Omnirelevance in technologised interaction: Couples coping with video calling distortions. In R. Fitzgerald & W. Housley (Eds.), *Advances in Membership Categorisation Analysis* (pp. 123–150). SAGE Publications; SAGE Research Methods ebook. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917873>
- Robinson, J. D. (2007). The role of numbers and statistics within conversation analysis. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 1(1), 65–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19312450709336663>
- Robinson, J. D. (2013). Overall structural organization. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 257–280). Wiley-Blackwell.

- Roine, H.-R. (2016). *Imaginative, immersive and interactive engagements: The rhetoric of worldbuilding in contemporary speculative fiction* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tampere]. <https://trepo.tuni.fi/handle/10024/99583>
- Ross, C. S. (1999). Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure. *Information Processing & Management*, 35(6), 783–799.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-4573\(99\)00026-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-4573(99)00026-6)
- Rothbauer, P. (2004a). *Finding and creating possibility: Reading in the lives of lesbian, bisexual and queer young women* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Western Ontario]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Rothbauer, P. (2004b). “People aren’t afraid anymore, but it’s hard to find books”: Reading practices that inform the personal and social identities of self-identified lesbian and queer young women. *Canadian Journal of Information & Library Sciences*, 28(3), 53–74.
- Ryan, M.-L. (1991). *Possible worlds, artificial intelligence, and narrative theory*. Indiana University Press.
- Saarinen, K., & Vakkari, P. (2013). A sign of a good book: Readers’ methods of accessing fiction in the public library. *Journal of Documentation*, 69(5), 736–754.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-04-2012-0041>
- Sacks, H. (1984). On doing “being ordinary.” In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 413–429). Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks, H. (1995). Lecture 6: Omni-relevant devices; Cover identifications. In G. Jefferson (Ed.), *Lectures on conversation: Harvey Sacks* (Vols. 1 & 2, pp. 312–319). Blackwell Publishing.

- Sacks, H., & Schegloff, E. A. (2007). Two preferences in the organization of reference to persons in conversation and their interaction. In N. J. Enfield & T. Stivers (Eds.), *Person reference in interaction: Linguistic cultural and social perspectives* (pp. 23–38). Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696–735.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/412243>
- Sahlström, J. F. (2002). The interactional organization of hand raising in classroom interaction. *The Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 37(2), 47–57.
- Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. MIT Press.
- Sandino, L. (2006). Oral histories and design: Objects and subjects. *Journal of Design History*, 19(4), 275–282. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epl022>
- Savolainen, R. (1995). Everyday life information seeking: Approaching information seeking in the context of “way of life.” *Library & Information Science Research*, 17(3), 259–294.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0740-8188\(95\)90048-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0740-8188(95)90048-9)
- Savolainen, R. (2007). Information behavior and information practice: Reviewing the “umbrella concepts” of information-seeking studies. *Library Quarterly*, 77(2), 109–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/517840>
- Savolainen, R. (2008). *Everyday information practices: A social phenomenological perspective*. Scarecrow Press.
- Savolainen, R., & Harviainen, T. (2014). Information as capability for action and capital in synthetic worlds. *Information Research*, 19(4). <http://www.informationr.net/ir/19-4/istic/isic12.html#.WmzMM5M-dTY>

- Schallegger, R. R. (2018). *The postmodern joy of role-playing games: Agency, ritual and meaning in the medium*. McFarland.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1972). Notes on a conversational practice: Formulating place. In D. Sudnow (Ed.), *Studies in social interaction* (pp. 75–119). Collier-Macmillan.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1984). On some questions and ambiguities in conversation. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 28–52). Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1987). Analyzing single episodes of interaction: An exercise in conversation analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 50(2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786745>
- Schegloff, E. A. (2007a). *Sequence organization in interaction: A primer in conversation analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E. A. (2007b). A tutorial on membership categorization. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(3), 462–482. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.07.007>
- Schleef, E. (2008). The “lecturer’s ok” revisited: Changing discourse conventions and the influence of academic division. *American Speech: A Quarterly of Linguistic Usage*, 83(1), 62–84. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2008-003>
- Selting, M. (2007). Lists as embedded structures and the prosody of list construction as an interactional resource. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(3), 483–526. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.07.008>
- Shrier, K., Torner, E., & Hammer, J. (2018). Worldbuilding in role-playing games. In J. P. Zagal & S. Deterding (Eds.), *Role-playing game studies: Transmedia foundations* (pp. 349–363). Routledge.

- Sidnell, J. (2011). The epistemics of make-believe. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada, & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 131–155). Cambridge University Press.
- Sidnell, J. (2016). Conversation analysis. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199384655.013.40>
- Sidnell, J. (2022). Reframing “footing.” In M. H. Jacobsen & G. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of Goffman studies* (1st ed., pp. 131–142). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003160861-13>
- Sidnell, J., & Stivers, T. (Eds.). (2013). *The handbook of conversation analysis*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sierra, S. (2016). *Intertextual media references as resources for managing frames, epistemics, and identity in conversation among friends* [Doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University]. <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1041844>
- Sierra, S. (2021). *Millennials talking media: Creating intertextual identities in everyday conversation*. Oxford University Press.
- Singleton, B. E. (2021). “We offer Nuffle a sausage sacrifice on game day”. Blood Bowl players’ world-building rituals through the lens of theory of sociocultural viability. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 50(2), 176–201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241620948244>
- Sköld, O., Adams, S., Harviainen, J. T., & Huvila, I. (2015). Studying games from the viewpoint of information. In P. Lankoski & S. Björk (Eds.), *Game research methods: An overview* (pp. 57–73). ETC Press.
- Smith, R. J., Fitzgerald, R., & Housley, W. (Eds.). (2021). *On Sacks: Methodology, materials, and inspirations*. Routledge.

- Solomon, P. (1997). Conversation in information-seeking contexts: A test of an analytical framework. *Library & Information Science Research*, 19(3), 217–248.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188\(97\)90014-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(97)90014-1)
- Sools, A. (2013). Narrative health research: Exploring big and small stories as analytical tools. *Health*, 17(1), 93–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459312447259>
- Spink, A., & Cole, C. (Eds.). (2006). *New directions in human information behavior*. Springer.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2007). *Serious leisure: A perspective for our time*. Transaction Publishers.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2009). Leisure and its relationship to library and information science: Bridging the gap. *Library Trends*, 57(4), 618–631. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.0.0064>
- Stivers, T. (2015). Coding social interaction: A heretical approach in conversation analysis? *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 48(1), 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2015.993837>
- Stivers, T., Mondada, L., & Steensig, J. (2011). Knowledge, morality and affiliation in social interaction. In T. Stivers, L. Mondada, & J. Steensig (Eds.), *The morality of knowledge in conversation* (pp. 3–24). Cambridge University Press.
- Stivers, T., & Sidnell, J. (2013). Introduction. In J. Sidnell & T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 1–8). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Stobbs, R. E. (2014). *Fiction & information: The leisure reading experience* [Master's thesis, University of Alberta]. Education and Research Archive.
<https://doi.org/10.7939/R34M91K0R>
- Stokoe, E. (2010). 'I'm not gonna hit a lady': Conversation analysis, membership categorization and men's denials of violence towards women. *Discourse & Society*, 21(1), 59–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926509345072>

Stokoe, E. (2012). Moving forward with membership categorization analysis: Methods for systematic analysis. *Discourse Studies*, 14(3), 277–303.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445612441534>

Stokoe, E. (2018). *Talk: The science of conversation*. Little, Brown and Company.

Storie, D. (2008). *Serious research? Exploring the information behaviour of avid players of a Massively Multiplayer Online game* [Master's thesis, University of Alberta]. Education and Research Archive.

<https://doi.org/10.7939/r3-tqff-rz91>

Suchman, L. A. (2007). *Human-machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Talja, S., & McKenzie, P. J. (2007). Editors' introduction: Special issue on discursive approaches to information seeking in context. *Library Quarterly*, 77(2), 97–108.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/517839>

Talja, S., Tuominen, K., & Savolainen, R. (2005). "Isms" in information science:

Constructivism, collectivism and constructionism. *Journal of Documentation*, 61(1), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410510578023>

Tilley, C. (2007). Materiality in materials. *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14(1), 16–20.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1380203807002139>

Trace, C. B. (2016). Ethnomethodology: Foundational insights on the nature and meaning of documents in everyday life. *Journal of Documentation*, 72(1), 47–64.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-01-2015-0014>

Tuominen, K., & Savolainen, R. (1997). A social constructionist approach to the study of information use as discursive action. In P. Vakkari, R. Savolainen, & B. Dervin (Eds.), *Information seeking in context: Proceedings of an international conference on research*

- in information needs, seeking and use in different contexts, 14-16 August, 1996, Tampere, Finland* (pp. 81–96). Taylor Graham.
- Turner, D. (2007). Conceptualizing oral documents. *Information Research*, 12, 1–13.
- Turner, D. (2009). *Conceptualizing oral documents* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Turner, D. (2010). Orally-based information. *Journal of Documentation*, 66(3), 370–383.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411011038458>
- Vakkari, P. (2008). Trends and approaches in information behaviour research. *Information Research*, 13(4). <http://informationr.net/ir/13-4/paper361.html>
- van Looy, J. (2005). Virtual recentring: Computer games and possible worlds theory. *Image & Narrative*, 6(12). <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/tulseluper/vanlooy.htm>
- Veinot, T. C. (2009). Interactive acquisition and sharing: Understanding the dynamics of HIV/AIDS information networks. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60(11), 2313–2332. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21151>
- Visvader, J. (1986). Philosophy and human ecology. *Human Ecology: A Gathering of Perspectives*, 117–127.
- vom Lehn, D. (2019). From Garfinkel’s “experiments in miniature” to the ethnomethodological analysis of interaction. *Human Studies*, 42(2), 305–326. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-019-09496-5>
- vom Lehn, D., & Dingwall, R. (2014). *Harold Garfinkel: The creation and development of ethnomethodology*. Taylor & Francis Group; ProQuest Ebook Central.

- Watson, R. (2015). De-reifying categories. In R. Fitzgerald & W. Housley (Eds.), *Advances in Membership Categorisation Analysis* (pp. 23–50). SAGE Publications; SAGE Research Methods ebook. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473917873.n3>
- Watts, C. (2018). Theorizing materiality. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, 42(1), 92–100.
- Westney, Q. E., Brabble, E. W., & Edwards, C. H. (1988). Human ecology: Concepts and perspectives. *Human Ecology Research and Applications*, 129–137.
- Williamson, K. (1998). Discovered by chance: The role of incidental information acquisition in an ecological model of information use. *Library & Information Science Research*, 20(1), 23–40. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188\(98\)90004-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(98)90004-4)
- Wilson, T. D. (2000). Human information behaviour. *Informing Science*, 3(2), 49–55.
- Wizards of the Coast. (2014a). *Dungeon master's guide*. Wizards of the Coast.
- Wizards of the Coast. (2014b). *Player's handbook*. Wizards of the Coast.
- Wizards of the Coast. (2016). *Storm king's thunder*. Wizards of the Coast.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2011). *Myst and Riven: The world of the D'ni*. University of Michigan Press.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2012). *Building imaginary worlds: The theory and history of subcreation*. Routledge.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (Ed.). (2017a). *Revisiting imaginary worlds: A subcreation studies anthology*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2017b). *The Routledge companion to imaginary worlds*. Routledge.
- Woodward, S. (2016). Object interviews, material imaginings and 'unsettling' methods: Interdisciplinary approaches to understanding materials and material culture. *Qualitative Research*, 16(4), 359–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115589647>

- Wu, M.-M. (2005). Understanding patrons' micro-level information seeking (MLIS) in information retrieval situations. *Information Processing & Management*, 41(4), 929–947. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2004.08.007>
- Wu, M.-M., & Liu, Y.-H. (2003). Intermediary's information seeking, inquiring minds, and elicitation styles. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 54(12), 1117–1133. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10323>
- Wu, M.-M., & Liu, Y.-H. (2011). On intermediaries' inquiring minds, elicitation styles, and user satisfaction. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(12), 2396–2403. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21644>
- Yates, J. (2022). Materiality. In L. A. De Cunzo & C. Dann Roeber (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of material culture studies* (pp. 27–53). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108622639>
- Younhee Kim, & Crepaldi, Y. T. (2021). “What? Olaf is the taxi driver?” Co-construction of spontaneous fantasy narratives in preschoolers' pretend play interactions. *Research on Children & Social Interaction*, 5(1), 103–128. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rcsi.18056>
- Zagal, J. P., & Deterding, S. (2018). Definitions of “role-playing games.” In J. P. Zagal & S. Deterding (Eds.), *Role-playing game studies: Transmedia foundations* (pp. 19–51). Routledge.
- Zaidi, L. (2019). Worldbuilding in science fiction, foresight and design. *Journal of Future Studies*, 23(4), 15–26. [https://doi.org/10.6531/JFS.201906_23\(4\).0003](https://doi.org/10.6531/JFS.201906_23(4).0003)

Appendices

Appendix A: Discussion of My Pilot Study

I did a pilot study to test narrative inquiry and narrative methods in my research in Winter Term of 2018. My research topic then was less specific than that focused on for this dissertation. I explored creative engagement with fictional worlds through forms of making. The fictional world and type of making was open to whatever the participant chose (e.g., fan art, cosplay, game materials, etc.). Several of the participants from the pilot study volunteered to talk about things they had made that included building their own their world, a world built and shared through gaming. This form of making and practice, more specifically that of world-building for TRPGs, became the focus of my dissertation based on the data I collected in the pilot.

Two starting points have been identified for narrative inquiry research designs. They can be started from a place of telling stories or from living alongside the participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, pp. 478–479). In my pilot study, I started from a place of telling stories. These stories, and narrative inquiries as a whole, are generally considered to be intentional co-compositions between researchers and participants (Clandinin, 2013, p. 24). This perspective acknowledged the ways in which the research process shapes the stories that are lived, told, retold, and relived. Small numbers of participants are used in narrative inquiries in order to be able to interact with them over an extended period of time and generate detailed stories of experience. For the pilot study, I initially proposed having three to five participants. More people volunteered to participate than I could accommodate in the study. Five primary participants volunteered for the pilot, and one of them recruited a further four people who were observed playing a TRPG.

Each of the five primary participants brought to an interview with me items they had made or used to engage with a particular fictional world. I also did further follow-up, and participants shared other items, such as notes, images, and stories. What was shared depended on

each participant's chosen fictional world and their interactions with it. In the interview, each participant explained their objects and told me stories about how they used them. The participants were all gamers (three tabletop, one live action roleplay, one computer) who brought in items they used to represent and create fictional experiences with other players. Not only did they talk about fictional worlds, but they also talked about the importance of experiencing those worlds as ways to collaboratively tell stories; ways to work on personal goals, such as becoming a better public speaker; or as ways to work through events or ideas that arise in their lives. The importance of the world and creating an experience was emphasized by more than one participant, and the ways in which information was used to build gaming experiences in a fictional world and world-building itself became my focus.

As I started to work on writing up interim texts based on the data I collected, I realized that I did not feel like I had enough direction for analysis when working from narrative inquiry alone. I was telling the story of what was said in the interview, but I found it difficult to go into deeper analysis. As a result, I fleshed out a much more extensive framework to focus the narrative accounts in my research write-up. This type of framework is not typically used in narrative inquiry, which avoids applying theory before getting into the field. However, I specifically wanted to engage with existing theories of materiality and models of information behaviour, and though I eschewed using existing theory to frame my research for the pilot study, I have incorporated it as grounding for the research reported in the main body of this document, based on the interactions I had with participants in my pilot study. I have now explicitly included information-as-social practice and materiality in conversation (using ethnomethodologically influenced CA / MCA approaches) as integral to the design of this research.

I chose these bodies of theory and methodological approaches specifically because they incorporate material and informational concerns with a focus on situated action. I use conceptualizations of materiality and information from material culture studies and library and information studies to help ground my research design and to engage with existing conversations and literature in LIS and MCS. After the pilot study, I also reworked my methodological approach to include closer analysis of talk in-interaction through ethnomethodological CA and MCA. The concern for discursive action analyzed through CA and MCA is a further refinement that I did not plan into my analysis of the pilot study data. Getting to observe and transcribe the recording of a live game and analyzing the stories that pilot participants told in interviews, sensitized me to ways that talk was structured and how actions were explained in the pilot data that I wanted to explore further in my dissertation. For example, participants categorized objects in ways that brought together fictional and actual material properties in objects. I considered these instances to be evidence of blurred borders between the imaginary and the real, and I wanted to examine this situation further. An adaptation of MCA to be applied to objects is especially suited to the analysis of this phenomenon because I was able use it to examine in-the-moment descriptions and accounts of how fictional and immaterial objects form in my pilot data and to expand that approach to this larger research study. For example, one pilot participant talked about tagging her shield for live action role play. The paper tag made her foam and paint physical representation of a fictional, magical shield real for the purposes of game play. The tagging mechanism she used was standardized for the game, but individually applied. Her practices and her discursive accounts of those practices are windows into the ways in which information worlds are engaged with and the ways in which their borders with reality blur.

Overall, the methods I adapted based on the pilot study were successful in garnering in-depth data from participants. The most significant changes to my research design were to add more acknowledgement of existing theory regarding the phenomenon being studied and to expand my methodology to include ethnomethodological CA and MCA to consider big and small stories through collection of recorded live gameplay.

Appendix B: Ethics Approvals

8/7/22, 8:24 AM

<https://arise.ualberta.ca/ARISE/sd/Doc/0/F0V261Q1EQKKH1KL0BC83DBAFB/fromString.html>



RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICE

308 Campus Tower
Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 1K8
Tel: 780.492.0459
ualberta.ca/reo

Notification of Approval

Date: January 23, 2018
Study ID: Pro00077794
Principal Investigator: [Robyn Stobbs](#)
Study Supervisor: [Arlene Oak](#)
Study Title: Fictional Worlds and Making: Exploring Narrative Inquiry Methods in Material Culture and Library and Information Studies
Approval Expiry Date: Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Approved Consent Form: Approval Date 1/23/2018 Approved Document [PilotInformationLetterandConsent_January2018.pdf](#)

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Anne Malena, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

8/7/22, 8:29 AM

<https://arise.ualberta.ca/ARISE/sd/Doc/0/BTN07CGQ15BK37R8B3FHMSMHBI/fromString.html>



RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICE

308 Campus Tower
Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 1K8
Tel: 780.492.0459
uab.ca/reo

Notification of Approval

Date: January 22, 2019

Study ID: Pro00087672

Principal Investigator: [Robyn Stobbs](#)

Study Supervisor: [Arlene Oak](#)

Study Title: (Im)material Worlds: An Exploration of Information and Materiality in World-Building for Tabletop Roleplaying Games

Approval Expiry Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2020

Approved Consent Form: Approval Date 1/22/2019 Approved Document [InformationLetterandConsent_December2018.pdf](#)

Sponsor/Funding Agency: SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council SSHRC

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has received a delegated review and been approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Stanley Varnhagen, PhD.
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1


Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).



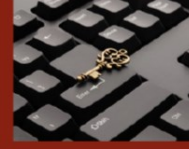
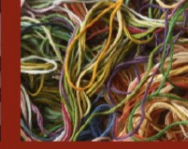
Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Appendix C.1: Poster / Image Used in Email Communications

Do you run a TRPG? Have you made parts of the world your own?

Fictional Worlds & TRPGs Research



If you are playing a tabletop roleplaying game (e.g., *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Pathfinder*) that has a homebrew world or an adapted gameworld, are fluent in English, and over 18 years of age, you and your group of players are invited to participate in a compelling study of gaming and fictional worlds.

If you are interested in participating please contact:

Robyn Stobbs
 PhD Candidate,
 Departments of Human Ecology and
 Library and Information Studies,
 University of Alberta
 (780) 868-2253
stobbs@ualberta.ca

Participation is voluntary. The plan for this study (Pro00087672) has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix C.2: Sample Email Script

(Note that I adapted this script depending on who I was contacting, and I included the image from Appendix C.1)

Hello _____,

I'm contacting you because I think you may have an interest in the research I'm doing for my PhD (no worries if you don't). I'm doing a research project on fictional worlds and tabletop roleplaying games. Right now, I'm looking for 2-3 groups of gamers (game master and their players) for my study, and I'm hoping you would be willing to spread the word. Please let me know either way--I know you're busy, and I don't want to annoy you with my emails.

If you're willing, please feel free to pass on my contact information, the attached information letter, or poster anyone you think would be interested, and let them know to contact me.

Some brief details:

This research is an exploration of how fictional worlds are built and interacted with in tabletop roleplaying games (e.g., *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Pathfinder*, *Edge of the Empire*). I want to observe games-in-play and hear your stories about the ways you create, share, and use fictional worlds. How do you build the world of the game, and how do players interact with it?

This study aims to explore connections between fictional worlds, "real" objects, and the information and practices that are involved. My overarching research question is:

How are fictional worlds constructed and interacted with in tabletop roleplaying games?

Participants need to be:

1. Currently be the game master for a tabletop roleplaying game wherein you have created the world of play or adapted an existing world, OR be a player in a game whose game master is participating in the study,
2. be 18 years of age or older, and
3. be fluent in English.

The 2 data collection methods I'm going to use are video-recording of games and interviews. I've attached further details about the project in the official information letter/consent form.

The plan for this study (Pro00087672) has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.

If you'd like to hear more about the project, please feel free to contact me for further information.

Thanks!

Appendix D: Transcription Notation

[Indicates the point where overlapping speech onsets.
=	Equal signs indicate no break or gap. Generally used in pairs where one ends a line and the next line begins with another, especially to indicate through-produced speech that is broken up in the transcript.
(.)	Indicates a pause in speech.
: or ::::	Colons indicate prolonged sound, e.g., wo::::rd.
-	Indicates a cut off.
(h)	Indicates bits of laughter within a word, e.g., S(h)o.
()	Indicate that as the transcriptionist, I was unable to capture what was said.
(word)	A word in parentheses indicates doubt in the transcription (i.e., that it sounded like the word, but I am not sure).
(())	Double parentheses contain my descriptions as the transcriber.
\$	Indicates smile voice.
_____	Underscores indicate words that were heavily stressed (I used this sparingly).
.	The end of an utterance (note that this use is not typical in CA transcription, where a “?” could indicate a rise in tone and a “.” a fall in tone at the end of an utterance).
?	When used where the transcript indicates the speaker, a “?” indicates doubt in who was speaking. When used in an utterance it indicates a question (note that this use is not typical in CA transcription, where a “?” could indicate a rise in tone and a “.” a fall in tone at the end of an utterance).

Adapted from Jefferson (2004) and Stokoe (2018).

Appendix E: Extended Excerpts

Appendix E.1 Introductory Portion of *Slugblaster*

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game 1, 00:00:06-00:08:38

Date: 2019-08-22

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Um, ok well then, I'll just, uh, I guess we, well, we're
 2 gonna, so we're gonna, we're gonna make characters? I'm
 3 hoping it takes (.) about thirty minutes. That's what it
 4 sort of has taken, but (.) that can (always) change. And
 5 then we'll d:o (.) uh, and then we'll play a bit, and
 6 the we'll, yeah, we'll see how far we get, s:o
 7 L: Excellent
 8 M: U:m (.) I':m going t:o just (.) ((gets up)) before we (.)
 9 make characters I'll just make sure ((sits again)) we're
 10 all on the same page as to \$what we're actually
 11 playing\$. So I'm gonna read, uh, just the intro to
 12 Slugblaster (.) just (as) sort of, get you guys, yeah,
 13 so you know what you're playing. So, um, ok, U::h,
 14 ((looks at screen, likely begins reading)) it's a game
 15 about bored small-town teens sneaking into other
 16 dimensions. [Solder up your ray gun, print some armour
 17 in=
 18 L: [Sweet
 19 M: =your Dad's garage, grab your hover board, and watch out
 20 for metaterrestrials as you (.) try to make a name for
 21 yourself in the highly competitive punk rock world of
 22 interdimensional action sports. It's dangerous, it's
 23 stupid, it's got parent groups in a panic, and it's the
 24 coolest [thing ever.
 25 ?: [((some suppressed chuckles from more than one
 26 player))
 27 M: Um, so, ((looks away from computer screen)) y- th:e game
 28 will take, you guys are all kids from (.) teenagers,
 29 u:m, (.) really can be any age, but because you're all
 30 in a group together, you're probably (.) close ((motions
 31 with hands))

32 L: 'Bout fifteen or sixteen [(I would say)
33 M: [That's sort of what I'm
34 thinkin', [I think that's a sweet spot.
35 L: [Yeah.
36 M: I think you could play with any age of teenager, but it
37 really makes most sense if they're still living with
38 their parents (.) and (.) [() (), [yeah, yeah
39 L: [In, in school, [yeah
40 M: So, fifteen or sixteen. ((turns back to computer screen))
41 Um, so, and you're from Hillview which is a small town.
42 Um, it doesn't have a movie theatre, it doesn't have a
43 Turbo Taco, but it has a gas station, a curling rink,
44 fourteen churches, [and some of the thinnest space-time
45 on the planet.
46 ?: [((some soft chuckles from more than
47 one player))
48 M: Thin enough (that) a growing underground subculture of
49 resourceful teenagers to hack through into the vibrant
50 planescape of exotic and dangerous worlds just beyond(?)
51 Who do you wanna be? Will you be the gutsy rich kid,
52 with a pair of modified scram-cat jet sneakers? A
53 curious nerd with a custom 3D printed mazer, A chill
54 loser with a lovable, lovable robot sidekick? A [meta-
55 dimensional princess with=
56 ? [((some
57 chuckles))
58 M: =psionic powers. ((turns to face them, away from
59 computer)) I don't have the psionic powers yet, coming
60 though. Um ((turns back to computer))
61 J: ((chuckles))
62 E: [Boo. ((chuckles))
63 M: [Mix and match backgrounds, attitudes, and signature
64 powers k, k ((touches touchpad on computer)) um, so the
65 stuff you're gonna do in this game i:s stuff like blow
66 off school and sesh the abandoned waterpark in Vastiche.
67 Get the Myper sponsorship by speed running Prismatia,
68 salvage power crystals from the moss covered
69 decommissioned mechs in the Golden Jungle, go viral by
70 sneaking into Quahalia without a logic binder, get into
71 the [hottest party in Operaebelum.
72 L: [That's insane.
73 M: Just make sure you can get home before the demiplane
74 melts, before the bloodwhip swarm sucks your marrow,
75 before rescue scoops you up and halls you back to the
76 decontamination facility, or you know, before your Mom
77 finds out and sends you away to some kind of troubled
78 youth camp.

79 ? : Mm ((a soft chuckle))
80 M : Ok. S:o, ((turns away from computer back to group)) you
81 guys get the idea. Um, you're part of a crew? Um, in the
82 final game you, there'll be different crew types that
83 will sort of define, like, what your guys' goal is, but
84 for now, we're just gonna say you guys are sort of the
85 general type of crew, [which is just about, u:m
86 ? : [Mm
87 L : We're, we're a clique.
88 M : Yeah, you, you're think of yourself as like, like a
89 skateboarding crew, right? Like your mission i(h)s to go
90 find cool places and do (.) [and dick around (from)
91 there.
92 E : [Do sick tricks. ((chuckles))
93 M : [Yes. [Like that's it.
94 J : [((joins chuckling))
95 L : [() sick tricks on (it, yeah)
96 J : Clone yourselves.
97 E : [((chuckles))
98 M : [Yeah, exactly. Like that's sort of thing, like um, like,
99 you know, exploration is part of something you might be
100 interested in, but also just like (.) the teenagers in
101 this world, just like other teenage pursuits, like, uh,
102 like vaping and hhh Dun[geons and Dragons and stuff (.)
103 teenagers,
104 B : [((chuckles))
105 M : they're, they do these risky things 'cause that's how
106 they blow off steam, right? And that's how they, like,
107 they have lots of reasons. (They) form their identity.
108 There's lots a reasons teenagers do risky things, but,
109 and, and this is no different. In this world
110 Slugblasting is the risky (.) it, i, it's the drugs and
111 vaping and skateboarding, and, and, um, what's that
112 thing where, it's the cinnamon challenge
113 [and the (.) and the climbing (.) the, you, [those, did
114 you=
115 J&E : [((laughter))
116 J : [Parkour?
117 M : =see (that) [thing (with)
118 E : [()
119 M : Parkour but it was like, they took parkour and they just,
120 just cut out just the insane part.
121 J : (Mm)
122 M : So there was this thing where Russian teenagers were just
123 going to the top of towers and just hanging off of them?
124 E : [O::h, yeah
125 J : [((chuckles))

126 L: [Oh yeah, Russians hangin' off buildings [is like a
127 whole=
128 M: [Yeah!
129 L: =subgenre.
130 M: [K, so yeah. [yeah
131 E: [And like (planking) and like weird things, [same diff.
132 M: K, so you guys get the idea, [um
133 L: [They've, they've upgraded
134 that, now they're jumpin' off.
135 M: So um, ((chuckles)) um, the world is, um, a lot like
136 ours(?) Slightly different, so some of the brand names
137 are, like different. That's the kind of world, you know,
138 so you, you, they're, don't feel bad about bringing
139 stuff in with our brand names, but you can also, like
140 make up your own, or, in the final game I'll have a
141 whole list of like, I have a, I have a whole document
142 filled with just made up candy
143 [that I made up
144 E&B: [((chuckles))
145 M: =for some reason. Like Smarmle Bars and
146 [stuff like that. So, um
147 B: [M::::::::::[::m Smarmle Bars.
148 L: [That sounds very Rick and Morty-
149 esque, [you know what I mean?
150 M: [Yeah, yeah. There's the, yeah, some of the touchstones,
151 ((turns to computer)) actually I have that(?) Some of
152 the touchstones a:re (.) stuff about young people like
153 Big Hero Six, Iron Giant, Stranger Things, and Paper
154 Girls. Interdimensional stuff, like Black Science or
155 Rick and Morty. Funny stuff, like Futurama, Douglas
156 Adams, or Neal Stephenson. Weird stuff, like Adventure
157 Time and Saga. Coming of age movies, this is my new
158 thing, man, coming of age movies.
159 ?: Mhm
160 E: [Heck yeah.
161 M: [Like mid-nineties, Eighth Grade, Edge of Seventeen,
162 Breakfast Club, all those, um, all subcultures, um,
163 yeah. That kind of stuff, so, ((turns back to group))
164 you guys get the idea.
165 E&L: [((nod))
166 ?: [Mhm
167 M: S:o. u:m, u::h, ch ch ch ch, anything else that I just (
168), so yeah, um (.) as Blaine knows I have a lot of this
169 world in my head, but the thing that I've had the most
170 fun with as I've been like playtesting previous versions
171 with him and stuff is like, uh, (.) giving you guys just
172 the general sense and then letting you guys just take it

Appendix E.2 Techno-Fantasy, Interview with Mikey

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game Master Interview, 00:02:11-00:04:13

Date: 2019-09-24

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

R = Robyn (Interviewer)

1 R: I'm just gonna start by asking you tell me a bit more
2 about your game, [so yeah
3 M: [Oh, ok
4 M: U:m, so Slugblaster is, a tabletop rpg that is, um, (.)
5 built using the Forged in the Dark system, which
6 originally was used for a game called Blades in the Dark.
7 Um, so the system is an open system, so I built using
8 that, those rules. Um, pretty heavily modified at this
9 point, but um, and then, and the setting of Slugblaster
10 is kind of a, um, hhh, a, it's sort of I guess techno-
11 fantasy, because none of, it's not hard science fiction.
12 It's sort of, um, uh, the rule of cool. So if it's
13 something is cool then it works hhh type thing, so uh,
14 yeah. Techno-fantasy, and it sort of, but it sort of
15 takes place in a mundane, um, our world-style, um,
16 backdrop. So the kids, the characters are all teenagers,
17 um, who live in a small town, small prairie town, um, but
18 there's, um, some, um, you know, some fanta, fantastical
19 technology, so they have hoverboards and they can build
20 ray guns and this stuff. And then, crucially they can,
21 um, hack their way in, into other dimensions to have
22 adventures, a:nd, um, so yeah, and it's sort of, sort of,
23 um, draws on, subcultures like skateboarding and, um, the
24 Indie music scene and those kinds of teenage subcultures.
25 Um, so the idea is that instead of doing that kind of
26 stuff in this world, teenagers, the, the thing that they
27 do to have fun and, um, relieve stress and, um,
28 disappoint their parents is to go into other universes
29 and have adventures, so, yeah, that's sort of the basics
30 of it. ((chuckles))

Appendix E.3 Emulating Genre Tropes

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game Master Interview, 01:03:44-01:04:40

Date: 2019-09-24

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

R = Robyn (Interviewer)

1 R: Um, () in there you talked about kinda, you kinda have
2 that vision for how the world or the kind of culture of
3 the game works
4 M: Mhm
5 R: and you talked about emulating genre tropes.
6 M: Oh
7 R: Do you wanna kinda just expand [on what your vision of
8 what those
9 M: Yeah
10 R: How that looks and what those are?
11 M: Yeah, um, it's just, Yeah, um, emulating genre tropes.
12 Yeah, it's just, um, (.) um, I guess I pull from a few
13 different things. There's the in the action type, you
14 know, a lot of typical stuff. Any, any sort of sci-fi,
15 fantasy adventure movie, um, you know, there's a lot of
16 chases, narrow escapes, and there's a lot of, um, surpri-
17 you know, like surprising giant scary monsters, and, um
18 that kind of stuff. But then, also there's, um, a lot of
19 the (.) genre tropes are from these sort of coming of age
20 movies. Um, things like, um, (.) movies like Eighth
21 Grade, or Mid-Nineties, or, um, Breakfast Club, um. These
22 different, these different movies about just how hard it
23 is to be a teenager, um, and a lot of, you know, drama
24 with your parents, and you're tryin' ta, you know, you're
25 trying to be your, figure out who you are, and you're
26 stressed out at home and so you act out and then it just
27 makes it worse. That kind of death spiral of teenage
28 life. Um, those are the kind of moments that I wanna
29 emulate. And so, um, some of the mechanics try to do that
30 so, for example I have this thing of, of stress and
31 gaining an issue and growing through it. So I'm tryin' to
32 incentivize bad behaviour basically. Incentivize teenage
33 drama ((turn continues))

Appendix E.4 Cinematic Storytelling, Interview with Mikey

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game Master Interview, 01:12:57-01:17:11

Date: 2019-09-24

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

R = Robyn (Interviewer)

1 R: Another thing I specifically wanted to ask you about on
2 here is the lovely intro you made on the [second day.
3 M: [Oh, yeah.
4 R: Is that something you would (.)
5 M: (I have it here) but
6 R: It had music and everything. ((chuckles))
7 M: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. That's something our group does. We,
8 That's sort of our thing is we always, we like to put a
9 lot of sort of showmanship and cinematic flare into our
10 games. And so, um, yeah, we my, the, my friend (X) who,
11 he's one of the other, he's one of the people in our
12 group who also, um, GMs, we take turns. Um, he's really
13 good at that and sort of inspired me to start doing that,
14 so um, he's the one who, you know, we, I hadn't, I hadn't
15 even played with music until I played with his group, and
16 he, and this group, and he, he's the master at having it
17 get, a well a thought out track list of music for
18 different things that work really well. And then, we do
19 things like we'll have, um, yeah, we always have an
20 opening credits we call it, and so that's what this was
21 is sort of like a, an opening credits. Um, just kind of a
22 way to pump everyone up and get everyone sort of ready.
23 And, then we often have a closing credits piece of music
24 that works really well to sort of signal, it's like, it's
25 like a curtain closing, right? It sorta signals that's
26 the end of the game so you can end on a cliffhanger and
27 hit the music and everyone knows the games over, like,
28 like, (.) nothing to, don't add anything now because it's
29 not, it won't be official, right. This game is officially
30 done until we open it again, so, so, um, yeah, so that
31 opening credits and closing credits is something we like
32 to do and it keeps it, and it gets, gets people in the
33 vibe of that sort of cinematic storytelling, so, you
34 know, like, I'll, I'll just say, um, you know, I
35 literally say, you see Brooz blow up an ancestral tree,

36 so the idea is you is the audience, and so, um, we always
37 think of our games as if we're (.) like, a, a show like
38 we're, we're an HBO show and this is how, and so we'll,
39 we, we'll describe the, dur, you know, the GM will often
40 describe things in terms of shots and camera angles, and,
41 and the players will sometimes do that too when they're
42 given scenes to do. And, um, this group we did this
43 playtest, you know, again they didn't know each other
44 very well, so they probably weren't as comfortable with
45 each other as a, as a, a, another group would be, but,
46 and when my group plays a lot of times players will feel
47 comfortable taking a whole scene and describing, you
48 know, a scene shot by shot of their of their teenager
49 coming home and getting and sneaking into their room or
50 something like that. So, um, yeah.

51

52 R: I remember noticing, like within the text you had specific
53 things that kind of touched on, kind of the, the, the
54 theme of game.

55

56 M: Yeah, so I was tryin' with this to do two things when I
57 wrote this, I was trying to, um (.) sorta do a recap of
58 what happened last game and then also, um, hint at like,
59 yeah, like what's gonna happen next, and, and, and the
60 vibe of the thing. So yeah, I'd say Hillview is a pretty
61 boring place at times, so that's a really quick, just
62 reminder that, to, like, remember where you guys are,
63 and, um, and then (.) um, yeah, and then just try to
64 describe different, different moments to just sort of
65 remind them, like, oh yeah, remember when that happened?
66 That's, ok, now I'm gettin' back into it. This is, this
67 is gonna be fun, and then yeah, will they find Brooz in
68 the abandoned waterpark? How much shit will they get in
69 with their parents? Will they ever get a logic binder,
70 find out- you know, so just trying to plant some seeds
71 there to, and, and yeah, just, just tone, tonally, just
72 trying to get everyone into the tone of the game, this
73 sort of light-hearted, um, yeah (gonzo) adventure, so.
74 (.)

Appendix E.5 Opening Credits

Participant Group: Group 2, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game 2, 00:19:47-00:21:03

Date: 2019-09-25

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (GM)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Ok, let's play. [Um
 2 L: [Yeah, let's play.
 3 M: Ok, I'm gonna do the, I'm gonna do an intro. I wrote an
 4 intro for us.
 5 E: Oh yes.
 6 M: So, we're gonna do it.
 7 L: Oo, I like that. ((points at something in front of B,
 8 dice?))
 9 B: (...)
 10 ((M starts music))
 11 L: Good intro.
 12 M: ((chuckles))
 13 E: Nice.
 14 (.)
 15 M: Last time on Slugblaster
 16 E: ((chuckles))
 17 (.) ((M turns music down a bit))
 18 E: (...) soundtrack on my game.
 19 M: ((reading on his laptop)) Hillview is a pretty boring
 20 place at times, but if Brooz, Bongo, Ariel, and Kyp, now
 21 Ty have anything to say about it, it's going to be a
 22 boring place they can leave whenever they feel like. They
 23 might be new to the scene, but the Goblins are already
 24 gaining a reputation as the sickest crew with the
 25 stupidest name,
 26 [and things are only getting sicker and stupider from
 27 here
 28 E: [((chuckles))
 29 B: [((chuckles))
 30 M: You see Brooz blow up an ancestral tree. You see Ariel
 31 scanning the jungle with her goggles. You see Kyp
 32 wrestling an android, and Bongo rocket boarding through

33 Prismaticia. Will they find Brooz in the abandoned
34 waterpark? How much shit will they get in with their
35 parents? Will they ever get a logic binder? Find out this
36 week in Slugblaster. ((stops music)) Ok, u:m, that's the
37 intro.

Appendix E.6 Opportunity Ideas

Participant Group: Group 1, *Slugblaster*, Game 1

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: So, um, in the full game, what there'll be is, on your
 2 back of your crew sheet there'll be a list of um,
 3 basically opportunity ideas. Like, like adventure ideas
 4 for you and also the GM will have, will have [um a list
 5 of uh, will have like opportunities that he rolls.
 6 J: [O:h, cool.
 7 M: So it might be something like (.), um, I don't have that
 8 right now, so we're hh, we're gonna be, free, free, free
 9 flowin' a bit, an opportunity might be rolled, like,
 10 remem, Blaine remember in that one game we played when,
 11 um, that black market demiplane, [all of a sudden for=
 12 B: [Mhm
 13 M: =one day only, you guys could get in (.) for free
 14 B: [Yeah
 15 M: Because their code happened to your code or whatever.
 16 B: Yeah
 17 M: Like, holy shit, so, um, I'm just gonna start talking
 18 things hhh hh ideas, and if any of them grab you guys,
 19 um, so this is basically gonna simulate the, you guys
 20 scrolling through your Instagram feeds or whatever and
 21 just seeing what other people are doing, so um, like,
 22 there's for example, there's an abandoned waterpark
 23 that's been discovered in Vastiche, and there's a video
 24 of a kid tryin' to board slide down the, the, one of the
 25 giant slides and just beating it so badly, and so that's
 26 sort of like, the talk of the town. There are these, um
 27 (.) there are (.) u:m, the decommissioned Gundam that are
 28 in the Golden Jungle that are all, like, covered in moss
 29 and stuff
 30 ?: Mhmhmh
 31 M: Recently the new cool thing to do is to, like, um is to
 32 go there and try to, um, get in there and pull, like
 33 power crystals out, um, and use
 34 J: [MM

35 E: [O:o
36 M: them, so those would be modules that you can use to
37 upgrade you:r, your items, right. So, um, there are kids
38 doing that [right now.
39 E: [That sounds sweet.
40 J: [Mhm.
41 M: Obviously all of the hottest action is happening in
42 Quahalia, which is basically the plane of hell, sort of,
43 ?: [((chuckles))
44 M: [so that's where all the cool parties are happening and
45 stuff, but obviously, but you guys can't get there
46 because you don't have logic binders, so you're just
47 seeing all these kids' selfies, with like, ultra-fiends
48 and stuff, and you're just jealous about that.

49 ?: Hm
50 M: U:m, [a;nd
51 L: [Doin' sick ollies over giant pools of lava and
52 M: Yeah, you, and you know a (.) and you heard a, you got a
53 lead on where the gate back from the golden jungle is.
54 You heard it is near a (.) um, (.) uh, bird mating
55 ground, like a tropical bird mating ground. Um, that's
56 the best you've heard, but you've heard a rumour about
57 that. U:m
58 B: We'd be famous (.) if we found that.
59 (.)
60 B: People would notice.
61 M: Yeah, 'cause right now, the
62 E: I'm down for Golden Jungle (.) bro. ((chuckles))

Appendix E.7 Brooz's Closet

Participant Group: Group 2, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game 1, 02:07:19-02:10:19

Date: 2019-08-22

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 M: Ye:s. K, first you guys clear stress. You guys are so
2 excited for this party. Um, describe (.) describe your
3 characters, like, getting ready to go for this thing at,
4 like, in the evening. Like, if they're sneaking out of
5 their house, or, or, or, whatever you're gonna do. When
6 you guys are gonna meet up at the spot. So again, you're
7 gonna meet up back at the gas station because you know
8 you're gonna have to go through the Golden Jungle. So
9 describe your character's briefly getting ready. What
10 they would [do
11 J: [Mm
12 M: And then, and, while I calculate how much stress you guys
13 ().
14 L: I roll exactly, exactly four joints.
15 ((chuckles))
16 L: And I tell my mom and dad that I'm going to a party and
17 I'm probably gonna come home late.
18 M: Yeah.
19 J: Um (.) Kyp is sitting in her room with music blasting
20 a:nd, she's uh, she's cooking an eyeliner pencil so that
21 it smears all over
22 ((M and E laugh, B chuckles))
23 M: Yes, that's so good.
24 E: () Gothic. Um, Ariel shines up her glasses, like, super
25 nice, so they're perfectly clear, and, like, puts on a
26 nice sweater. My style, I defined as geek chic.
27 M: Yes, yeah.
28 E: So have like this sweater that's just like the perfect
29 in-betweenies for, like, nerdy and like cool.
30 M: Yeah.
31 E: And I'm just like, yeah feelin' good to go.
32 M: Yeah.

33 L: This song is so good for the [scene we're doin' right
34 now,
35 B: [Ye:s
36 L: [Oh man
37 J: [Mmm
38 M: [Yes
39 E: And we cut over t:o
40 B: Um, [Brooz always wears, um
41 L: [In the next room.
42 B: a full set of hover bike leathers. [(.) All the time.
43 [(group chuckles)
44 B: School, all the time.
45 E: Like you're ruining my style,
46 B: Yes.
47 E: walking with me.
48 B: [But he thinks it's cool.
49 M: [I'm picturing like a motorcross, like, outfit almost.
50 L: [That's what I'm picturing too, yeah.
51 B: Like, sometimes, sometimes it's like, sometimes it's like
52 bike leathers.
53 E: [Like a jumpsuit?
54 M: [Like more biker?
55 M: Yeah, ok, yeah.
56 B: Like, sometimes it's like, looks like armour.
57 [It's not actually armour 'cause that's part of the game,
58 M: [Yeah, No, yeah. Yeah, no. Yeah, no.
59 B: and I don't wanna () ((chuckles)) (stop ...)
60 M: There's gonna be armour. I gotta add that still.
61 B: So he's, like, picking out his, like, he, like, he like
62 opens his closet, like, [he like
63 M: [Yeah.
64 J: I imagine he owns, like, nothing but Under Armour
65 clothes.
66 M: [(breathy chuckling)
67 B: [Oh, absolutely, and like, Axe body spray.
68 M: [(laughs)
69 E: (...)
70 B: (...)
71 L: Classic Chad, yeah.
72 ((chuckles))
73 E: Don't spray that Axe stuff near me. No, in this universe
74 it should be Hammer instead of Axe.
75 ((group chuckles))
76 L: Ye:ah, or [Sickle, yeah, something like that.
77 M: [Yeah ()
78 M: Yeah, totally. Well, the energy drinks in this world are
79 called, there's two major brands of energy drink. There's

80 Trigger and Panic, and those are the two energy drinks
81 that everyone drinks. So, I imagine you crushin' one of
82 those. ((chuckles))
83 B: But he, [he, he waves a gesture by the wall
84 E: [But
85 B: and it, like, the wall, like, dissolves [in a way
86 M: [Yeah, yeah
87 B: and, and it's just like this long, like, it's this
88 closet, and it's just like, like, [bike suit, bike suit,
89 bike suit, bike suit,=
90 [((group chuckles))
91 B: =bike suit, and they're all [like arranged by colour.
92 M: [Right, 'cause you're rich.
93 That's right.
94 L: Like Barney Stinson's suit closet.
95 B: Exactly, [yeah.
96 L: [Yeah, cool
97 B: [It's just suit-jamas as well.
98 M: [You guys, um haven't, haven't been to, you've never been
99 to this spot, um
100 L: [That's () () suit jamas (...) ((chuckling))
101 B: [((chuckles))
102 M: And um, so you're gonna clear four stress.

Appendix E.8 Salt and Science

Participant Group: Group 2, *Slugblaster*

Recording: Game 1, 01:35:49-01:37:09

Date: 2019-08-22

Speaker Key -- Player (Character):

M = Mikey (Game Master)

L = Marshall (Samuel Beaton aka Bongo)

B = Blaine (Danny [Yang] aka Brooz)

J = Jordan (Kimberly Randall aka Kyp)

E = Emily (Ariel Yang)

1 E: Since I'm like the smart person, um, is there any chance
2 that I just have, like, some salt or something in my bag?
3 M: Yeah
4 E: 'Cause slugs are weak to salt. [I know that because of
5 science.
6 M: [Roll.
7 M: () so, for any, so for knowing
8 ((some chuckles))
9 M: to see if you know something or to see if you have
10 something
11 E: Yeah
12 M: You roll two d6 [and depending what you roll [you'll have
13 it or whatever
14 E: [ok
15 E: [You'll tell
16 me whether or not I have it? Ok.
17 M: So you can, you can do, yeah. [So () uh
18 E: [((rolls dice)) (.) Uh,
19 five
20 M: Five, ok. So you have something (.) u:m, but there's a
21 consequence, s:o, we're gonna say you have it, but as
22 you're rummaging around () it you, the slug, a ten
23 tendril creeps up and grabs you.
24 E: Oh, ok.
25 M: So, um, so that's a slam you can resist or you can take.
26 E: Um yeah, I'll take, I'll take a stress
27 M: K, so you
28 E: Um, yeah, he tries to wrap around me, I just like bloop
29 downwards and get right out of the hole
30 M: Yeah, and you pull out, yeah, you pull out, like,
31 concentrated salt serum, so

32 E: Yeah, I'm like, I take this with me everywhere for
33 science purposes.
34 M: Yeah
35 L: For science.
36 B: And for lunch.
37 M: [Sodium, sodium extremist or something, sodium, I don't
38 know
39 E: [And for lunch.
40 L: I-iodized salt from Wendy's or something. [Something
41 super shitty.
42 M: [((laughs))
43 M: Ok so you pull that out, and what are you gonna do with
44 it?
45 E: U:m, I kind of wanna try using my elaborate plan skill.
46 M: Ok.
47 J: [I love it.
48 [((chuckles))
49 E: which is um, I need to make a plan that involves at least
50 three steps.
51 ?: [((unintelligible))
52 [((chuckles))
53 E: So like Kyp ((motions come here)). Kyp, come here. Ok, I
54 have a plan.