

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Looking Past the Action: A Study on the Effects of Structure on Video Game Communities

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This thesis explores the effects of *ludic structure*—defined as the elements of game play not considered content—on video game communities. Counter to the focus on video game content and its effects by other scholars, this study argues the importance of the study of game structure and its influences on player interactions. Two games, *League of Legends* and *Puzzle Pirates* were examined. I played both games for 20 hours, as well as interviewing four players from each game. Using Laura Ellingson’s (2009) crystallization as a guiding approach, I analyzed the games using both a traditional thematic analysis and personal narratives in an attempt to create a richer dataset from which to draw conclusions. I discovered that one game was more competitively structured (*League of Legends*), which resulted in more aggressive and negative interactions among players in the community. *Puzzle Pirates*, on the other hand was more cooperatively structured, which resulted in an open and friendly community of people who were wanting to help each other. I argue that ludic structure does have a significant impact on player interactions, and that game companies should strive for more cooperatively structured games to encourage a positive community of gamers.