

Who Wants to Play?

Identity, Participation, and Learning in Higher Education

A case study of an alternate reality game embedded in a first-year university course

The Assumption

Playful learning engages students

Engagement supports learning
More participation = better outcomes

What I found

Non-participation was not neutral

Some students chose not to engage with the game,
affecting belonging, engagement, and learning

*"...those who are unable to figure it out
feel disconnected from those that do"*

Inclusion vs Exclusion

ARGs create insiders
Some students feel excluded

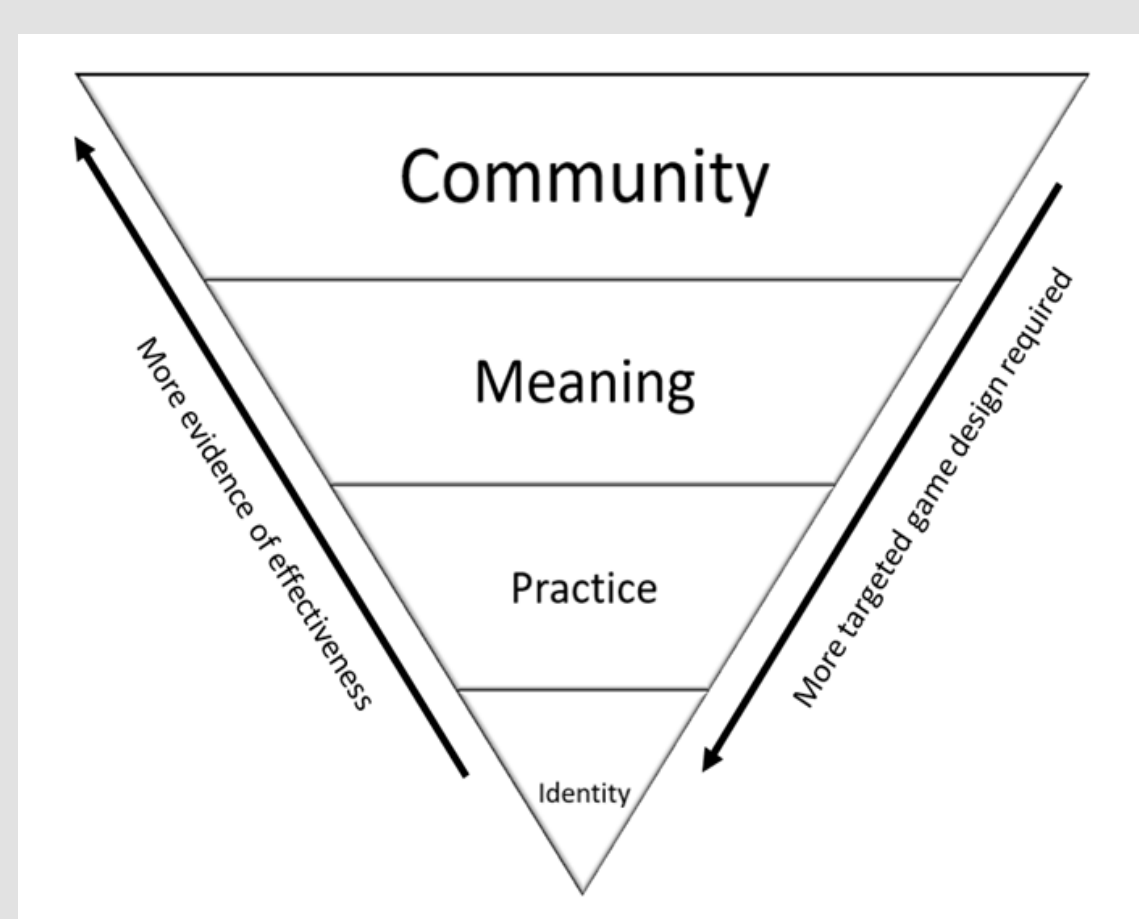
Explication vs Immersion

Teaching requires explication
Explication breaks immersion

Clarity vs Ambiguity

ARGs require uncertainty
Courses require clarity

Implications for Teaching



Use playful approaches for community and meaning

Provide multiple ways to engage

Separate immersive gameplay from theoretical exposition

About the study

- First-year game design course
- Alternate reality game embedded in curriculum
- Two-year case study
- Interviews, observations and course artefacts
- Analyse through situated learning theory
- Thesis includes design recommendations for educators using playful or innovative learning activities

Key references

- Braun & Clarke (2006)
- Lave & Wenger (1991)
- Wenger (1998)
- Whitton et al. (2014)
- Yin (2014)

Full list of references available via QR code below

