School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry

**Player Types, Motivations & The Western Australian Live Action Role-Play Community:
An investigation of Possible LARP Player & Digital Game Theory Compatibility**

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy – Media, Culture and Creative Arts (DR-MCARTS)
of
Curtin University**

**March 2022
(November 2022)**

Declaration Statement

To the best of my knowledge, abilities, and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014.

The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number # HRE2018-0366-04

Signed: ___ ███████ _____

Date: 28 / 2 / 2022

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Abstract

The primary goal of this PhD thesis is to determine to what extent Richard Bartle's (1996) Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) Player motivation typology can be applied to classify the motivational behaviours and play styles of the Live Action Role-Play (LARP) participants of the Western Australian LARP community.

Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) is a form of role-playing game in which players physically embody the fictional characters within the game's narrative world, represented through a real-world location. A process made possible using improvisational acting skills, costumes and set dressing, with many LARPs also involving both social interactions and simulated combat elements (Daniun, 2016). Bartle's theory consists of four interconnected player motivation types: *Achievers, Explorers, Socialisers* and *Killers*. Each player type is defined by a core motivating factor with an array of player behaviours reflecting that central motivation. *Achiever* type players are goal focused players, while *Explorer* type players are focused on investigating the game environment. *Socialiser* type players seek to form relationships within the game world, while *Killers* seek to disrupt other players enjoyment of the game (Torner, 2018; Bartle, 1996). Although the various types of Role-Play Games (RPGs) differ in many of their defining aspects, they still have several consistent core elements that unite them (Tychsen et al, 2006). Arguably then, theories developed to investigate one type, can be applied to the study of another type. However, it is likely that there will be specific modifications or customisations required to improve accuracy and reliability.

This thesis aims to develop a theory of *LARP Player Motivation Typology*, a theory that can be used to provide an understanding of the LARP community's motivations, desires, and expectations. That can be utilised by LARP players (LARPers), LARP Organisers (LARP Orgs), and academic researchers alike. The research project employed a two-phase method, starting with a phase of observational field research and then moving to a verification study phase.

In *Phase 1*, the effectiveness of applying Bartle's typology to the analysis of LARP participants was tested. This was accomplished through the collection of recorded field

observations and the examination of audio-visual data of player behaviours and interview responses, collected during multiple LARP events. A set of proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's theory was then developed from the analysis of the collected *Phase 1* data. These modifications were specifically designed to counter the limitations of the initial typology in classifying LARP Players through their observed motivations and behaviours. In *Phase 2*, a method for testing the effectiveness of these proposed modifications to Bartle's theory were developed and executed. This verification study method involved participants from the WA LARP community taking part in a series of surveys, focus group discussions, and screenings of documentary-style film presentations. These film presentations were produced from the audio-visual data collected during *Phase 1* of the project. The data resulting from this was used to further refine the hypothetical modifications, developing it into a new, specialised theory of *LARPer Motivation Typology*.

The completed *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory developed from this research consists of four LARPer types, titled the *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants.* Players of the *Wanderer* type are motivated by the themes of character embodiment in LARP, enjoying how they can influence the narrative progression of the LARP through their actions. Players of the *Champion* type are motivated by the challenging and competitive elements of LARP, which can include the physicality and combat aspects of LARP. Players of the *Scholar* type are motivated by the gameplay designing aspects of LARP, enjoying learning about the mechanics of LARP events, and developing their own game systems. Players of the *Merchant* type are motivated by the opportunity to become a part of a LARP's narrative world, interacting with but not directly influencing the narrative progression of the LARP.

The typology produced by this project will result in multiple benefits. Firstly, it will enable individual LARPers to better understand themselves and allow them to make more informed choices of the events they want to commit to. Secondly, it will provide additional guidance to LARP Orgs as they prepare for events and develop new content for their players to encounter. Thirdly, the project will endow academic researchers with another method with which to gain a deeper understanding of LARP communities and participants.

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Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction to Research

1.0 – Chapter Overview

This chapter has three primary functions that it aims to accomplish. Firstly, the chapter aims to clearly introduce the research project, including the primary goals of this research, as well as providing a brief outline of the methods utilised to achieve those objectives. Secondly, the chapter aims to define the main topics and academic theories that are central to the investigations being undertaken in this project. Thirdly, the chapter will outline the structure of this thesis, in addition to identifying those who will, and how they will benefit from the resulting outcomes of this research.

1.1 – Introduction

This project aims to investigate the effectiveness of applying Bartle's (1996) Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) Player motivation typology to the categorisation of LARP Players (LARPers). The Thesis has investigated and analysed the play styles, behaviours, and motivations of LARP players, with a specific focus on those participating in LARP events operating within Western Australia.

The player guidebook for "*Shattered Worlds LARP"*, currently Western Australia's largest Live Action Role-Play (LARP) event, describes Live Action Role-Play as follows:

> Live action roleplay is a unique interactive game concept based around ideas found in fantastical settings such as *Lord of the Rings* or *Game of Thrones.* It takes place in a medieval style fantasy world where Knights, Vampires, Orcs, and Mages all live. The participant or 'Player' of this game takes on a role of their own creation known as their 'Character'. Playing the game is a mix between sports, sword-fighting, improv and acting all bundled together at once. Players can participate in battles, act out the life of their own character, visit the tavern and interact with other players, all of whom are acting out their own characters. (*Shattered Worlds LARP*: Players Handbook, 2019, p. 3)

Role-playing games (RPGs) are a broad genre of interactive entertainment media that can exist across numerous platforms, such as digital games or printed books. These involve the viewer taking an active role, rather than a passive one, in the text, to some extent becoming immersed in the narrative, with their choices influencing how the experience progresses (Daniau, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). The structure of most, if not all, Role-Playing Games (RPGs) is based on the same set of central pillars, which include the following (Tychsen et el, 2006):

- RPGs take place in a collaborative narrative world, managed using consistent rules or game mechanics.
- This collaborative narrative takes place within an agreed upon fictional game environment.
- The players take on the role of Player Characters (PCs) within in the game's fictional 'world'.
- There is some form of guiding authority that manages the game world, including the environment, non-player characters (NPCs), and the enforcement of the world's rules.
- There is a critical number of players that are necessary for the game to function properly

These common core elements, arguably, enables the use of research methods designed to explore one type of RPG to be used to explore another RPG type (Henry, 2015).

Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) is a unique form of RPG, in which the game environment is created within a real-world physical space, accomplished using set dressing and the game organiser's efforts. Furthermore, the LARP's players fully embody their player characters, through costume, props, and improvisational acting methods, within the agreed upon the altered physical reality of the imagined game environment. The player's actions and words are those of their character, rather than their own (Söderberg et al, 2004; Stark, 2012).

Bartle's Player Type theory describes four primary player motivations that can be identified through corresponding sets of described player behaviours within the game. These four

types are as follows (Bartle, 1996; Torner, 2018):

- The *Achievers*, who seek to complete the game with the best score or most wealth indicators.
- The *Explorers*, who seek to learn all they can about the game's environment.
- The *Socialisers,* who play the game to form friendships and communicate with other players.
- The *Killers*, who seek to disrupt the enjoyment of other players to demonstrate their power within the game

Bartle's typology was used for this project because it was an RPG player motivation theory that was not so specialised that it could not be applied to other types of RPGs, while also being specific enough to provide genuine insight into player motivations.

The primary research question of this project is to what extent can Bartle's (1996) MUD Player motivation typology can be used to classify the motivations of Western Australian LARP community participants? The primary research question can be deconstructed into four manageable research objectives, as identified below:

1. To test the effectiveness of Bartle's Theory when applied to the examination of LARP players and games.
2. To develop hypothetical modifications to Bartle's typology, specifically designed for the classification of LARP Players.
3. To devise a method for testing the effectiveness of the proposed theory and to then test the modified theory.
4. To use the data to further develop these initial modifications into refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory, capable of providing a better understanding of WA LARP Participants.

Additionally, there is a secondary research goal, a fifth research objective, focused on assessing the usefulness of panoramic video production as a method of academic research. Specifically investigating its viability as a tool for the collection and presentation of audio-visual fieldwork data, in comparison to standard audio-visual data collection and presentation methods. The unique nature of the panoramic video is its ability to record and

display events from multiple angles simultaneously, using specialised equipment, thus providing a perceived sense of deeper viewer engagement (Jaunt, 2017; Bender, 2019). It is this unique aspect of the new medium that potentially provides it with an advantage in the recording of certain cultural phenomena that have often previously defied conventional documentation.

The experimental design of this research project consists of two primary phases of data collection and analysis. The first being the fieldwork recordings of player behaviours and participant interviews at LARP events. The second phase being the verification study, which involves the use of surveys and the screenings of a short film presentations, produced from the audio-visual data of the first phase. The data obtained from this method is then used to direct the development of an accurate *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory.

The resulting refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory can be used to benefit several groups. It can benefit LARP Players (LARPers) by enabling them to determine where they fit within the typology and thus what LARP games they will most enjoy. It will benefit LARP Organisers (LARP Orgs) who can use it to gain an understanding of their players and guide the development of new game content that best appeals to their target audience. It will also be beneficial to future research endeavours, providing scholarly researchers with further methods with which to study LARP communities.

1.2 – Live Action Role-Play (LARP)

Although the research of Live Action Role-Play has increased in recent years, there is still a lack of academic consensus on a distinct definition of the term. This results in many individual researchers often presenting their own interpretations of what can be considered LARP (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Lampo, 2016; Stark, 2012). This is not helped by LARP being without a single clear location of genesis, with LARP having seemingly appeared around the world at different points, with wildly varying inspirational circumstances. Spontaneously developing and re-developing into multiple strains of unrelated yet similar communities in a sociological equivalent of convergent evolution (Gade et al, 2003; Daniau, 2016; Montola, 2012). However, there is still considerable overlap in these definitions and varying types, which enables the presentation of an effective, if over

generalised definition of LARP and LARPing.

One of the most unique aspects of LARP, as previously stated, is the way in which the player interfaces with the game. LARP is a unique form of RPG in which the player controls their character by physically embodying that character within the physical real-world space of the game environment. Rather than its players controlling a digital avatar in a virtual game environment via a computer as in a Massively Multiplayer Online RPGs or using dice and verbal statements as in Tabletop RPGs (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Montola, 2012). In other words, instead of pressing buttons to talk with the town guard or saying, 'I want to talk to the town guard …', the LARP player physically walks up to the 'town guard' and talks to them (Henry, 2015; Bakerly, 2018). *Figure 1.1* below shows an example of LARP Players as they participate in the role-playing components of one of the recorded *Shattered World LARP* game events.

Figure 1.1 – Example of LARP and LARPers engaging in role-play activities

The narratives of LARPs are emergent and collaborative creations, produced through the interactions between the players, event organises, and the challenges presented by the game world. The story develops through these shared interactive encounters, with the outcomes determined by the game's pre-established internal logic, or via the conditions of

an abstract set of game mechanics. This collaborative experience results in each player having a unique experience of the game's events. Although this can make it very difficult, if not nearly impossible, to conventionally document or record a LARP in its entirety. This emergent nature of LARPs arguably exemplifies the notion of 'having to be there' to truly understand the experience (Cox, 2019; Steele, 2016; Söderberg et al, 2004). However, the Organisers do their upmost to record the most important of these interactions at each event, using them to guide the development of the narrative set up of the next game event. Therefore, demonstrating that the player actions have had an impact on the game's narrative world, with the player's individual story arcs affecting the progression of the event's larger narrative (Mochocki, 2021; Vartiainen, 2015).

As with other types of role-playing games, a LARP's narrative can be in any number of genres, geographical settings, or time periods, either fictional or historical. This means the settings of a LARP can range from a high fantasy realm, the American 'old west', post-apocalyptic Eastern Europe, or even a futuristic cyber-punk business conference. Despite the huge variety of different types of LARP, there are some common aspects, including a reliance on cooperative immersion, character embodiment and physicality. Furthermore, LARPs are defined by gameplay rules and mechanics, as well as to what degree simulated combat mechanics influence the outcome of player interactions and game progression (Bienia, 2013; Bowman, 2018; Hellstrom, 2011).

Broadly speaking, for most LARP events, the game's organiser team, develop and plan out the narrative and mechanical aspects of the game. This includes the game's setting, the beginnings of the story, mechanics, the types of character's the players can create, as well as how the players interact with the game world and each other. Following this they set about bringing the game's world to life in the real-world as best they can. This is done by modifying the chosen event location so that it is ready for the players to enter and become immersed within the space, including the use of set dressing, props, and occasionally even set construction (Vartiainen, 2015). During the event's in-game time, the organisers often take on the roles of non-player characters to flesh out the world and guide the players through the narrative. This is in addition to their roles as game marshals who enforce the rules of the game and ensure that everyone is enjoying the experience in a safe and responsible way (Söderberg et al, 2004; Zagal and Deterding, 2018).

The duration and set up of in-game and rest time is another consistent, but variable, structural aspect of LARP events. Some LARPs events can run for under six hours, while others can run over several days, such as a long weekend. The in-game time set for multi-day events may be 9am to 5pm, while others may involve a full 48-hours of continuous in-game time. During the game event, the players role-play with one another and complete any physical or mental challenges set for them by the organisers, to progress the game forward. LARP Games can involve a player population ranging from fewer than a dozen, into the hundreds, with each of these players building a character suitable for the specific world of the LARP. During the run time of the game, the players become fully immersed in their fictional characters and the imagined game environment. They utilise costumes, props, and improvisation techniques to achieve a level of embodiment in which their words and actions are not the player's but those of the character (Bakerly, 2018; Mochocki, 2021; Stark, 2012).

Physicality is another important consistent aspect of the LARP experience, and one that is often manifested through various forms of simulated combat (Söderberg et al, 2004). *Figure 1.2* below shows an example of LARP Players as they participate in the combat component of one the recorded *Shattered World LARP* game events.

Although this simulated combat is not a part of all LARPs, with some involving no combat at all, it is still an iconic aspect of LARP, with some LARPs being entirely combat orientated. While it can vary between game types, the most common variety of simulated combat involves the use of specially manufactured 'LARP-Safe' weapons, made of silicon, latex, and EVA foam. This variety of combat simulation also often involves the use of armour that is both functionally protective and aesthetically in line with the rest of the player's in-game costuming. All forms of simulated combat in LARPs require the diligent adherence to combat rules and safety protocols, along with regular equipment maintenance and inspections. Furthermore, players are required to regularly participate in training sessions to ensure they know how to correctly use their equipment and are aware of any updates in the rules (Hellstrom, 2011; Vartiainen, 2015; Zagal and Deterding, 2018).

Figure 1.2 – Example of LARP and LARPers preparing for combat

The sheer variety of LARP game types makes it difficult to effectively describe a typical game event that would be representative of all types of LARP events. However, there are several variables and aspects that are present in the majority of LARP events, but it should be noted that their presence in each event varies widely. LARP is a niche hobby that is often described as an 'experience that needs to be experienced' to be fully understood. It is this aspect, along with the inherent difficulty in documenting the hobby, that has contributed to its generally limited and inaccurate representation in main-stream media (Lampo, 2016; Cox, 2019; Bienia, 2013).

The two frequently cited examples of mainstream LARP representations are the comedy films *Role Models* (2008) and *Knights of Badassdom* (2013). These films include LARP in their plots as the set up for much of their humour, with the punchlines often going out of their way to overly exaggerate the more outlandish aspects of LARP. This results in these films deliberately presenting a highly inaccurate and barely recognisable representation of the hobby. Both films rely on stereotypes of 'nerds' as anti-social outsiders, participating in LARP because they are not welcome elsewhere, which is an inaccurate representation of player motivations. For the most part however, any commentary of the representation of,

or motivations to participant in LARP are ignored for the sake of providing set up for the next punchline.

Some news reports and articles (Futcher and Lewis, 2011) have been known to provide a slightly more recognisable representation of LARP and LARPers. However, as the study participants commented: these are still often presented as a "light-hearted puff piece" or a mocking "freak watch", providing little in the way of insight for their audiences (*Phase 1*, Formal Interview). Alternatively, there are a few independent documentary projects, such as *LARPing Saved My Life* (2015), have taken a more thoughtful look at LARP, managing to present a more accurate representation of the hobby. However, the focus of these films is normally very narrow, often concentrated on the personal stories of a few individuals, rather than provide an overview of a specific LARP event or community.

These programs, and other sporadic appearances of LARP in other media, do little to dispel what one participant described as the 'out-dated and derogatory' stereotypes of nerd culture (Bowman, 2012). The mainstream view of all 'nerds' as being "anti-social, un-washed, basement dwelling losers" is proven false after only a minor study of the WA LARP community (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3). Thus, a tertiary aim of this thesis is to present an accurate representation of LARP and LARPers in the WA LARP community, to start counter-acting this issue.

1.3 – Project Overview

The development, execution and analysis procedure of this research project consisted of five stages. Stage one was the literature review process, including the initial preparation and equipment testing exercises. Stage two was *Phase 1* of the project's data collection protocol, involving the recording of observational and interview data at multiple WA LARP events. Along with assessing the practical viability of panoramic video as a method of data collection. Stage three entailed *Phase 2* of the data collection procedure, consisting of a verification study involved surveys, focus group discussions, and documentary style short film screenings. In addition to evaluating the of panoramic video as a research data presentation method. Stage four involved the full analysis of the collected data and the production of the project's primary research outcomes. Stage five was the complete review

of the research project including the drafting and redrafting of the thesis document. This five-stage research process is summarised in *Figure 1.3* below and described in further detail in the following paragraphs.
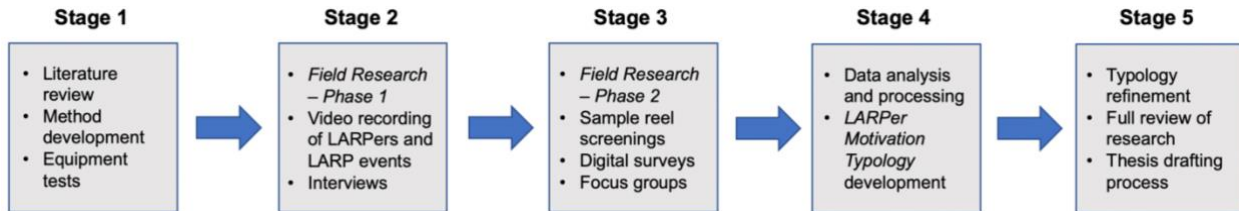
Figure 1.3 – Research Procedure Summary Diagram

The first stage of this research project involved the accomplishing of two primary goals. Starting with the conducting of the background academic literature research into the various scholarly schools and relevant topics. These fields of study included game studies, film studies, behavioural studies, psychology, theatre studies, new technology studies, and anthropology. The literature review involved the analysis of previous academic research that investigated the topics, concepts, and methodologies relevant to those elements that were to be explored in this research project. These topics included, Role-Play Gaming (RPGs), Live Action Role-Playing Games (LARPs), player motivational behaviour theories, panoramic video production, and documentary filmmaking. This was with the aim of creating a detailed picture of the current state of the relevant fields of research. This also enabled clear definitions of the important terms and concepts core to this investigation to outline the gaps in the existing knowledge this project intends to address. This stage will then set out the development, and testing, of the project's overall experimental design. The development of the experimental protocol involved the examination of the methodologies employed in the work of previous scholarly or industry research projects. The most effective methods of data collection, analysis, and coding, to then be adapted into an efficient experimental design to achieve the project's research objectives. In addition to testing and improving the researcher's proficiency with the various pieces of specialised recording equipment utilised in the project's experimental design.

The second stage of this research protocol was focused on *Phase 1* of the project's data collection and analysis process. In addition to the production of several research outcomes

that are critical for *Phase 2* of the data gathering procedure. *Phase 1* aimed to address the first two primary research objectives of the project. The first objective being to test the effectiveness of Bartle's Theory when applied to the examination of LARP players and games. Meanwhile, the second objective was to develop a hypothetical player typology specifically designed for the classification of LARP Players. This stage of the research design aimed to achieve these research goals through the recording of qualitative observational and interview data from the participants of the WA LARP community. For the reasons to be outlined in *Chapter 2*, this footage was recorded using both traditional, flat-panel audio-visual recording methods, and specialised panoramic recording technologies. The recorded data results were then reviewed, analysed, and coded to search for relevant themes and categories. After which it was used to produce several important research outcomes. The most important of which included the generation of the proposed set of hypothetical modifications to the existing Bartle (1996) player taxonomy. Along with two ten-minute documentary style film presentations, a standard version and one produced using panoramic film techniques. These films were known as the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*. Furthermore, this phase of the research project provides an initial assessment of the usability of panoramic film as a qualitative research tool, in comparison to, flat-panel data recording methods.

The third stage of this research process consisted of *Phase 2* of the project's data collection and analysis procedure, which aimed to address the remaining two of the project's primary research objectives. This stage begins by focusing on devising, and then conducting, a method for testing the effectiveness of the proposed theory. It then aimed to use the collected testing data to improve the initial proposed modifications into a refined *LARPer Motivation Typology*. A theory that will allow for a greater understanding of LARP participants and LARP games, in the context of the Western Australian LARP community. This phase of the data collection process involved the use of several methods to obtain responses from the participating members of the WA LARP community. These included the use of online survey questionnaires, as well as the screening of the flat-panel version of the short film, or *Primary Research Material Sample Reel*. Furthermore, this stage included physical real-life screening sessions, involving the presentation of the panoramic version of the film, as well as the use of a survey and focus group discussion questions. The data gathered from these verification study protocols were then analysed and coded using academic methods, such as thematic analysis. Additionally, this phase of the

research project provides a full assessment of the viability of the panoramic film as a qualitative research method in comparison to flat-panel methods of data presentation.

This data analysis process was continued into the fourth stage of the project's research design process. In this stage, the coded data results from both *Phase 1* and *Phase 2* of the research process, along with an analysis of the literature review data, were assessed. Through the consolidation of the research data resulted in the development of a refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory. This theory effectively describes the player types that exist within the player populations of the WA LARP community. This work benefits LARP Orgs who gain a guide for the development of new game content, allowing LARPers to better understand themselves, and providing academic scholars new methods of research.

Finally, the fifth stage involved the full-scale review of the research project's procedure and results. In addition to the drafting and redrafting of the thesis document itself, along with the responsible storage and eventual disposal of the research data, all in accordance with the relevant academic and ethics protocols. These methods were chosen because it was the most efficient and accurate way of gathering all the primary research data necessary to accomplish the project's research objectives.

It is important to note that the global *Covid-19* pandemic that swept the world in 2020 had a considerable impact on the development and execution of this phase of the project. The quarantine restrictions and safety regulations employed to slow the spread of the virus, made it necessary to fully overhaul both the project's research objectives and design of *Phase 2* of the study. The research objectives connected to examining the effectiveness of panoramic film as a tool for academic research had to be downgraded from a primary to a secondary research objective. This was because it was simply not viable to gain a significant sample size for the topic using the new *Covid-19* safe experimental design. The new design was considerably less elegant than originally planned but was still effective in gathering the necessary data within the reduced window of opportunity. Despite all attempts to make up for lost time, the effects of the pandemic still resulted in a delay of nearly two months. The new design did have some limitations and technical difficulties, most of which were overcome well enough for the research project to remain viable. Although, these limitations could be more effectively addressed in future research, however the effect they had on this specific research project must still be acknowledged.

1.4 – Structure of Thesis

This thesis will begin by reviewing the relevant literature research, including definitions of Live Action Role-Play, Bartle's player motivation typology and panoramic video. Following this the methods of *Phase 1* will be described, before reporting the results of the *Phase 1* data collection process, presenting the proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's theory. The thesis will then divulge the *Phase 2* experimental procedure, before providing an assessment of data resulting from those designs. Penultimately, the *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory, produced from the examination of all the collected data will be outlined. Followed by a discussion of the limitations encountered during the project, along with possible implications for future research design and a full project summary.

As previously stated, this thesis chapter aims to introduce the project and its primary research goals. *Chapter 2* will define in detail the important terms, topics and theories that are addressed in this thesis, along with the relevant academic research on those subjects. *Chapter 3* will describe the methodologies that influenced the development of the *Phase 1* experimental design. *Chapter 4* will outline the results of the data coding process of the *Phase 1* results, as well as describing the research outcomes that were produced from this data and that are used in the next phase of the project. These include the LARP focused modifications to Bartle's Player Types and the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*. *Chapter 5* will define the experimental procedures and influencing methodologies of the second phase of the project. *Chapter 6* of the thesis discusses the data coding process and presents the collected Phase 2 research data results. *Chapter 7* provides a summary of the LARPer motivation typology theory, along with an assessment of the panoramic video as a scholarly research method. *Chapter 8*, the thesis conclusion, will discuss the limitations encountered during the project, and the implications for future research design, along with providing a full summary of the research project.

The work of this thesis will result in several benefits for a variety of possible groups. The *LARP Motivation Typology* theory could help individual LARPers better understand what they enjoy about the activity and thus can more easily choose the games they want to take part in. LARP Organisers could use the theory to improve existing games or create new

LARP games based on a clearer understanding of the existing player base's wants and needs. In addition, the theory, along with panoramic video technology, could be useful methods for academics to use in future studies of LARP and other similar activities.

1.5 – Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to accomplish three main goals. Firstly, the chapter introduces the primary research question and accompanying research objectives, as well as providing an overview of the experimental process used in achieving those research goals. Secondly, the chapter aims to provide an outline of the major topics and academic theories that are the key to understanding the core focus of the research project. Thirdly, the goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the structure of the research project, along with setting out an outline of the primary aims of the other thesis chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Research Review

2.0 – Chapter Overview

The first step of the project is to determine the relevant areas of research and examine the pre-existing work in those areas as well as defining the main terms related to or used during the project. This chapter will cover the review of the current academic and scholarly literature in the three research areas relevant to the project.

Firstly, Live Action Role-Play (LARP) will be defined through the examination of the central aspects of the game mode and identifying what differentiates the Western Australian LARP Community from otherwise similar LARP communities. This section will further describe LARP's distinguishing elements, its myriad of origins, development histories, geographical variations, and other relevant aspects. This section will additionally outline the defining aspects of role-playing games (RPGs) across the various media forms they are played through.

Secondly, the various academic theories on the analysis of RPG player motivations will be outlined, with a focus on discussing the player categorisation work of the scholars Bartle (1996) and Yee (2006). This includes a discussion of why those theories were chosen as the core of the project over other forms, aiming to assess previous attempts to apply player typologies developed for one RPG type to another. For example, Henry's (2015) attempt to apply a typology developed for a digital RPG to the study of LARP players, along with explaining how the thesis intends to continue and build upon these previous attempts.

Thirdly, the chapter will briefly define the medium of panoramic film, as well as so called 'Cinematic Virtual Reality' (CVR), in reference to other methods of academic research. This section will also outline how documentary filmmaking techniques are used to supplement various forms of academic fieldwork including observational research, focus group discussion, and participant interviews. This stage will furthermore discuss the possible advantages panoramic video might have over flat screen recording techniques as a scholarly method of audio-visual data collection and presentation.

2.1 – LARP Definitions, Elements and Theory

In this section, Live Action Role-Play (LARP) and its related topics will be discussed. Starting with defining the core aspects of RPGs, including the common design elements, main varieties, and primary media platforms available to the genre. This section will then outline LARP itself, discussing the genre's various distinguishing aspects, such as the primary game design features, the variety of narrative settings and player community structure. The section then provides details of the various developmental histories and origins of LARP, explaining the variations present between the geographically separated European and North American LARP communities. Finally, this section will review the history and structure of Australian LARP, outlining how it differs from the other LARP varieties, with a particular focus on the Western Australian LARP community.

2.1.1 – Defining Role-Playing Games (RPGs)

The term Role-Playing Game (RPG) is an umbrella term used to describe several types of narrative-focused, interactive experiences. These experiences are available in a variety of forms and on numerous platforms, that involves the players taking an active role in how the narrative unfolds. During an RPG, the participant, or player, takes control of some sort of player character (PC) or avatar within the narrative world. The decisions the player makes on how their character avatar interacts with the stimulus provided by the game world has an impact on how the narrative of the game experience unfolds (Steele. 2016; Daniau, 2016). There are two main types of RPGs, digital RPGs, and Tabletop RPGs (TTRPGs), and these can be played using a variety of visual media platforms, such as computer systems or dice and paper. All RPGs are focused on the players' experience and are reliant on the imaginations of their players to fill in the gaps in the elements provided by the RPG to create those experiences (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Tychen et al, 2006). To varying degrees the players take on the roles of their Player Characters (PCs), which are fictional entities situated within all the specifically nuanced detail of the game's wider fictional setting. They use their PCs to tackle the various challenges the game has laid before them, utilising which ever control system is provided by the narrative medium of the game experience to resolve the encounters (Edwards, 2001; Daniau, 2016).

A prime example of a Tabletop Role-Playing Game (TTRPG) is the long running combat and role-playing adventure game *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974). In a session of *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974), one participant, referred to as the Dungeon Master (DM), takes on the role of the game world itself, taking control of the game environment's various parts. These responsibilities include setting up the location, the narrative hooks, the various threats, and controlling the other characters in the game. The other participants, or Players, each take on the role of a Player Character (PC), with which to explore the world created by the DM, acting as the main characters or 'heroes' of the DM's narrative (Zagel and Deterding, 2018). The game's narrative environment is produced in the imaginations of the players through the verbal descriptions of the DM, often assisted by visual aids like maps, artwork, photos, and scale models. The actions of the players within the game environment are described by the players and their own player miniature set down in the grid map and scale models on the table. Players fill out a character sheet, picking a species (race), hero type (class) and origin story (background) and follow the instructions from the rule books to mechanically create their PC. The rule books also contain the various character ability score stats and special features available to their character, which the players add to their character sheets to use as they engage with the game world. The players then add their own creative flavour to their PC, expanding on the suggested narrative hooks to better connect their PC to the game world and develop them into a fully realised character (Hall, 2015; Gygax et al, 1974).

The various encounters and conflicts of the game's narrative are resolved using role-play acting, basic mathematics, and seven types of dice, the most important being the twenty-sided die (D20). For a character to succeed at any given task the sum of their die roll and relevant skill modifier number must be equal to or higher than the task's designated difficulty check (DC) value on the DM's charts. For instance, if a player wanted to break down a locked door, they declare this then roll the die. This action has a high DC value, thus a character with a low strength skill modifier needs a high die roll to succeed, but a character with a high strength skill modifier can succeed even with a lower roll. The outcome of these mechanical equations then inspires the creative narrative flavour and role-play which results in a scene that the players and DM can verbally act out. For example, upon succeeding the check, instead just saying 'I succeed and enter the room', the player more creatively says 'I slam my shoulder into the door, using my shield to

protect myself'. In response the DM would say 'the impact from your body bursts the door off its hinges, and you enter the room unharmed by the splintering wood', continuing the story from there (Hall, 2015; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003).

The other major type of RPG games is Digital RPGs, which are executed using various video game technologies. The main defining feature of Digital RPG's is the use of computer-based technologies to be played, instead of the books, paper, dice, and models of TTRPGs. Essentially, these games automate the DM's role in the game, which is taken on by the computing power of the games program (Daniau, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). In other words, the medium of digital RPGs "Relies on various digital supports to provide an interactive experience through the exploration of mostly virtual worlds" (Daniau, 2016, pp. 426). These experiences can vary "from solo investigations to group adventures, and to millions of players involved in a massive multiplayer online RPG (MMORPG)" (Daniau, 2016, pp. 426). There is a wide variety of digital RPGs, for instance Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) games, or Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) and offline single player RPGs (Torner, 2018). Examples of these types of games include *Federation II* (1988), *World of Warcraft* (2004), and *Mass Effect* (2007).

Federation II (1988) is an example of a Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) game, an early form of online RPG, in which players interface with each other and the story of the game through only typed text commands. The players type out their character actions and dialogue, then wait to see how the game and other players respond to these actions and words. After which they respond to those new actions and words from the other players and the game program itself, progressing the game experience forward towards some form of conclusion (Daniau, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Bartle, 1996).

The game *World of Warcraft* (2004) is an example of a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) (Yee, 2005; Hsu et al, 2009). *World of Warcraft* (2004) players use their computers to control their three-dimensional animated digital avatar around a huge computer-generated digital environment with up to hundreds of other players at a time (Daniau, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Yee, 2005). These players can communicate with one another via specialised character avatar movements, in-game text chat systems or even verbally, using an additional microphone set up.

The game *Mass Effect* (2007) is an example of a single player RPG video game, isolated to a single electronic device, in which the player controls their character via a game controller. The player interacts with the other computer-controlled characters in the game world through either social interactions or combat encounters. During a social interaction the players choose how their character responds by selecting one of multiple possible dialogue choices which the game provides. However, during hostile encounters the game uses the mechanics of a third person shooting game or flight simulator game. The player's choices in these encounters progress the story down any number of possible narrative arcs, with each decision leading the player toward one of several pre-determined endings to the game's story (Daniau, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018).

Previous research has identified five consistent elements that are common among all types of role-playing games (RPGs), including MUDs, MMORPGs, and LARPs, amongst others. While not a complete list of common features, all RPG experiences possess each of these five broad concepts to some degree, which provides a reliable method for identifying the various types of RPGs (Tychsen et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011; Zagal and Deterding, 2018).

The first element is that all RPGs are collaborative narrative experiences based on rule sets which outline the nature, mechanics, and the imagined world of the game. These collaborative narratives are established between the guiding authority, such as a DM, who officiates the game's rules, and the players who work within those rules (Lampo, 2016; Daniau, 2016). These collaborative narratives can be an open-ended narrative, or it can be a highly focused linear experience. For example, in *World of Warcraft* (2006) there is a great deal of background lore for the game world and a large variety of quests. The players choose their part and contribute to the continuation of that lore. The importance of the contribution varies but there is no strict order for the completion of the quests. The players are free to explore the expansive game environment as they wish and deal with what they find rather than doing any of the actual game quests. Whereas in games like *Mass Effect* (2007), the narrative is very linear and focused, but the player's choices and actions still affect how the story progresses. The sum of this player input is calculated, determining which of the predetermined conclusions the players will experience. Once completed, the experience is reset, ready for them to play through again, providing the opportunity for the players to make different choices to perhaps achieve a different

outcome. The narratives of *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974) campaigns can be open ended, or strictly linear, or even a combination of both, depending on the skill and aims of the DM, as well as player behaviour (Yee, 2005; Hall, 2015; Daniau, 2016).

The second element is that the players have considerable control over their player character (PC), in other words, the player is just as much the author of the narrative as the guiding authority). This means that the player is responsible for choosing their abilities, skills, emotional drives, personality, visual design, and most importantly their individual decisions within the game's world. Ideally, in an RPG the players decisions and actions will have a noticeable impact on the progression of the narrative (Tychsen et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011). As an example, in Digital RPGs, such as *Mass Effect* (2007) and *World of Warcraft* (2004), this is often done through a character creation menu screen. Through this system the players can return to this menu at regular intervals to update and alter their characters with various tokens, points, and items they have gathered while playing the game. In *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974), this is done using specially designed character sheets and the text from the player focused rule books. These books provided a variety of modular options for players to choose from in mechanically developing their character and to inspire how they will role-play the character. While still providing further opportunities to alter this design as they play through the game, as more options become accessible to the player as they progress. (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Yee, 2005; Hall, 2015;).

The third element is that RPGs all take place within a mutually agreed upon *Magic Circle*, a term referring to the boundary between the real-world and the imagined world of the game (Montola, 2012). The *Magic circle* is a "socio-cultural construct" which operates in a "kind of spatial and temporal dimensions" that enables the separation of the game world from the real-world (Montola, 2012, pp. 53). In other words, the games take place within a fictional world established by the guiding authority and agreed to by the players, where the players enter and accept the fictional world as their PC's reality (Tychsen et al, 2006; Vorobyeva, 2014; Meriläinen, 2011). The way in which the *Magic circle* actually manifests the boundary of the fictional world is one of the main factors that can differentiate the various types of RPGs. For instance, the world of MUDs and MMORPGs, such as *Federation II* (1988) and World of Warcraft (2004), are digitally programmed virtual environments in cyber space. TTRPGs worlds, like that of a Dungeons and Dragons (1974) campaign are created in the descriptions given by the DM, combined with the

player's imaginations and additional visual aids, such as images or scale models (Montola, 2012; Zagal and Deterding, 2018).

The fourth element is that in some form or another the game will always have a guiding authority, who aims to ensure that the game is an enjoyable, entertaining, and comfortable space for the players. The guiding authority establishes the environmental factors of the world, influences the narrative flow, as well as enforcing the rules, and adjudicating disputes between players of the game world. The form and title of the guiding authority varies between the various types of RPGs, TTRPGS have a single DM/GM while MMORPGs have sophisticated computer programs and teams of admin staff. However, they can also share many of the same techniques to achieve their goals, such as NPCs or Non-Player Characters who give the players quests or clues to the next phase of the narrative (Tychsen et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011; Hall, 2015). For example, in *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974), this role is taken on by an actual person, whereas in *Mass Effect* (2007) this guiding authority is a part of the pre-programmed code of the game itself. *World of Warcraft* (2004) similarly has its guiding authority pre-programmed into the game's code, but it is also monitored, improved on, and expanded by teams of program developers. Primarily aiming to fix any problems within the game and to remove any players who prove to be problematic to the other players experience of the game (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Yee, 2005; Daniau, 2016).

The fifth common element of RPGs is that there is a necessary minimum number of participants for the game to function properly. There must be someone to take on the role of the guiding authority and someone to take on the role of the player (Tychsen et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011). As *Mass Effect* (2007) only requires a single player, with the games programming filling the rest of the character and DM roles. Whereas *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974) requires one participant to be the DM and then at least two other players, but works best with four to five players, with any more than seven becoming too unwieldy to manage. *World of Warcraft* (2004) on the other hand, can have hundreds, if not thousands of players online at a time, with players from around the globe able to participate any time of the day or night (Yee, 2005; Hall, 2015; Daniau, 2016).

This is only a broad generalised definition of the principal aspects of RPGs that demonstrates the variety of similarities between the various types, as well as defining their

differences. These indicating features demonstrated that there are enough commonalities present for academic theory developed for one type of RPG to be potentially applied to another RPG type (Yee, 2006c; Edwards, 2001; Steele, 2016). However, these features also show that each type of RPG possesses some unique attributes that differentiate them from one another. Thus, the extent to which theories can be effectively transferred between the types will vary, and modification may be necessary for better results (Tychsen et al, 2006; Stewart, 2017; Torner, 2018).

Live Action Role-Play (LARP) is a form of RPG, in which the game's fictional narrative is portrayed by the players, using costumes, and improvisational performance methods, within a physical play space (Vartiainen, 2015). The players take on the role of a different person from another world for their own enjoyment of the experience (Mochocki, 2021; Söderberg et al, 2004; Gade et al, 2003). In other words, LARP is "an improvised play performed without script or audience, the participants pursue goals within a fictional setting represented by the real world, while interacting with each other in-character" (Vartiainen, 2015, pp.68).

2.1.2 – Defining LARP

The bulk of scholarly research focused on LARP has only been undertaken in the last few decades, however much of that research only includes LARP as a part of a larger investigation of RPGs. This combined with the highly diverse nature of Live Action Role-Play means that it lacks a sufficiently consistent academic definition (Tychen et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). This sub-section will propose a clear definition of LARP, based on the common features in the research definitions of several scholars, which shall be used to frame the remainder of the thesis. The subsequent sub-sections will then detail the history of LARP, as well as discuss how Western Australian LARP differs from the other major LARP styles of other regions, such as the USA and Europe.

LARP is an RPG system like those outlined above, so it follows many of the same conventions of other RPGs, however, one feature sets it apart from other role-play formats like TTRPGS and MMORPGS. This feature being that the LARP players, or LARPers, physically embody their Player Characters (PCs), acting out the game's collaborative

narrative through their actions within a physical real-world space (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004). As will be outlined in this chapter, LARPs have several additional features that can be used to describe and define them in more detail, however this concept of full physical character embodiment is what truly sets LARP apart from other similar activities. Furthermore, LARPs are considered as improvised performances without a set script or audience, in which the LARP Organisers (LARP Orgs) set out the game's rules and develop the narrative context of the game environment. These games most often utilise elaborate sets, costuming, specialized props, and player imaginations to alter the real-world physical space into that of the game environment. For example, transforming a simple farm paddock into the game's high-fantasy realm by constructing castle gates, medieval buildings, erecting period appropriate tents, and adding other decorations (Tychen et al, 2006; Steele, 2016).

The improvisational theatrical nature of LARPs means that they can be comparable to, or even considered as a form of unscripted pantomime (Söderberg et al, 2004; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Bakerly, 2018). During game events these LARP Orgs work in similar roles to the Dungeon Masters (DMs) of TTRPGs, often calling themselves Game Masters or Game Marshals (GMs). These GMs enforce the rules of the game and deliver the narrative context of the game world to the players (Meriläinen, 2011; Yee, 2005; Hall, 2015). Game masters work with game organizers to set out the rules and setting of the world, they populate it with non-player characters (NPCs) to provide players with ways to progress the game's narratives. This can include the player's personal narrative as well as group narratives, collaboratively building upon the overall narrative of the game world. LARP Orgs will often utilise elaborate set dressing, costumes, and specialty props to transform the chosen game area into an effective representation of the imagined game environment. Then within that game environment the players pursue their own in-game goals or quests to progress their individual narrative aims, as well as those of the game world's overall narrative. A LARP's player base can range from a few dozen to several hundred participants, including the GMs, LARP ORGs, player characters (PC), and non-player characters (NPCs). In some cases, this can also include small retailers and service providers who set up shop within the game world and remain in-character throughout the game experience (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Gade at el, 2003).

In other words, while Live action role-play (LARP) games are like other RPG formats,

however the media platform used to play them is unique (Tychen et al, 2006; Steele, 2016). The primary defining aspect of LARP is that players physically embody the actions and words of their PC in a real-world space, instead of controlling their PC through dice or a computer interface. This is in direct contrast to the player pressing a button to pick the lock on a treasure chest as in a digital RPG or saying "I roll to pick the lock" then rolling a die like in *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974). The LARP player physically attempts to pick the lock on the physical treasure chest prop, most often by correctly acting out the specific actions for lockpicking within the *magic circle* (Bakley, 2018; Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004). An example of this is demonstrated in *Figure 2.1* below, which depicts a LARPer team attempting to breach another team's camp gates, using a specific battering ram prop and the necessary role-play actions to do so.

Figure 2.1 – Example of LARP stronghold siege, simulated battering ram use

LARP can additionally be defined by the five common elements of RPGs, as discussed in the previous section. Referring to the elements of i) collaborative narrative, ii) player characters, iii) the *magic circle*, iv) the guiding authority, and v) minimum player capacity (Tychen et al, 2006).

LARP events are often focused on the collaborative, emergent narratives they can provide to their players, with the forms of these narratives varying between LARPs. As will be

discussed later in this chapter, the majority of LARPs have several layers of emergent and collaborative narratives occurring simultaneously during a game event. These could range from those of individual characters, the story arcs for teams of LARPers or the fictional nations they represent, as well as the over-arching narrative of the game world itself (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). LARP Orgs often admit they do not know where the players will take the story after they take hold of the 'plot hooks' at the start of the game. Commonly, by the events conclusion the players will have taken the LARP's narrative in a different direction to what the LARP Orgs had expected. In LARPs that continue the story from on event to the next, it is up to the LARP Orgs to take what occurred at game and then develop it into the prologue and plot hooks for the next game (Lampo, 2016). The Figures below, demonstrate some examples of this co-operative creativity and emergent narrative construction as it occurs during a LARP event.

Figure 2.2 – Two knights discovering next step of their quest from the town librarian.

Figure 2.2 above depicts two LARP players, the two knights, and a LARP Org NPC, the witch, concluding an in-character interaction that resulted in the completion of the player's quest. By completing the quest, they gain the in-game knowledge they need to continue their narrative journey, as well as receiving the next set of out-of-character instructions. They obtain these instructions by removing a portion of tape from their laminated sheet of paper, that their team received at the start of the game, which contains their team's plot

hooks for the game.

Figure 2.3 below depicts members of a sea themed LARPer team having an in-character discussion about how they plan to use the rewards gained from completing their teams' various quests. The players aimed to decide how best to use the imaginary resources they had amassed in-game to defend their fictional homeland from future sea monster or pirate attack. After which they would explain their plans to the LARP Orgs, who would then use that knowledge in the planning of that team's quests for the following game.

Figure 2.3 – Warband discussing how to defend their homeland from monster attack.

The way in which LARP players develop their characters can differ depending on the type of game. Some games use character sheets like TTRPGs to provide a framework for character creation, while for other games only a basic understanding of the game world's lore is required to make a character. Often the development and creation of their characters costume can be the most important part of the players character development process (Hall, 2015; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Mochocki, 2021). In other words, LARPs are focused on its player's full embodiment and physicality of their player's chosen character, meaning that within the game's *Magic Circle* the player becomes their PC. Every action the players make and every word they utter within the game's *magic circle* is that of their character, fully committing to the imagined world which they inhabit alongside

other PCs and NPCs (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Vorobyeva, 2014).

The *Magic Circle* of the LARP is often clearly defined and distinct from the real-world, through a process that greatly heightens the player's immersion into the game world. This process can often use costuming and set dressing, in addition to improvisational acting, to further enhance the transformation of players into their PCs and the physical space into the game environment (Tychsen et al. 2006; Montola, 2012; Mochocki, 2017, 2021). This increased immersion can often be so intense that LARPers can experience what they describe as "LARP bleed" (Bowman, 2018, pp. 388). This is a phenomenon where for a few days after a long or particularly intense LARP event players will subconsciously struggle to fully leave their character and the game world behind. Often this includes players subtly continuing to think and act like their LARP character in real-life for a few days after the LARP (Bowman, 2012; Steele, 2012; Przybylski et al, 2012). Although this is an interesting concept, that did appear in the project's primary research data, it is outside the scope of this thesis. *Figure 2.4* below demonstrates an example of this *magic circle* in action.

Figure 2.4 – LARPer in full costume starting the day with a chaotic grin.

This photo was taken at around 9:15am on the second day of *Shattered World LARP* and features a LARPer already wearing their full Swamp Fey costume and in-character. The

LARPer is gleefully heading off to cook up a hearty breakfast for the rest of their teammates, fellow LARPers who were already off laying siege to one of the other player faction camps on the other side of the game field.

LARP's can involve any number of participants, ranging from less than ten to hundreds of players depending on the game, with most LARPs having a sizable committee who plan and run the events. LARP Organisers, or LARP Orgs, can have many responsibilities, and many of the committee members will take on both specific planning and execution roles, as well as helping whenever they can. The responsibilities of these specific roles can include, but are not limited to rules development, narrative development, prop making, safety officer, NPC, and general administrative duties. Each event will have an ideal LARP Org to Player ratio that enables games to operate most effectively which can vary greatly depending on the type and length of the specific game (Tychen et al, 2006; Steele, 2016; Söderberg et al, 2004).

The majority of LARP games have a committee consisting of several people operating as the game's guiding authority, although again this can vary between LARP events. These LARP Org committees will organise all aspects of the game both before and during the event, as well as after the game event. In preparation of the game event the LARP Orgs will develop the story, define the game rules, organise the date of the event, outline the games schedule, promote the game, and sell tickets. Furthermore, LARP Orgs run player training sessions, create props, organise insurance, as well as other necessities, and set up the play area for game as well as dismantle it after the event. (Vartiainen, 2015; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Koljonen, 2016).

During LARP events, the LARP Org committee members will split up to take on various roles, in addition to those they filled during the preparations for the event and set-up of the game space. Some LARP Orgs will become Game Masters to guide players through the narrative aspects of the game and record how the players go about interacting and developing the main narrative encounters. Others will act as Game Marshals, policing and enforcing the rules of the game and ensuring that everyone is participating to the proper standards. These standards are based on the community code of conduct and safety guidelines, it is the role of the GM to settle any disagreements or 'interpretative confusion' the players may have with the rules. LARP Orgs will also take on NPC roles within the

game world, aiming to make the game more immersive for the players and to provide various plot hooks, as well as other in-game services. Following the conclusion of the game event, the LARP Orgs will pack up and clear out of the play space and begin the process anew for the next game event (Montola, 2012; Mochocki 2021; Gade at el, 2003).

The following two figures below portray examples of some of the responsibilities of these LARP Orgs in practice. *Figure 2.5* depicts LARPers and LARP Orgs engaged in a meeting during an event, aimed to remind players of the game's safety protocols, but to maintain player immersion it was run as in-character peace talks between their Warbands. *Figure 2.6* depicts a pair of GMs at a LARP training event discussing how they felt the new rules they were testing worked during the last practice skirmish, while also checking that a player's weapon was safe to be used in combat.

Figure 2.5 – In-game Warband leaders meeting aiming to review game's safety rules.

Even the best definition of LARP may still lead to some confusion among those first encountering LARP, due to there being several activities that could be confused for LARP but are not actually LARP. For example, Historical Re-enactor groups are often the first thing to come to mind when LARP is mentioned, and while there are clear similarities, they are not LARP (Mochocki, 2021; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade at el, 2003). Thus, to clarify, historical re-enactment is described as "battles and camps staged by costumed

hobbyists geared with period accurate replicas and performing period accurate physical activities" (Mochocki, 2021, p. 1). Whereas LARP on the other hand is described as "scenarios and situations enacted via improvised full-body acting by costumed participants role-playing as fictional characters" (Mochocki, 2021, p. 1).

Figure 2.6 – GMs discussing rules and conducting player weapon safety checks.

Re-enactors role-play as real nameless people from historical events, with a high focus on accurately recreating a moment in time through their speech, movement as well as their costumes and props. Re-enactment performances are also highly scripted, for reasons of the educational enjoyment of their intended an external audience, safety, and historical accuracy. This extends to the materials used in the accurate re-creations of the real-life clothing and objects they use, including traditionally produced linens and metal weapons.

LARPers role-play as completely fictional characters, with the narratives of LARPs being mostly unscripted and improvisational in nature. LARPers will make their costumes and realistic-looking armour from all manner of materials, rather than just materials of the time, including sustainably sourced leather, plastic, and foam. Many of these materials are used because they are more durable, cheaper, lighter, and provide protection to the user, while also being compatible with specially designed "LARP-safe" weapons. These purpose-built foam, latex weapons are designed to look real but be harmless when used, which

considerably reduces the risk of injury, and thus the need for scripted fight choreography (Meriläinen, 2011; Steele, 2016; Söderberg et al, 2004).

Figure 2.7 below, effectively illustrates these differences, as the photo portrays a medieval knight, a Napoleonic era naval officer, a magical cat-girl, a bohemian witch, and Vikings. It would be impossible for such a selection of characters to exist in the same historical re-enactment event but is just a small example of the character variety that can potentially inhabit a LARP's game world.

Figure 2.7 – A selection of fantasy characters within the LARP game world.

In short, the key difference between historical re-enactors and LARPers is that re-enactors perform for an outside audience as well as for their own enjoyment, while LARPers perform solely for their own enjoyment.

2.1.3 – Further Defining LARP Features and Terms

As previous scholars have stated "a game's narrative context, the actions each character performs within it, and the location everyone shares" makes it possible for LARPs to exist (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 89). There are many types of LARP games, differentiated by factors such as their gameplay mechanics, rule philosophy, narrative setting, run time,

geographical location, player population, and the ratio between in-game and out-of-game time (Vartiainen. 2015; Tychen et al. 2006; Steele. 2016). In other words, "the embodied aspect of LARPs often means that they are constrained by the physical locations where they are played" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 89). This can refer to the physical area in which the game will take place, and the historical socio-cultural background influences of the geographic location in which the LARP Orgs are located (Mochocki, 2021; Hellstrom, 2011; Bienia, 2013).

For instance, a LARP event that is being run in a hired-out indoor space can only be modified using temporary set dressings and props. This is because they cannot do anything that will permanently damage the space, as they will not be able to rent the space again for future events. Whereas a LARP event that is played out on the back paddock of a farm that is co-owned by the LARP Org committee, can build numerous semi-permanent buildings on the site. Thus, creating a reusable and improvable player area specifically for their event, which is limited only by available skilled labour and funding. Additionally, the cultural difference between geographic regions will mean that the common languages and cultural capital used between the LARP Orgs and the LARPers will be different. For example, a very common cultural concept in the American LARP community may be completely lost on a LARPer from Germany or even considered problematic to the Australian LARP community (Steele, 2016; Hellstrom, 2011; Gade et al, 2003).

The ratio between the event's in-game time and out-of-game time is another important aspect in defining different varieties of LARP events. The concept of 'in-character/out-of-character' time, also referred to as 'in-game/out-of-game time', is an important narrative, immersion, and safety aspect for LARP participation. In other words, this means that "different LARP communities have developed signals for communicating that a player's actions are carried out by the player and not the character" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 88). These signals often include special headbands or gestures, such as holding their hand over their head.

The difference between the amount of in and out of game time at LARP can vary between game types, most shorter games have the players in-character for almost the whole time. Multiple day events, on the other hand, can strictly dictate that players must be in-character within a certain time, such as between 9am and 5pm, with staying in-character

outside those times being optional. There are some events with longer run times that require their players to remain in character for the full event, such as 48-hour full immersion survival-horror LARPs. In *Figure 2.8* below is an example of this concept of in-game and out-of-game time in action, with the image showing the LARPers of a knight themed team taking their lunch break. However, lunch time at this game event occurs during in-game time, so the LARPers remain in character while they eat and discuss clear plans for the remainder of the day. Whereas in other LARP events, there is a designated lunch break time that is set up to be out-of-game time for everyone involved.

Figure 2.8 – Business lunch at camp for the medieval knights themed Warband.

The frequency, length, and continuity structure of LARP events can vary greatly between the various types of LARPs, with the frequency of games ranging from monthly, every 3 months, or bi-yearly. Some LARP events will run for only a few hours, others will take most of a day to complete, while others will be run over the course of several days. Continuity wise, some LARP events will be isolated one-off events, with each game taking place in either a new world with new characters or the same world with different player characters each time. Other LARPs can be part of a series of games, with narratives that flow from one game to the next as a continuous campaign, in a similar way to the episodic narratives of television programs. This will often involve some of the story occurring 'off-screen'

between events to better link each game to the next one (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003; Koljonen, 2016).

An understanding of LARP's gameplay structure and mechanics will be vital for comprehending the themes to be identified and used to develop the refined LARPer motivation typology. As will be outlined in later chapters, the notion of how the different LARP gameplay elements appeal to different players becomes an important defining aspect of the developing taxonomy. Therefore, the remainder of this subsection aims to provide a general overview of LARP's various gameplay mechanics, which are relevant to the production of the LARPer motivation typology.

One way of describing a LARP's rules and game mechanics is to think of the LARPs rules as "a type of code that runs on humans" (Steele, 2016, pp. 30). As the players gain a better understanding of the rules, they can play the game more effectively, as well as gaining greater influence over the forging of their own in-game experiences. As Steele (2016) states "Human coding that happens in LARPs is improvisational and takes place in real time" meaning that as LARPers play they "shape an invisible mutually agreed upon reality" (Steele, 2016, pp. 31). Furthermore, as the players "develop fluency in the rules the code gradually loses its novelty and rather becomes a tool to create experience" (Steele, 2016, pp. 32-33). Meaning that as players grow ever more proficient with the game, they can also begin to grow tired of it and will seek to apply their knowledge to new settings or try out other rule systems (Hellstrom, 2011; Mochocki, 2017).

The various types of RPGs can draw their narrative inspiration from any number of narrative genres, setting or themes, both fictional and historical, or any combinations of these elements. This is also true for LARP however these narrative choices will have an impact on all other aspects of the LARP's game design. That means, according to Steele (2016):

> To the LARP designer, genre often plays a major role in influencing their choices over which elements of games sociality to render code and genre also influences the types of significance to be used as signs for those truth commands (Steele, 2016, pp. 33).

For example, a game set in the 'Old West' will need to have rules for resolving gunfights in a satisfying way, while a swords and sorcery themed LARP will need rules for satisfying magic and melee combat. The design will utilise the narrative themes or tropes that define the genre's setting, so players can recognise it, allowing for easier immersion into the game world (Mochocki, 2021; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Koljonen, 2016).

LARP game mechanics most often refer to the written rules that dictate how to play out the LARP aspects that cannot be easily or safely simulated in the real-world, providing both balanced and enjoyable resolutions to these in-game player encounters (Hellstrom, 2011; Steele, 2016; Koljonen, 2016). In other words, LARP gameplay mechanics are described as a "system of rules made to allow players to act out aspects of the game that would be impractical, illegal or impossible to do for real, such as magic, cyber technology, armed conflicts or use of drugs" (Gade et al, 2003, pp. 172).

The methods used by LARP Orgs to create their LARP's mechanics are often a choice of design focus between strict written rules or consequence-based gameplay design. Each of these design philosophies has its own strengths and weaknesses, which will be outlined over the course of this section. However, many modern LARPs utilise a combination of these extreme ends of the design spectrum to develop the basis of their gameplay design and rules. Written rules focused gameplay design philosophies for LARPS are most often developed through the adaption of the rules of popular TTRPGs, such as *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974). These types of games will have a heavy reliance on extensive and complex rule sets to decide the outcomes of the various in-game encounters between the players or the game environment. Meanwhile, 'consequence-based' design aims to codify the logical cause and effect of the LARP's world in simple consistent terms to ensure everyone has the same expectations for the results of in-game actions. Essentially, taking the imagined outcome of an encounter as if it were real, and then writing it down to create an understandable and repeatable version of common sense that is specific to the fictional world (Steele, 2016; Gade et al, 2003; Koljonen, 2016).

The below image, *Figure 2.9*, demonstrates a practical example of LARP gameplay, depicting a pair of mercenary PCs trying to help a poisoned comrade, as well as the disappointed Mayor NPC who hired them. The poisoned mercenary PC has not actually been poisoned of course, it is too dangerous to poison someone for the sake of a game,

the PC is only acting as if they have been poisoned. In the rules of the LARP, poisoning is the result of a PC saying a specific phrase, doing a specific action, and or using a specific prop against another PC within the game's *Magic circle*. After which the effected PC accepts this condition and acts out the imagined consequences of the poisoning, in this case by pretending to hallucinate and lose control over their motor functions.

Figure 2.9 – Mayor NPC disappointedly observes poisoned mercenary PC.

The amount and type of combat mechanics in a LARP is another factor that can demonstrate the wide variety and variation available in LARP events. This can be connected to the genre and the narrative focus of the game, influencing the amount and type of combat mechanics in the game. For instance, an outdoor, high fantasy, player vs player LARP has a higher focus on combat, than an indoor, sci-fi, political espionage themed LARP game, that has no combat mechanics at all (Hellstrom, 2011; Söderberg et al, 2004). The rules for the simulated combat of LARP are influenced by the concepts of safety, practicality, and player enjoyment, as well as relying on the awareness and honesty of the players to function. For example, for safety reasons most LARPs ban the attacking of player's heads and legs, along with the general use of thrusting attacks, as players are aware of this, so do their best to avoid those actions (Mochocki, 2021; Meriläinen,2011).

In *Figure 2.10* below the image depicts a player team preparing for one of the LARP's daily large combat encounters, which includes consulting with the attending LARP Org (identifiable by their yellow tunic) on any last-minute rule amendments. This is an example of the honest player awareness necessary for the safe and continued inclusion of combat simulations in LARP events.

Figure 2.10 – PC Warband consults with LARP Org in preparation for combat.

Another example of differing combat mechanics, along with the necessity of player honesty and awareness in the proper function of simulated combat, would be the 'Hit Points' (HP) system. In this context, each player has a base number of HP, which they can increase with the addition of armour, gear (such as a shield), magical artefacts, potions, or spells. The player loses these hit points when they are successfully attacked by another player or enemy NPC, keeping count until they are reduced to zero HP, after which they become 'knocked out'. Once 'knocked-out' the player acts out a dramatic death scene, designed to both alert teammates who could revive them and to get away from the battle to avoid being trampled by accident. These combat mechanics rely on players being aware and honest about when they are hit, their starting HP, as well as how much HP they have remaining for the system to work properly. These types of LARP mechanics enable the battles to last longer and be more enjoyable, as well as providing additional justification for players to invest in a more elaborately armoured costume. These are rule

sets modified from those in TTRPGs and Digital RPGs, which are employed by many LARPs, such as outdoor, swords and sorcery, player vs player LARPs. However, a consequence-based rules focused high-fantasy LARP would not use this system as it would disrupt the game's immersion, meanwhile an indoor non-combat LARP has no use for such mechanics (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Koljonen, 2016).

An example of a different type of LARP mechanics that are not completely combat focused would be the 'resource gathering' rules from *Shattered World LARP*. In the game there are several points in the game environment, called resource nodes, from which players can gather various natural resources, such as wood, stone, or herbs, which they can use in game. These resource nodes are simply appropriately decorated mailboxes, with a water-proof container inside which holds custom-made trading cards. These include the wood node that looks like a log, the stone node which looks like a boulder, the ore node that resembles a lump of ore, the herb node which looks like a bush. The players gather the resources by spending about five-minutes role-playing the action of gathering the materials (such as chopping wood, cleaving stones, digging up ore, picking herbs). Once they have completed playing out this action, they can take one of the resource cards from the node, to represents a unit of the resource they have gathered. The gathered resources can then be used in several ways, such as being sold or traded to the villager NPCs for in-game wealth, which can be used in other aspects of the game's mechanics. Alternatively, the player can use the resources to craft items, such as using herbs to create healing potions, which they can used or trade at other points in the game. The opportunities provided by these resource mechanics add another level of activity and strategy to the LARP which would otherwise not exist.

However, this set of mechanics would not work in a game like *Warhearts LARP*, even though it is similar in narrative setting to *Shattered World LARP*, its game mechanics are structured differently. *Warhearts LARP* is a series of mostly separate combat encounters occurring at different places and times within the in-game world, although they occur on a single play area and event day. Whereas the events of *Shattered World LARP* occur in real time and within the physical representation of the in-game world, which has the same boundaries as the farm paddock the event is held upon. Therefore, *Warhearts LARP* does not have the physical space or time to run this style of resource collecting and trading mechanics, thus they use different resource management rules instead. Player teams in

Warhearts LARP are rewarded with fictional resources depending on how their various battles turn out on the event day, and what parts of the fictional world map they capture or lose. The teams then declare how they will use the resources, or attempt to broker trading deals with the other teams during the role-play focused council meeting that brings the event day to a close

Scholars have regularly discussed the concept of Immersion in LARP "as the feeling of 'being there'" through its "embodied nature", thus immersion and embodiment are core aspects of the LARPing experience. (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 90). As the LARPers take on their roles within the shared game environment, they will each "construct mental models of his/her character's mental models of the storyworld" (Mochocki, 2017, pp.150). it is through these models that the players are not only able to embody their character, but also perceive the other players as their respective characters and overlay the imagined game world on to the physical play space. This is often referred to as the concept of '*shared imagination*', where the individual role-playing of the LARPers loops into the role-play of the surrounding individuals (Bowman, 2018, pp.390). Even when the desire for immersion into the world can be at odds with the game's mechanics and the physical abilities of the players (Bowman, 2018; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Steele, 2016). Feeding back and forth between the participants in a form of *social immersion* that fosters the social identities of the individual player characters, reinforcing the collective player identity of the individual and community (Bowman, 2018, pp.390). It is through role-play that this immersion is most often established, in other words:

> The sense of place is created through a combination of activities, physical settings, and situated meanings, LARPs use this mixture to make their fictional spaces seem real, even when the environment cannot be perfectly modelled (Harviainen et al, 2018, pp.89).

This large variety of aspects that can influence how LARPs can be defined and differentiated makes it difficult to classify the varieties of LARP available effectively and easily for players to participate in. However, these elements could be more effectively arranged to create a taxonomy that could be more effective for organising LARP events present with in each region.

2.1.4 – Different LARP Types

There are a few widely accepted LARP type designations, accepted both by the various LARPer communities and research scholars, including *Parlour LARPs* and *Boffer LARPs*, amongst others. As with many aspects of LARP fixed definitions of these LARP types are limited, and those that do exist can either be overly broad, very flexible, or vary between different geographic regions (Hellstrom, 2011; Gade et al, 2003; Meriläinen, 2011). Furthermore, "these game types are not bound by nation or culture" but instead "they are templates to which national play cultures give their own unique spin" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 90). The following section will summarise these common LARP game types, using colloquial terms to define the types, along with listing the other names that are used to refer to them. This will include the likes of *Parlour LARP*s, one of the most common and arguably one of the oldest, of the various LARP types, as well as another frequently referred to type that are known as *Boffer LARPs*.

In brief, *parlour LARPs* are described as "LARPs made for small, random player groups at events, usually designed to run with next to no props and for a short, fixed time" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 90). These are often role-play heavy events, with a keen focus on verbal communication, character interactions, interpersonal relationships, and often the solving of some sort of mystery. Additionally, they most often have little to no physical combat elements, these types of LARPs are also known as *Convention LARP*, *Dinner Party LARP* and *Theatre LARP* (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003). A common example of *Parlour LARP* is the *Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre* style event, which are small-scale events that are often themed around 'Agatha Christie style' murder mystery narratives. In these games the small group of players dress in costume, take on characters provided to them by the events host and Game-Master. They spend the first part of the evening socialising in character, while attempting to secretly achieve tasks within the game space. At the halfway mark a meal is served, during which a character (often the one played by the game master) is murdered by one of the other players, pre-determined to do so from the game's start. After the meal and the 'discovery of the body', the remaining players attempt to interrogate each other and assemble clues to uncover who committed the murder (Gade et al, 2003; Söderberg et al, 2004; Meriläinen, 2011).

Boffer LARPs are more focused on combat rather than story and will often heavily borrow

design elements from the likes of digital RPGs and even traditional sports. This type of LARP can also be referred to as *Combat LARPs* or 'Nerd-Ball' within the community, because of this focus on more game-like mechanics and resemblance to sports like football (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003). To further clarify, the term 'Boffer' derives from a Swedish word that is used to not only refer to a type of LARP game, but also to a variety of LARPing combat equipment used in this type of event. Specifically, 'Boffers' refer to an earlier type of handmade LARP safe weapon made from foam and other similar materials, which were used in early combat heavy LARP varieties that were named after these weapons. However, the weapons most often referred to as 'Boffers' these days are those homemade weapons that are bulkier and more crudely constructed in comparison to modern, professionally produced LARP-Safe Weapons. These mass produced LARP weapons and gear are constructed from specialised high-grade foam and latex by skilled professionals and come in a wide variety of types and designs, from hyper realistic to the completely fanciful. Although they can be expensive to purchase, and some types of homemade weapons are still allowed, these mass-produced weapons have become the standard for most melee combat focused LARPs, due to their consistent quality and proven safety record (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003).

Another commonly referred to classification of LARP within the communities is known as 'Freeform LARP'. This sort of LARP is defined as "minimalist games that use no props or costumes and are often designed to facilitate optimized interesting stories" in place of "combat or deep character immersion" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 90). This type of LARP is the opposite style of LARP to most of WA LARP community games, as most WA LARP games have strong narrative structures, and distinctive game mechanics, along with utilising numerous detailed props, set dressing and costumes (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Mochocki, 2017). Whereas 'Freeform LARP' relies entirely on the participants ability to physically embody their PCs and imagine the game environment with as few, or without any, additional aids to enhance the embodiment.

Some other common terms used to define different LARP types describe the narrative structure and length of the game, using terms borrowed from the lexicon of TTRPGs (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003; Hall, 2015). *One-Shot LARPs* refer to games which "are designed and conceived to be played only once" often having "high production values and are played over several days" or only a few hours (Zagal and

Deterding, 2018, pp. 90). In other words, they are LARPs that have a narrative that has a defined beginning and end point and is meant to be played out quickly over a single session of play. This makes it ideal for beginners who want to see if they will enjoy the concept of LARP, as it provides a good sample of the experience but requires no additional commitment once completed (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003). *Campaign LARPs* refer to LARP events "that have ongoing narratives and characters and extended character development" and "they are played over multiple events" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp.90). These types of LARPs are some of the more common in the WA LARP community, as they allow a story to progress and evolve over time, which is an enjoyable aspect for many participants. Some of these LARPs can have mechanisms that enable players to become more powerful the more games they take part in, but this is becoming less common as it results in a difficulty barrier that can be discouraging to new players (Gade et al, 2003; Koljonen, 2016).

2.1.5 – LARPers and LARP Communities

LARP communities can be considered as what the scholar Pearce (2009) described as '*Play Communities'*, and the members of these communities often benefit from being a part of them (Lampo, 2016; Meriläinen, 2011; Bowman, 2018). Play Communities are defined as a collection of individuals who come together because of a common interest in a specific activity - in this case LARP - and use this mutual involvement as an exercise in co-operative knowledge acquisition and the formation of group identity (Daniun, 2016; Pearce, 2009; Looy et al, 2012).

These communities treat LARP in a way reminiscent of what Oldenburg (1997) describes as a 'third place', the spaces in between your 'first place', the home, and the 'second place', work or school. These third places include the likes of pubs, social clubs, public parks, and sporting events, with these spaces providing balance and meaning to the lives of those who populate them (Oldenburg, 1997). LARPers communicate and interact with one another not only at the game events, but also outside of those events, via social media and online forums. In addition to the organisation of additional social events, such as building/crafting days, post-game parties, and training sessions, as well as more focused events such as LARP Org committee meetings (Jenkins, 2008; Vartiainen, 2015; Taylor, 2006).

This commitment to communal identity development is a complex aspect of the player's psychological motivation, involving the development of both emotional and cognitive aspects (Pearce, 2009; Looy et al, 2012; Peterson, 2012). The scholar Daniun (2016) states that LARPs along with "TTRPGs are particularly effective to foster knowledge acquisition, develop role-play skills, strengthen team building, encourage collaborative creativity and explore one's personal development" (Daniun, 2016, pp. 423). Daniun also argues that "during a role-playing game, players interact with their environment by adapting their play to suit the characters and situations encountered" as they would as if it was their player character's real-life, but "without the risks" (Daniun, 2016, pp. 439). Furthermore, "they must deal with the rules of society, adapt to environmental changes, manage priorities and assume consequences of actions" (Daniun, 2016, pp. 439). All of which becomes instrumental in the ability of LARPers, as individuals and a community, to expand and explore both their personal and group identity (Przybylski et al, 2012; Stark, 2012).

As with all communities, including these 'play communities', there are a slew of positive advantages and negative aspects to membership (Pearce, 2009; Looy et al, 2012; Daniun, 2016). Positives include but are not limited to identity formation, mutual emotional support, positive social interaction, acquisition of new social, physical, and practical skills, and occasionally even minor financial relief (Lampo, 2016; Söderberg et al, 2004; Hall, 2015). Conversely there are also negative aspects, including the usual problems that plague alternative and fan communities such as exclusionary gate keeping, underdeveloped social skills, considerable time consumption, financial strain, and dismissive or abusive treatment from those outside the community (Hellstrom, 2011; Bowman, 2012; Aytemiz and Smith, 2020). Although these are interesting aspects of LARP and LARPer communities, an in-depth investigation of these concepts in the context of the WA LARP community is not within the scope of this project.

The work of other scholars also includes discussions of the importance of supportive player communities and positive interactions between players. For instance, Meriläinen (2011) explains that "role-players form tight social networks" and that role-play can be an effective method for teaching by encouraging "experimentation with different social roles and personality types, as well as the development of imagination" (Meriläinen, 2011, pp.

50). Another scholar, Bowman (2018), meanwhile, outlines the concepts of *Community Immersion.* This concept is described as the individual's involvement within the communal, collaborative social activities which occur during game events, as well as those that occur outside such events (Bowman, 2018; Jenkins, 2006; McDiarmid, 2011). These out-of-game events, such as player training sessions, and post-game BBQs, can "establish a greater sense of trust, inter-immersion, and group flow" along with "helping to reinforce relationships out-of-character and strengthening the protective frame of the magic circle" (Bowman, 2018, pp.389-390).

Investigating from a different perspective, the scholar Hellstrom (2011) discusses the variation and uses of *Cultural Capital* within various LARP communities. This discussion includes the concepts of symbolic capital, the authenticity of authoritative symbolism and the effects of homogenizing forces, as they appear in different LARP event player populations (Hellstrom, 2011; Bøckman, 2002). Alternatively, LARP participation can be considered as a form of "*cultural improvisation*, the dramaturgical nature of which could be regarded as a *texture* that can be examined in the form of *scenarios*" (Lampo, 2016, pp.36). Through considering LARP communities as an example of a cultural ecology, it is possible to compare LARPers and LARPing to other cultural phenomena. In other words, "the conception of LARPs as ecologies is based on interdependence: we are connected to our environment and vice versa" (Lampo, 2016, pp.37). This includes investigation of the extent it simulates real-world roles, along with comparisons between independent and interconnected player actions.

For this research, only a basic understanding of the general structures of LARP communities is necessary for interpreting the themes that will influence the player motivation typology's development. However, a full in-depth investigation of the varying community types, multitudes of possible participant interactions and larger societal implications is beyond the scope of this thesis (Pearce, 2009; Taylor, 2006; Stark, 2012).

2.1.6 – History of LARP and Global Variations

This sub-section will provide an overview of the historical and diverse geographical origins of LARP, as "no LARP tradition can be separated from its historical roots, which are reflected in its practices and implicit assumptions" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 92).

Thus, a basic knowledge of LARP's origins and global variations will be necessary for a proper understanding of the role and usefulness of the player motivation typology developed in this thesis (Hall, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004). According to Montola (2012) "LARP, or originally 'live action role-playing', has no clear definite point of origin. Instead, it has been invented and reinvented around the world in many places" (Montola, 2012, pp. 109). Hence, modern LARP exists today in a variety of forms, on several continents, including Europe, North America, and Australia. It is because of this "pattern of sporadic emergence, LARP cultures have evolved in very different directions" (Montola, 2012, pp. 110).

Even though many of the first LARPs organized seem to have appeared during the 1980s the true origins of LARP are likely far older (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Steele, 2016). Including as far back as 735ce, where chess was played using real people instead of pieces. Other early examples include the 17th and 18th century Carousel games of the royal courts of Europe (Tychen et al, 2006; Daniun, 2016; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). In the modern era, several additional influencing factors have been attributed to the further contemporary development of LARP, including 1920's psycho-drama theory, socio-drama therapy, improvisational theatre exercises, parlour games, historical re-enactment, 'Cosplay' (costume play) and other types of RPGs (Lampo, 2016; Stark, 2012; Mochocki, 2021).

The development of LARP on a global scale is interesting because "it appears that the modern form of LARP emerged in many places, nearly simultaneously" around the world, with only limited clear connections between these separate groups (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 92). These different LARPs groups are often defined and separated out into categories based on the game's location in the world. The most common of these being referred to as *Nordic LARP* (Europe), *US LARP* (America), and *Australian LARP*. The LARPs of each region developed in their own unique way and thus the way the games are run can differ greatly between the three regions (Montola, 2012; Vartiainen, 2015; Gade et al, 2003).

The initial American LARPs (*US LARPs*) emerged from the heavy adaption of popular TTRPGs, while also taking considerable design ques from parlour games, improv-theatre, historical re-enactment, and educational simulation like 'the model United Nations' (Zagal

and Deterding, 2018, pp. 92). LARPs development process within the United States is considered the usual method by which LARP communities develop in their early stages, having been developed from TTRPGS, relying on complex rule systems and meta resource tracking. The stereotypical American LARP events are most often described as either "rules-heavy combat- oriented fantasy campaigns that are run as small business franchises, or theatre-style LARPs that use cards for conflict resolution and are staged at gaming conventions" (Montola, 2012, pp. 109-110). Therefore, *US LARPs* are defined as "having rules for as many things as possible, those games seek to enable participation by people who cannot do the same things in real life (e.g., pick pockets)" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 92). In addition, these games have a greater focus on rules for player progression, power-scaling between games, including making "the tracking of character progression and history" a less labour-intensive exercise (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 92). As a result, *US LARPs* normally have complex detailed rules, often derived from TTRPGs, and a greater focus on fantastical elements (Vartiainen, 2015; Gade et al, 2003). The majority of LARP events in the USA are locked within the region in which they were initially developed, with communities being very isolated and sheltered from each other and the rest of the world. This has only started to change in recent times with the advent of easily accessible social media platforms enabling more effective communication (Zagal and Deterding 2018; Montola, 2012).

The *Nordic LARP* communities, in comparison to *US LARPs*, are very proactive in seeking out and collaborating with each other, leading to this wide variety of LARPs. Due to this variety identifying the collective defining aspects of *Nordic LARP* can be difficult, although not impossible. Nordic LARPers are known for sharing ideas and improving themselves through cooperation and communication "eventually forming a loose but influential community around their annual Knutepunkt conference" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 97). Although this is a loud and important voice for *Nordic LARP*, there is still vast communities of LARPers across Europe not represented in this conference (Hellstrom, 2011; Gade et al, 2013). A main feature is that the majority of LARPs in Europe are designed and operated by volunteer, non-profit community organisations. These groups maintain an effective bureaucracy to produce content, organise events and manage the game for players. Meanwhile, the participating LARPers pay a small fee at the start of game, these funds go to covering the cost of the game rather than the pay packets of the organising group or some parent company. These community organisations share the

view that "LARPing is not a service one purchases but an experience one participates in creating" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 97).

Nordic LARPs will often focus more on the interactions between players as the source of the game's narrative drama, rather than relying on direct challenges set by the GMs. Most often physical combat mechanics only have a very minor role in how events of the narrative transpire, as opposed to US LARP where most storylines are decided via battle. The rules of Nordic LARP will often be designed to assist in encouraging and escalating these dramatic interactions between players. These LARPs are aiming to bring dramatic events to a head to generate regular satisfying narrative climaxes for the players efforts with the game world. Such as moments when vast conspiracies are revealed to all, or a character is dramatically killed off, with the aftermath of these narrative peaks starting the LARPers on to the next stage of the story (Hellstrom, 2011; Koljonen, 2016).

Another key identifier is that *Nordic LARPs* are normally free flowing with fewer, more simplistic rules, with a higher focus on immersion and a grounding in 'reality' or some historical context (Montola, 2012; Gade et al, 2003). For the most part, *Nordic LARP* was developed purely out of early Parlour games, such as charades, as well as historical re-enactment (Mockocki, 2021; Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004). As a result of this the majority of these LARP events use sets of simplistic rules based on the concepts of high player immersion and the realistic results of simulated action. In other words, "Simulation rules are common, particularly for amorous and violent interactions, but the systems tend to be loose and honour-based" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 98). The mechanical rule books for *US LARPs* can resemble an encyclopedia volume, whereas the mechanical rule books of most *Nordic LARPs* are akin to pamphlets. These simplistic rules are developed, tested, refined, and taught to the player base through workshops and training sessions that are run before or between game events. This is to ensure not only that the mechanics work as intended, but also that all participants personally understand the rules and can be confident that everyone else at the event understands them as well (Hellstrom, 2011; Koljonen, 2016).

A method for understanding the similarities and differences between *US LARP* and *Nordic LARP* is to directly compare the two varieties in terms of their overall gameplay and design philosophies. For example, in a *Nordic LARP* if you are directly hit by a great weapon

across the chest without wearing armour, your character would be seriously wounded, and will likely die, as they would in a real battle. Whereas in a *US LARP*, in this scenario, a player hitting your character would declare how much HP their attack removes from your total amount of HP. Your character will only die when your HP is reduced to zero, in the meantime you can attack back or use some other action with the rules, such as a healing spell to restore your lost HP (Vartiainen, 2015; Tychen et al, 2006).

Another important aspect of *Nordic LARP* in comparison to *US LARP* is the notion of 'Winning LARP'. In *US LARP* many LARPs do use game-like mechanics, like score keeping or objective-completion systems, to determine a winner for each event. Which can result in a player culture where one is expected to use their understanding of the rules and game abilities to gain an advantage over other players. Whereas in *Nordic LARP*, it is not technically possible to 'win a LARP', as the focus for players is to generate a good story through their play, which creates a community that encourages a mentality of 'playing to lose'. These LARPers appreciate that *Nordic* style game characters who can, and do, faulter will likely create far more entertaining scenarios to play out in game (Montola, 2012; Gade et al, 2003; Hellstrom, 2011).

An additional identifying feature of *Nordic LARP* is the general acceptance of LARP as a legitimate, valid, and even worthwhile cultural past time for adults to participate in. There is little to no social stigma around enjoying LARP, with LARPers feeling no shame in admitting they take part, some even including it in job applications. It is likely because of this acceptance that LARP Orgs can apply for funding grants through the same channels as arts projects, community initiatives and sporting groups, in addition to possibly being responsible for the increase in serious scholarly interest in LARP (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Montola, 2012; Gade et al, 2003).

A further defining element common to *Nordic LARP* is that it has a much greater diversity in play style, and that the "play duration ranging from hours to a month, player counts from six to a thousand and organization budgets from the negligible to hundreds of thousands of euros" (Montola, 2012, pp. 110). Thus, these games can require a considerable financial and time commitment from both LARP Org and players alike. By the start of the game event, the players are expected to have a full understanding of the game rules and the relevant narrative lore of the game event's setting. Along with the necessary costume

and gear appropriate for their character, which they have mostly developed, including pre-establishing relationships with at least a few other player characters. This should also be a character that they are comfortable embodying for the duration of the LARP, which can often be several days at a time. Furthermore, LARP Orgs need to use their available resources effectively to physically create as much of their interesting, cohesive imagined game environment as possible. Providing the space for the player character to inhabit and interact, in addition to ensuring all the rules function properly, and any other services or amenities are available over the course of the event (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Gade et al, 2003; Hellstrom, 2011).

The differing approaches of Nordic and American LARPs can be simplified down to one main point. In general *US LARPs* are designed to be mechanically driven, winnable experiences in which the players must create powerful characters to overcome the challenges set for them by the GMs. Meanwhile, *Nordic LARPs* in general, are primary immersive narrative simulation experiences focused on progressing forward a dynamic user-created story through a series of narrative interaction (Hellstrom, 2011; Mockocki, 2021; Montola, 2012).

The physical distance, and to a lesser extent the cultural differences between the US and Euro LARP communities, resulted in very little cultural exchange between these two communities. However, some of the unique defining aspects of Australian LARP communities means that a form of this cultural exchange is possible, these aspects being its isolation, climate, and lack of traditional LARP precedents. Although the exchange is limited, being only one way, it still provides the developing Australian LARP community with the unique opportunity to select or dismiss whichever aspects of *US LARP* and *Nordic LARP* they wish. Australian LARP development has combined and rearranged elements from both varieties, while not being restrained by the historical tradition and cultural context (Harviainen et al, 2018; Vartiainen. 2015; Tychen et al, 2006).

2.1.7 – LARP in the Australian Context

The earliest recorded examples of Australian LARP events began in Canberra during the early 1980s. Even from the start the Australian LARP scene took a different approach to the design of their events to organisers in other parts of the world. These early events

focused on the 'freeform' style of LARP as opposed to the structured TTRPG inspired event frameworks employed by other regions at the time. These dynamically designed events also differed from their overseas counterparts by utilising a low game master to player ratio, averaging 2 GMs for every 15 players. Furthermore, Australian LARP developers chose to make the inter-player interactions the primary focus of the game's action, and method for driving forward the narrative (Montola, 2012; Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004).

In other words, these LARP Orgs developed their games "with some plot pre-defined but with development very much left to the players" interactions with one another to progress the story (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 102-103). Australian LARP has steadily grown and refined itself ever since, continuing to evolve and grow slowly over the course of the late 80s and 90s, as it became popular at fan conventions and overseas influences started to drip down past the equator. For a time, the terms LARP and Freeform split from one another, describing two distinct, but still related activities. At this point, LARPs were defined as campaign games, run over multiple long sessions, where players created their own characters using props and full costumes to supplement their immersion into the game's imagined world (Harviainen et al, 2018; Tychen et al, 2006; Gade et al, 2013).

Meanwhile, 'freeform' games were quick single session games, where players used pre-generated characters to navigate within the purely imagined space and were often played out within the schedule of another event. As with other LARPs from around the globe, Australian LARPs started to take inspiration from the variety of commonly available TTRRPGs. LARP developers used the settings and rules of the tabletop games as inspiration for the development of the next generation of LARP events and game types. Along with reintegrating the notion of "abstract resolution systems" and other ideas of freeform back into the core structure of much of this new wave of LARP game design (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 102-103).

During this redevelopment period there was a shift in character design focus, moving away from a reliance on statistics-based character design. Instead, they experimented with character design mechanics based on role-play communication skills, which allowed for the greater exploration of psychological, political, philosophical, and social concepts. Throughout this period of change and redevelopment of Australian LARP into its modern

form, the focus 'on player-on-player social interaction' as the core method of narrative resolution remained an important gameplay feature. As opposed to the use of purely combat-based or mathematically powered mechanics-based systems of event resolution, as utilised in other LARP communities (Montola, 2012; Vartiainen, 2015; Gade et al, 2003).

Australian LARP falls somewhere in between the extremes of the Nordic and American LARP communities, yet it also has its own unique identity, this is due in large part to its isolation from the bulk of the other LARP communities, along with the flexibility granted to it from its lack of long-standing traditions (Daniau, 2016; Meriläinen, 2011; Söderberg et al, 2004). As some scholars describe it, this process is "particularly freeform and LARPs based on commercial tabletop systems, have cross-fertilized each other, predominantly through role-playing conventions" (Zagal and Deterding, 2018, pp. 102-103). Therefore, creating a uniquely adaptable, hybridised system employed by a vast network of semi-connected communities of LARPing clubs across the country. It is because of these unique origins that Australian LARPers exhibit a strong sense of community inclusion, while the LARP Orgs have an eagerness to experiment, and the freedom to try out new ideas. This has resulted in a large variety of game events that include those who follow templates from across the global LARP communities as well as new hybridised LARP designs. In addition to these designs that combine elements of both *Nordic LARP* and *US LARP* traditions there are entirely new game creations (Tychen et al, 2006; Hellstrom, 2011).

The WA LARP community has several aspects that differentiate it from even other examples of Australian LARP. For instance, due to the smaller size of the WA LARP community, many LARP Orgs are also players, and vice versa. One of these primary differences is in the close interconnectivity of the community members, who all share resources and responsibilities among the various LARP organisers and organiser groups.

Almost all WA LARPs are members of the organization LARP West, which is a community operated non-profit company (https://www.larpwest.net). This company helps to organise insurance, legal matters, grant applications, and other tasks that are either expensive or difficult, by pooling together all their available resources. This concept is currently only employed in the WA community, through these coordinated efforts it makes the whole

process of LARPing more affordable and manageable for both the players and organisers, (https://www.facebook.com/groups/190381684391332/).

As a brief aside, the bulk of home crafting in the WA LARP community is focused on the creation of costumes, rubber band guns, shields, larger props, and armour. Produced from either 'real' (steel, wood, traditional fabrics, and leather) or fake 'costume' (plastic, foam, modern fabrics, and fake fur) materials. Furthermore, LARP can also present several interesting business opportunities for both large and small businesses. They can provide props, costumes, and other equipment necessary for LARP to players or event organisers. Meanwhile, Larger companies, such as *Epic Armoury* (https://epicarmoury.com.au/), produce LARP-safe weapons, props, armour, costume elements, and other ephemera. They sell these products via their own websites or through small and large third-party retailers, such as *Western Leather Craft* (http://westernleathercraft.com.au/) . These larger companies supplement the work of individual creators and cottage style businesses to help supply the necessary equipment and ephemera used by LARPers. All of this has resulted in making it much simpler for LARPers to gear up and prepare for events (Vartiainen, 2015; Gade et al, 2003; Stark, 2012).

These unique aspects of WA's particular brand of LARP have resulted in some interesting, and possibly beneficial, elements in the production of the refined LARPer motivation typology. Many of the component elements of WA LARP have been adapted from and combined with elements of numerous other LARP forms from around the world. Therefore, the developed LARPer taxonomy should be more readily adaptable for the study of other LARPer communities and LARP formats. During the conducting of this research project, there were two primary LARP events running in the WA LARP Community*, Shattered World LARP* and *Warhearts LARP*, as well as three smaller LARP game events, those being *Arecibo Circle LARP*, *Boot Hill LARP*, and *Avoss LARP*.

Shattered World LARP (2019) (https://www.facebook.com/groups/696247443746736) is the largest operating in WA with nearly 200 participants and has a balance of all the previously described LARP gameplay features, making it a middle of the road LARP. It is a 'player vs player' event (PVP) that resolves the narrative by encouraging both role-play and combat activities. It is a high fantasy themed four-day event held twice a year with the in-game time occurring between around 9am-6pm. It is also the only LARP in WA with a

permanent game site with semi-permanent structures built by the orgs and volunteers, including a licensed tavern. The diegesis of this LARP is a long and complex one, but in summary, the story revolves around a vast and distant land, with a wide variety of people, biomes, and nations, all under threat from each other and outside forces for centuries. Once every six months or so dozens of portals open to a mysterious magic realm known as the Nexus, wherein a pantheon of titans invite small groups of adventurers from the different regions, so they can battle each other for the titan's favour. In return these mortal representatives win magical energies, artifacts, and other resources that the Warbands can use to improve their lives back home, beyond the borders of the Nexus. Player teams consist of a minimum of 10 participants and a maximum of about 25 people, and they are known as a 'Warband'. These warbands will each have some degree of unified aesthetic and theme and will hail from one of the various fictional nations from the game's established narrative lore. These Warbands will then pledge their allegiance to one of the four god-like titans present during each game event, allying with other Warbands to form one of four player factions. Each game a different four titans come into power, representing different existential concepts, so the Warbands choose to join whichever of the four factions best reflects their own ideals and overall narrative goals.

Player character creation in *Shattered World LARP* involves two components, a mechanical component, and a narrative component. The mechanical part involves the completion of one or more half-page character sheets, upon which the players note down their character name, species, Warband, and faction information. Along with listing the various magic abilities, armour, weapons, and any other equipment they will be using in the combat related aspects of the game. The narrative component is the development for the role-play and socialising aspects of the character creation process, which includes their character's origins, species, cultural background, personality, voice, and personal goals amongst other characterisation aspects. There are few limits in terms of the narrative creation component, so long as it fits within the established lore of the narrative world, and you can maintain the characterisation throughout the event. Players can take on the roles of humans, sea-elves, vampires, animal-folk, hags, mutants, orcs, or even dragons as a small sample of possibilities. Both components effect the development of the player's character costume design, as some costume and prop elements do connect to the mechanical aspects of the character creation. For example, the type of armour the player wears determining their hit point total, or to use certain types of magic spells a player must

have a specific prop, like a spell book, to act as a casting focus. Whereas other costume aspects aim to best represent the character's physical appearance and Warband allegiance, such as extra eyes, gills or loosely coordinated Warband uniforms.

The structure of this LARP also provides a massive amount of free space, time, and opportunities for players to explore their own personal story ideas within the game's established lore and rules. Granting its player base a large amount of creative freedom to experience the game world and their fellow players in whatever manner they choose. The events combat mechanics work on a 'hit point' (HP) system and overacting is encouraged. Combat can technically occur at any point during the game, but the bulk of the combat occurs during several scheduled 'capture the flag' style combat encounters. During these encounters, the players can win and power up tokens representing magical energy to use to gain out-of-game points or use in-game to progress their faction's narrative. In addition to sieges, in which one or more factions can attack the strong hold of another faction, to steal the various treasures that faction has gathered up to that point in the game. However, the players can challenge, or attack, any of the other players at any time, but only if they are both in-character, outside of the central village and not in the safety of their camp. If they do manage to 'kill' the other player, they can get the few resources and wealth tokens they had on them at the time, but the victor will likely be the target of quick if not instant retribution, delivered by the victim's companions or the victim themselves once they 'respawn'.

The main type of *Shattered World LARP* quests involve both narrative and game-play elements, are the Warband quests. These quests are written and developed for each Warband drawing on all the narrative lore and their actions from previous games. They are a series of tasks that the majority of the Warband must work on together and complete by the end of the game. The results of which establish how the next few months of stories for their home nation will progress, and what quests the Warband will be focusing on in the following game. The quests consist of a main narrative goal that is broken up into smaller steps that consist of a few paragraphs of new lore and instructions for some form of task. The Warband must then complete the tasks before they can progress to the next lot of new lore information and in-game task instructions. There are also quests for the whole faction to work on, and quests presented by each faction's titan and are opened to anyone PC in that faction can complete in exchange for extra rewards, as well as smaller side

quests set by the townsfolk NPCs for players to earn personal rewards. Additionally, there is also a system by which players can have bounties placed on their heads and players who can take on jobs from the assassin's guild NPC. This is where players aim to assassinate other players without getting caught, by sneaking a poison bottle prop onto the other player's person, to gain an additional personal in-game reward. Players can also gain in-game rewards for themselves, or their team, by collecting resources from the various resource nodes around the events large play area, as described earlier in this chapter. The 'winning' player faction is the one that was able to accumulate the largest number of points by the end of the weekend long event. These out-of-game points are collected in-game through winning battles, collecting magic resources, completing quests, and accumulating tokens of in-game wealth amongst several other activities. Aside from the points aspect, each team wins by completing their war band quests as efficiently as possible. This is achieved by making good decisions on what they want to do with the magic, resources and Titan favours they managed to gather in the process. These decisions will set up how the narrative for their home nation will proceed in the time between games.

Warhearts LARP (https://www.facebook.com/groups/198362130567061) is the second most popular game in WA with around 100 to 150 participants attending the roughly monthly, single day game events, it is also an example of a *boffer LARP* game, but with a few extra steps. The game is described as a high fantasy themed, player verse environment, combat focused game, with an additional empire building and diplomacy element. The aim of the game is for the player factions, called Empires*,* to try to conquer as much of the event's fictional game-world, with the progress of these conquests recorded on a massive hexagonal grid map. The event day consists multiple 30 to 60-minute 'capture the flag' or 'defend the point' style battles between the various player factions, while the evening contains the bulk of the role-play and diplomacy mechanics. Although, the battles are fought in character, the actual story lines of the game are determined by how well each team does during these battles. Along with how they decide to use the fictional rewards they receive if they are victorious in their battles, to progress the story between game days. For example, if one team wins a capture the point game, and are rewarded with accessing the fictional resources of that point, they can choose to fortify that position or to keep pushing forward to obtain more land. Each of these decisions will then determine who or what each empire will be fighting next and from what

position they will have to fight, as well as the other conditions or goals of those battles.

The structure of *Warhearts LARP* has three main components, the first part involves the leaders of each empire submitting to the organisers before game day a list of the political decisions their empires' leadership has made. These decisions could include the likes of what they plan to build, where they plan to mine or grow crops, where they will move their armies, where they will attack, and other similar actions. The second part occurs on the game's monthly event day and involves a series of battles between the player empires and whatever resistance their forces encounter as a result of their in-between game choices. This could include battling local monsters, stopping an internal rebellion, or coming into conflict with one of the other player empires as territorial boarders are challenged. The third part is a 'Model United Nations' style council meeting between all the empire leaders, which occurs at the end of the event day, where they argue and discuss the results of the battles, seeking surrender, trade-deals, declaring war or bargaining for peace. The result of this council influences the political background of the game world and influences the next round of decisions each empire can make, as well as influencing the outcome of those decisions the LARP Orgs will prepare for the next game event. This pattern continues until one empire grows too powerful, or some other force causes the game-world to destabilise and fall apart, after which there is one final game. In this closing game, any remaining plot elements for the empire's stories are resolved though climatic battles or through the role-play opportunities of the last council meeting, and the winners are announced. After a month or so break, during which the LARP orgs develop a new world, and decide any mechanical changes they want to make, the process then begins again with a new map and with new player Empires.

The narrative structure of Warhearts LARP is less detailed than that of *Shattered World LARP*, but even still each Empire gets its own satisfying and interesting narrative arc apart from just their conquests. They develop these along the guidelines the LARP Orgs set out, and the plots progress and evolve based on the decisions and performance of the Empires. For example, in previous events Empires have had to halt their plans of conquest due to the kidnapping of a head of state by a neighbouring Empire or deal with a civil war. Most players don't have a fixed character in *Warhearts LARP*, instead each empire has a few figurehead characters who will represent them at the end of event council meetings. Meanwhile, the rest of the team take on whatever combat role is requested of them in

each battle of the day, players will also often take on enemy NPC or monster roles when their team isn't involved in a battle. *Warhearts LARP* is different to *Shattered Worlds LARP* as it is a more combat focused and modular style of game, rather than a continuous immersive rope-play and combat experience (Koljonen, 2016). As a brief side note, although *Warhearts LARP* was rebranded in the latter half of 2021, relaunched as *Ascension LARP (Perth)* (https://www.facebook.com/groups/198362130567061), this event will continue to be referred to as *Warhearts LARP* for the remainder of this thesis.

Apart from these two primary LARP events there are also several smaller LARP events that are run less frequently within the WA community. These include the Parlour LARPs *Arecibo Circle LARP* and *Boot Hill LARP*, as well as the unique survival horror LARP *Avoss LARP*. *Arecibo Circle LARP* is described as "a multi-genre sci-fi LARP setting" focused on corporate espionage, political manoeuvring and mystery investigations, with the event's story set during a diplomatic conference on a space station orbiting a distant planet (https://www.facebook.com/arecibocircle/about/?ref=page_internal). The narrative can also involve some form of murder mystery element as well as including the setting up of social media accounts for the characters where additional clues can be hidden. On the other hand, *Boot Hill LARP* is a described as "an Old West-themed, town-based LARP that expects and rewards outstanding role play" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/BootHillLARP/about). This event's combat mechanics are described as being "role play-based" and often deadly so should be "only considered as a last resort when all the jawin' has run dry" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/BootHillLARP/about). The event is more focused on activities such as Poker matches, smooth talking, and dancing rather than on the classic western tropes of bar brawls or shoot outs at high noon. *Avoss LARP* is an irregularly run WA LARP event described as a post-apocalypse LARP "set in the Ukraine region following an unspecified apocalypse" (https://www.facebook.com/groups/148897822486781). The event is designed for the involvement of around 30-50 participants and is focused on being a 48-hour non-stop, full immersion role-play, exploring concepts of psychological horror and urban survival (http://avoss.info).

In addition to from the actual game events there are several other LARP related events that take place within the WA LARP community. These include the regular LARP training sessions, LARP West general meetings and various appearances at other events, such as medieval fairs and fan conventions for the purposes of self-promotion. LARP training

sessions in WA are run approximately once a week, they are free events run in several locations on an unofficial rotation between the LARP Org committees of the combat focused LARPs. These sessions are designed to teach players the rules of the games, how to fight safely, and how to fight well. The training nights also provide opportunity for players to socialise and get to know each other between games. The LARP West general meetings are open to any member of the organisation to attend, and members are also able to apply for positions on the company's various subcommittees (https://www.larpwest. net). These are where the various aspects and programs being run by the organisers committee are discussed openly with the members. Additionally, attendees can make suggestions and comments on the progress of those projects and other matters relating to the operation of the organisation. A fact which contributes to how the WA LARP community continues to evolve, providing a great variety of events to its members.

In summary, Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) games are a physical form of role-playing game, defined by their emergent co-constructed narratives, produced from the interactions between the LARPers, LARP Orgs and game environment. Played within real-world locations, where players physically embody their characters, using improvisational acting to progress the game's narrative (http://www.unahamiltonhelle.co.uk/index.php/projects/ the-virtual-restoration-project/).

2.2 – RPG Player Motivation Typology Theories

The previous section provided an overview of the scholarship and community understanding of LARP and its similarities to other RPG types. Against this background, this thesis will explore how theories that analyse the players of one type of RPG may have possible applications to another. The key approach which forms the primary theoretical framework for this thesis is the work of Bartle (1996). Before this project attempts to apply Bartle's work to LARP, this section will outline his theory. This will include a discussion of the various critiques, adaptions, expansions, and uses of this theory, as well as previous attempts to apply other player classification typologies to LARP.

2.2.1 – Bartle Player Typology
Bartle's (1996) original model was based on defining the players of online multiplayer

RPGs, specifically Multi-User Dungeon games (MUDs), into categories based on their primary motivating aspects. He developed this 'simple taxonomy' through an examination and summary of "a long, heated discussion" on an online board that catered to a group of around thirty MUD developers and players for debating the question "What do people get out of MUDs?" (Bartle, 1996, p. 1). In this development, Bartle (1996) was able to identify four recurring motivating reasons for why the players participated in MUDs (Bartle, 1996, p. 2-4):

- "Achievement within the game context"
- "Exploration of the game"
- "Socialising with others"
- "Imposition upon others"

Through the analysis of this intense online discussion and an evaluation of the behaviours related to these four motivations, Bartle was able to develop his four MUD player motivation types. Bartle used the observational and qualitative coding of these opinions, along with reviewing the player experiences of what he considered to be the 'average' player of MUDs to develop his player typology (Torner, 2018; Looy et al. 2012; Przyblyski et al, 2006).

Each of these player groups had a core player motivation which defined it and had a set of observable player behaviours that reflected this motivation and could be used to classify players into these types. These four identified player groups were developed into four MUD player motivation types which he defined as: *Achievers, Socialisers, Explorers,* and *Killers.* Bartle (1996) developed an effective method by which to remember the four player types, which he explained as follows:

> …consider suits in a conventional pack of cards: achievers are Diamonds (they're always seeking treasure); explorers are Spades (they dig around for information); socialisers are Hearts (they empathise with other players); killers are Clubs (they hit people with them). (Bartle, 1996, p. 4).

Those of the *Achiever* type were focused on completing the set goals of the game world, for example, a player who immediately tries to gather up all the treasure in the dungeon

after quickly defeating the enemies protecting it, could be an *Achiever* type player (Bartle. 1996). Those of the *Explorer* type gained enjoyment from discovering everything they could about a game world. For example, a player who spends their time ignoring the main quests to investigate every corner of the dungeon, could be an *Explorer* type player (Torner, 2018). Those of the *Socializer* type play games to communicate and interact with other players as their primary source of enjoyment. For example, players who would rather spend the whole game chatting with other players rather than focusing on the quest, could be a *Socialiser* type player (Przyblyski et al, 2006). Those of the *Killer* type take pleasure in disrupting the activities of other players, both within and outside the specified rules of the game world. For example, players who seek out and deliberately attack other players rather than the enemy monsters, just to make those defeated players start over, would be a *Killer* type player (Bartle, 1996; Torner, 2018; Przyblyski et al, 2006)

Bartle explains that the players can be seen to have a primary motivation and will migrate into the type that allows them to best fulfill their primary desire over the course of the game. Each of the four player types have strongly interconnected relationships with one another and will interact with players of the other types in a variety of ways. (Bartle, 1996; Przyblyski et al, 2006). This is because each of these player types are so strongly inter-connected with each other, a player of one type could demonstrate player behaviours of another type. Thus, their playstyle may change slightly depending on the situation and the type of game, as the players seek to continue satisfying their primary motivation for playing the MUD. For example, primarily of the *Achievers* type players may demonstrate some play behaviours of the *Explorer* type, but only because they need to search out new areas to complete their current quest. Alternatively, they may need to demonstrate player behaviours that reflects that of a *Socialiser*, but only because they need to learn how other players approached an area they are struggling with. Furthermore, they could demonstrate *Killer* type player behaviours when they need to defend themselves from other players, so they do not lose any of their in-game progress. In each of these cases, the *Achiever* player demonstrated off type behaviours with the aim of satisfying their primary motivation, which is to accomplish the objective of the quests and obtain vast in-game riches.

The table featured in *Figure 2.11* below outlines the basics of these inter-player type interactions, as well as the effects a change in the population of a particular player type will have on the other player types.

x	Achievers	Explorers	Socialisers	Killers
Achievers	*Achievers* regard fellow *Achievers* as challenges to overcome but will still work together when it benefits them. Altering the number of *Achievers* will have no effect on the number of *Achievers* wanting to take part in game.	*Achievers* often look down on *Explorers*. The number of *Explorers* doesn't influence the number of *Achievers*	*Achiever* type players just tolerate *Socialisers*. "Changing the number of *Socialisers* in a MUD has no effect on the number of *Achievers*" (Bartle, 1996, p.19).	*Achievers* understand that *Killers* are a part of most games, but still find them to be frustrating to deal with. "Increasing the number of *Killers* will reduce the number of *Achievers*" meanwhile "reducing the *Killer* population will increase the *Achiever* population" (Bartle, 1996, p.19).
Explorers	*Explorer* type players consider *Achievers* to be like themselves, just more restricted in their focus on goals. The number of *Explorer* type players is not influenced by the number of *Achievers* type players.	*Explorers* enjoy playing with fellow *Explorers* and will play with each other more frequently. However, it is difficult to encourage more *Explorers* to join a game belong those that already populate the game.	*Explorers* often consider *Socialisers* as irrelevant, apart from being a captive audience to which to present their discoveries. The number of *Explorers* is not affected directly by the number or behaviours of *Socialiser* players.	*Explorers* begrudgingly have an initial amount of respect the skill levels demonstrated by *Killers*. However, they quickly grow frustrated by them and their behaviour. The number of *Killers* doesn't normally affect the population of explorers. As being attacked rarely slows the *Explorers* overall progress.
Socialisers	*Socialisers* enjoy being around *Achiever* type players as they provide sources of topics of discussions to explore. A change in the population of *Achiever* influences the number of *Socialisers*. If too many players are goal focused, then there is too much for the *Socialisers* to discuss. Similarly, if the number of *Achievers* decrease to being too low, then there is no new content for further interactions	*Socialisers* and *Explorers* get along well enough. The population size of *Explorers* does not affect the population size of *Socialisers*.	*Socialisers* get along most effectively with other *Socialisers*. Whether that discussion is about in-game or out-of-game topics. "The more *Socialisers* there are in a game, the more new ones will be attracted to it" (Bartle, 1996, pp.22).	*Socialisers* and *Killers* to not get along well with each other. This is due to how different their play styles are overall. With many of the *Killers* activities being very disruptive to those of the *Socialisers*. An increase in number of *Killer* type players will decrease the number of *Socialiser* players. While a decrease in *Killers* will provide opportunity for the *Socialiser* population to increase.
Killers	*Achievers* are the preferred targets of *Killer* type players, as they present a real challenge for them. This is because *Achievers* are skilled fighters and care about the consequences of losing a fight. An increase in the number of *Achievers* in a game's population will also increase the number of *Killer* type players.	*Killers* tend to avoid *Explorer* type players in-game as they are not an enjoyable target for their antics. *Explorers* can often put up a considerable fight thanks to their discoveries, while also be unphased by outcome of the battle. A jump in *Explorer* type numbers will cause a minor decrease in the number of *Killers*.	*Socialisers* are another favourite target for *Killers*. While they are often not the best at combat, they do take being attack very personally. Thus, their reactions and quick defeats greatly amuse *Killer* type players. "Increasing the number of *Socialisers* will increase the number of *Killers*" (Bartle, 1996, pp.25).	"*Killers* try not to cross the paths of other *Killers*, except in pre-organised challenge matches." (Bartle, 1996, pp.25). This is due to most of these players are too evenly matched in terms of skill and what they could lose. "The only effect that *Killers* have on other *Killers* is in reducing the number of potential victims available" (Bartle, 1996, pp.25-26)

Figure 2.11 – Inter-type Interaction Summary Table (Bartle, 1996; Bowman, 2018)

Bartle stated that these player motivation types "could be mapped in a 2×2 quadrant with two axes: Players vs. World and Interacting vs. Acting" (Torner, 2018, pp. 204). The '*Interest Graph*' plots how the four player types interact with each other and how these four aspects of the player experience can affect where an individual fits in relation to the player types. This 'interest graph' below, shown in *Figure 2.12*, is a reproduction of Bartle's original design, remade for the sake of clarity and to better fit within this thesis document.
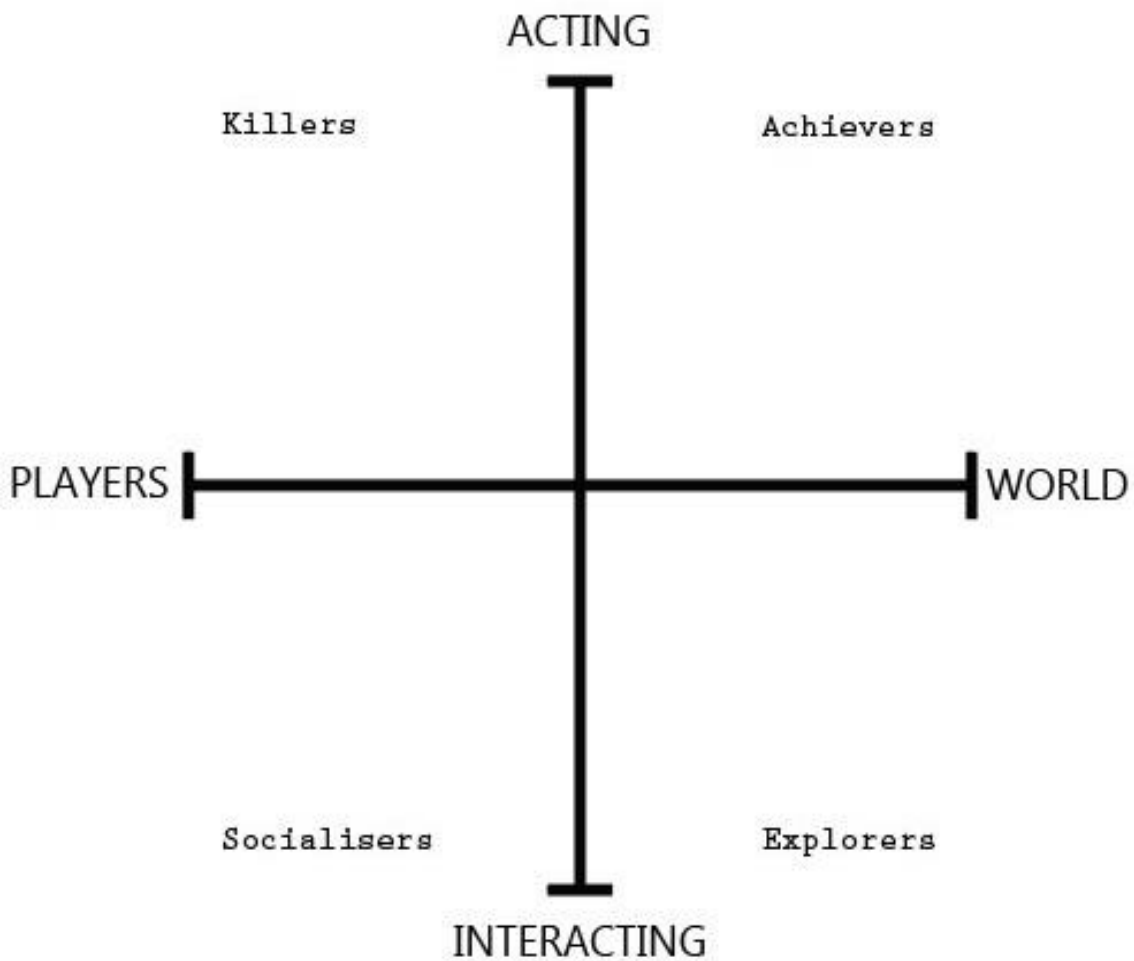
Figure 2.12 – Bartle MUD Player Typology Theory 'Interest Chart'

The far corners of each quadrant on the graph represents the perfect example of a player of each type. One end of the Y-axis represents the other players in the game, while the other end represents the game environment. On the X-axis, one end represents the player's desire to interact with the other players or the game world itself (Hsu et al, 2009).

Whereas the other end represents the players desire to act upon or impose their will on the game's world or fellow players. Meanwhile the outer corners of each quadrant represent the stereotypical ideal version of each of the player types (Bartle, 1996; Torner, 2018).

Bartle also explains that any changes made to a MUD, affecting any of these axis points, will translate to a change in the ratio of each player type within the game's player base. Thus, these interconnections between the four types can be represented on the points of the graph's axis, thus by influencing certain aspects of the game. Therefore, a game developer can influence the player base of their game to help create the viable balance point they desire for their game. However, they can also disrupt the existing balance in the game's player base the same way, if they do not consider their actions carefully (Bartle, 1996; Przyblyski et al, 2006). Therefore, rather than being a fixed dichotomy, Bartle's typology is more effective as a method of identifying an individual's primary motivations, based on their observable player behaviours. This can be used to then predict how that player will interact with the mechanics and other inhabitants of the game's virtual world. In each case they are taking part in the necessary aspects of the game that all players must interact with while playing the game. This includes those aspects that they do not enjoy or are motivated by, to satisfy their primary motivation (Bartle, 1996; Przyblyski et al, 2006). Although this flexibility is seen as an advantageous feature to some (Henry, 2015; Stewart, 2011), the lack of rigidity in Bartle's types is seen by others as a considerable flaw in the typologies overall design (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006; Torner, 2018).

The percentage of a MUD game's player population within each of the four types can vary greatly between individual MUD games and their player communities. Bartle states that while it can vary for different games, a balance between the four player types is achievable and is an important aspect of a 'stable' MUD. This balance, or 'equilibrium', is not defined by there being an equal number of each type, instead that the percentage of each type within the player population needs to stay constant throughout the game's lifetime. Game developers can manipulate a variety of elements (players, acting, environment) to alter the balance of their game's player base to both positive and negative results. It is still possible, however, for the ratio of player types to become unbalanced, which can have a negative effect on the player community, causing the players to no longer be able to enjoy themselves and thus they will abandon the game, causing the population to collapse

(Henry, 2015; Stewart, 2011; Przyblyski et al, 2006).

Bartle (2004) would attempt to update his original design, aiming to further improve and focus the taxonomy, this resulted in the doubling of player types from four to eight. This was achieved by adding a third axis to the original player interest graph, which described how the relationship between *Implicit* and *Explicit* game design aspects affected MUD players (Bartle, 2004). Bartle explains that in "computer language semantics, explicit means data, implicit means code" (Bartle, 2004, pp.222). In other words, in this context, *Explicit* refers to game aspects that the player can openly observe, whereas *Implicit* refers to aspects that are not so easily accessed. These resulting eight player types were titled as follows: "opportunists, planners, politicians, griefers, hackers, scientists, networkers, and friends" (Bartle, 2004, pp.227). These types were collected into a pair of sub-groups, four player-orientated types and four game world-orientated types (Bartle, 2004). These alternative MUD types are each briefly outlined in the table below (*Figure 2.13*), and are represented on a three-dimensional player interest graph, as shown in *Figure 2.14*.

*Player-O*rientated Types (Bartle, 2004, pp.223)		*World-O*rientated Types (Bartle, 2004, pp.226)	
Politicians.	"Players who act in an open fashion on other players."	*Planners.*	"Organized achievers, who decide what they want to do than go off and do it."
Networkers.	"Players who interact openly with other players—even complete strangers—on any and all subjects."	*Scientists.*	"Explorers who experiment in a thorough, methodical fashion."
Friends.	"Players who interact primarily with people they have known a long time and with whom they have deep bonds (often forged through adversity)."	*Hackers*	"Explorers whose understanding of the virtual world is such that they can proceed purely by intuition."
Griefers	"Bullies prepared to use force or other unpleasantness to get their way or be noticed."	*Opportunists*	"Achievers who go where their fancy takes them."

Figure 2.13 – Bartle's 8 Player Types – Summary Table (Bartle, 2004, pp. 223, 226)

Bartle states that although "the conflicts between some of the eight are meaningful" this alternative version of the typology is not an unquestionable upgrade of his initial design, explaining that the original can "work just as well and are better at encapsulation" (Bartle,

2004, pp. 227). Bartle additionally states that "if having more categories doesn't deliver more tools for designers, there's little point in designers using them" (Bartle, 2004, pp. 228). Thus, due to a more specialised focus on specific types of MUD games, this version of Bartle's typology was not used for this research project, as the earlier more generalised version could be more easily applied to other types of RPG.
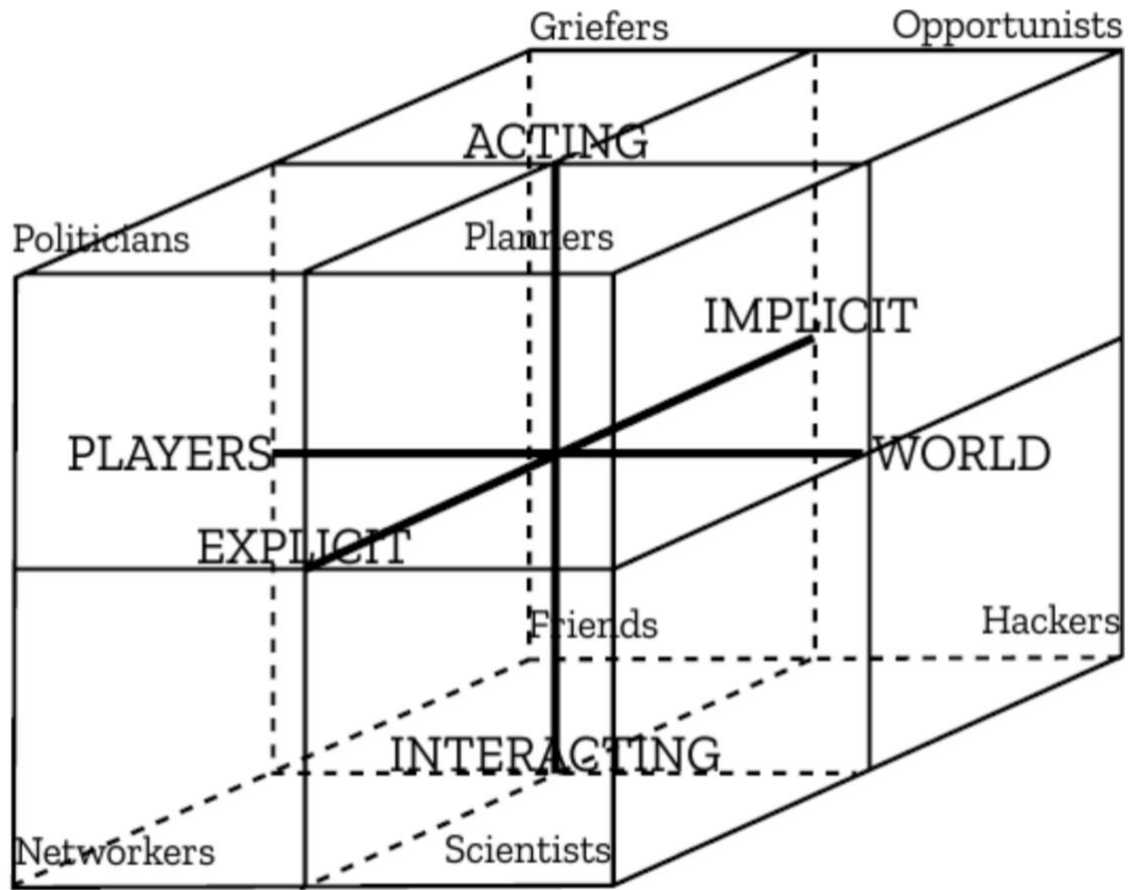
Figure 2.14 – 3D Player Interest Graph (Bartle, 2004, pp.227)

In summary, Bartle's MUD player motivation typology can be defined as follows:

> A colloquial term for a typology of four player preferences in MUDs: achievers wanting to win and progress, explorers wanting to discover the virtual world, socializers wanting to socialize, and killers wanting to impose themselves on others (Torner, 2018, pp. 204-205).

Bartle's (1996) design has continued to be a contested but also influential theory amongst scholarly research into RPG player motivations. However, the original four player type

version of the taxonomy remains the dominant version in use today, both in projects that are using the theory as it stands and those using it as the starting point for further scholarly research (Bartle, 2004; Yee, 2005; Stewart, 2011).

2.2.2 – Criticism and Limitations of Bartle's Typology

Although Bartle's work continues to be influential, it is not without its flaws, which includes the small amount of empirical data that was done in the development of and testing of his typology. Several scholars, Nick Yee chief amongst them, have worked to address these flaws and apply Bartle's work to other types of digital RPGs (Henry, 2015; Stewart, 2011; Przyblyski et al, 2006). In Yee's (2005, 2006) research, he states that there are three major flaws in Bartle's work, listing them as follows:

1. Bartle incorrectly arranged the defining aspects of his four types
2. The player types that Bartle described were not distinct enough, blurring into one another too easily
3. Bartle did not develop an empirical method by which players could be categorised into the described player types.

In other words, the approach was over simplified and lacks the adequate supportive evidence needed to be reliable. Thus, the approach requires further expansion to more effectively define those aspects of a game that motivated its players to continue playing. Yee's work expands upon and adjusts the initial model using an extensive investigation of MMORPG Players, developing his own player motivation typology system (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006; Looy et al. 2012).

In his research, Yee aimed to develop a player motivation typology for the players of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), that not only improves on the flaws in Bartle's works, but also results in the production of a usable empirical player classification tool (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006; Looy et al. 2012). Yee's method consisted of the production of a 40 question Likert scale survey, along with a series of demographic questions which define and categorise the large participant group. This empirical research survey tool was then distributed to the global player base of a specific MMORPG over the course of 3 years (Yee, 2006a). Yee's research involved the participation of 30,000 active

MMORPG players to investigate the "demographics, motivations and derived experiences" of those players (Yee. 2006c. pp.13). Yee's initial taxonomy was developed using "an exploratory factor analysis" (Yee. 2006a, p. 2;). Discovering five motivating factors – Relationships, Manipulation, Immersion, Escapism, and Achievement – as summarised in the table below in *Figure 2.15* (Yee, 2006a; Yee, 2006c).

Motivation Factor	Description
Relationship	"Measures the desire of users to interact with other users, and their willingness to form meaningful relationships that are supportive in nature" (Yee, 2006c, pp. 13)
Manipulation	"Measures how inclined a user is to objectify other users and manipulate them for his personal gains and satisfaction" (Yee, 2006c, pp. 13)
Immersion	"Measures the enjoyment of being 'someone else' in a fictional world, creating backstory, world lore and emergent narratives" (Yee, 2006c, pp. 14)
Escapism	"Measures how much a user is using the virtual world to temporarily avoid, forget about and escape from real-life stress and problems" (Yee, 2006c, pp. 14)
Achievement	"Measures the desire to become powerful in the context of the virtual environment through the achievement of goals and accumulation of items that confer power" (Yee, 2006c, pp. 14)

Figure 2.15 – Yee's 5 Player Motivation Factor Theory

This five-point player typology was further developed and improved as Yee's analysis work continued, evolving into a more refined, effective version of their MMORPG player classification system (Yee, 2006a; Yee, 2006c; Yee, 2006b). Additionally, this developed taxonomy identifies ten defining factors that impacts the motivations of MMORPG players, with these points then grouped into three distinct overarching player types. Yee defines these three MMORPG player motivation types as follows:

- *Immersion* (discovery, role-playing, customization, escapism)
- *Social Interaction* (socializing, relationship, teamwork)
- *Achievement* (advancement, mechanics, competition)

The table below, in *Figure 2.16*, outlines the arrangement of and defines the ten motivating factors that make up these three overarching player motivation types (Yee, 2005; Yee,

2006b; Looy et al, 2012).

Player Type	Motivation Factors	Description
Achievement	Advancement	"The desire to gain power, progress rapidly, and accumulate in-game symbols of wealth or status" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Mechanics	"Having an interest in analysing the underlying rules and system in order to optimise character performance" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Competition	"The Desire to challenge and compete with others" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
Social	Socialising	"Having an interest in helping and chatting with other players" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Relationships	"The desire to form long-term meaningful relationships with others" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Teamwork	"Deriving satisfaction from being part of a group effort" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
Immersion	Discovery	"Finding and knowing things that most other players don't know about" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Role-playing	"Creating a persona with a background story and interacting with other players to create an improvised story" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Customisation	"Having an interest in customizing the appearance of their character" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 773)
	Escapism	"Using the online environment to avoid thinking about real life problems" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 774)

Figure 2.16 – Yee's 3 Player Type Typology Theory

This version of Yee's taxonomy is more specialised and examines the players of 'Massively Multi-Player Online RPGs' (MMORPGs), the successor to MUDs, and some other older types of digital RPGs. The focus of Yee's work was on the development of an empirical data-based typology that would use an accurate and reliable survey tool to define the motivations of the player base. As opposed to relying upon qualitative observation methods for defining the player types based on observable player behaviour. By using the descriptions of the motivating factors, it is possible to define examples of a

stereotypical player of the *Achievement, Social* and *Immersion* player types as defined by Yee (Yee. 2006b; Looy et al. 2012; Przybylski, 2006).

The *Achievement* focused player is a player who wants to challenge themselves and get better at the game, improving their gaming skills, and learning the complexities of the game's rules. They also aim to gather the resources necessary to continually power up and strengthen their player character so it can gather wealth and resources even more effectively. For instance, a MMORPG player who goes to all available quest giving NPCs and completes these quests no matter how simple or difficult, just to hear that quest completion bell. In addition to receiving whatever reward was offered for the quest even if it is not useful for their character would be an example of the *Achievement* player type (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006b; Looy et al, 2012).

The *Social* focused player is a player who is friendly, and who wants to make positive emotional connections with other players along with enjoying helping their friends succeed in whatever way they can. For instance, a MMORPG player who will ignore the solo quests if possible and only join in on the large group quests, or more often remain in the main hub areas of the game to chat with other players. This is the sort of player who would stay online all night to chat with the friend they met through the game without playing any of the game itself would be an example of the *Social* player type (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006b; Looy et al, 2012).

The *Immersion* focused player is a player who seeks to know everything about the world of the game to better experience into and become a part of it while they are playing. These players put great effort into expanding on their characters history, controlling the aesthetic and mechanical aspects to be exactly how they envisioned them. For instance, a MMORPG player who would spend hours trying various combinations of actions in certain locations to trigger a rumoured hidden bonus animation would be an example of this type. Those players who will play a part of the game that they do not even enjoy just to unlock the last piece of an armour set that perfectly suits their character, would also be an example of the *Immersion* player type (Yee, 2005; Yee, 2006b; Looy et al, 2012).

Yee states that "having a validated motivations taxonomy and a robust measure of those motivations would provide a crucial theoretical and methodological bridge between players

and in-game behaviours" (Yee et al, 2012, pp. 2803). Thus, Yee has continued to further develop their MMORPG player motivation taxonomy in the years since this initial publication. In their 2012 research they aimed to improve on the few weaknesses of their earlier typology, these weaknesses being:

- The large number of questions used in the empirical survey tool
- The lack of participant sampling from outside Western English-speaking cultures
- That the results of the survey tool were not compared to actual in-game behaviours of the participants (Yee et al, 2012).

This work resulted in a more refined and specialised MMORPG focused empirical survey tool, consisting of "12 items (4 for each factor)" instead of the initially developed 41-item tool (Yee et al, 2012, pp. 2804). The tool was also said to now be more easily adapted for use with participants from non-English speaking cultures as well as having "a good factor structure and good internal reliability" (Yee et al, 2012, pp. 2804). Comparative testing of this updated survey tool determined "that the self-report data has a significant relationship with the set of in-game behavioural metrics" (Yee et al, 2012, pp. 2806).

Although this new version of Yee's empirical tool and MMORPG motivation typology did improve on many aspects of the initial design, it still had some limiting flaws. The two main weaknesses being, that the tool had only been proven useful for examining online game communities, and that recorded correlations between player behaviour and the immersion motivation aspect were limited. Furthermore, it was stated that further studies in non-western cultures would be needed to ensure it was effective in those regions (Yee et al, 2012). Hence, Yee has continued to refine and specialise their MMORPG player motivation empirical survey tool, publishing updated research reports and industry-ready versions of the survey tool in 2016 and 2021. However, these most recent versions of the tool are too specialised to the study of online RPGs, and so would have been more difficult to apply, test and, when necessary, modify to the study of LARPers. Therefore, the larger initial empirical survey was used in this research project, as the greater number of items would provide greater opportunities for useful data collection.

Yee's work is based on a wealth of empirical evidence, collected through the development, and use of a specialised research tool for gathering large amounts of data on the

behaviours of MMORPG players (Yee, 2006b). The methods utilised by Yee (2006b) in their adaption of Bartle's typology will be an important influence in the methodology employed in the execution of this research project. However, as it is already specialised for the examination of MMORPGs, it is important to note that Bartle's broader theory remains a more suitable starting point for this project. Similarly, there are other player classification taxonomies present in the scholarly study of RPGs that warrant discussion but have only a minor relevance on this research project (Torner, 2018; Hsu et al, 2009). These theories, and why they were not more central to the core focus of this thesis, will be explored further in the following subsections.

2.2.3 – Additional RPG Player Typology Approaches

Bartle's types are reasonably well known in scholarly video game research, however it is not always applicable for every research situation. Hence other academics have sought to improve and customise his concepts into new theories of their own. This demonstrates how Bartle's work is a versatile initial starting point for the further study of player behaviours and motivations (Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Torner, 2018; looy et al, 2012). This section briefly explores some of these other RPG player motivation typology theories encountered in this study's literature research.

Developed by the scholar John H. Kim (1998), from the summary of an extensive online scholarly discussion, the '*Threefold Model'* is an influential classification theory of RPG player motivations (Kim, 1998; Kim, 2003a, b; Stewart, 2011). The model is centred around three main player motivation types: *Dramatist, Simulationist* and *Gamist*, these player types are defined as follows:

- *Dramatist* – The type that desires to take part in a fulfilling narrative experience through the game, both as their Player Character (PC) and as the Player.
- *Simulationist* – The type that desires to complete in-game encounters based only on the resources and knowledge available to the Player Character (PC) within the game environment.
- *Gamist* – The type that desires to construct challenges designed to be fair for the player rather than for the Player Character (PC).

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The strength of the model is that it can recognise the equal validity of each of the motivation factors it has identified (Kim, 1998; Kim, 2003a, b). An example of a *Dramatist* would be an RPG player who is focused on the primary story missions of the game. A player who only explores the game environment for the content directly relevant to the story's main events, rather than just for the sake of exploring (Kim, 2003b). An example of a *Simulationist* would be an RPG player who wants the in-game interactions to be as realistically accurate as possible to the game world's interpretation of reality (Kim, 2003b). Including using the properties of the game's mechanics to determine the solution to puzzles, or previously gathered in-game lore information to successfully navigate a social encounter. An example of a *Gamist* would be a TTRPG player who looks forward to utilising all the special abilities that allow them to 're-roll their dice' in hopes of improving the outcome of an encounter. Even though there is no way to demonstrate the use of these mechanics within the game's narrative flow or the action of the in-game encounter (Kim, 2003b).

Another alternative player motivation taxonomy system to be briefly considered in this research is the *GNS* method, also referred to as the *GNS+* Method, or *GNS Perspectives* (Edwards, 2001; Stewarts, 2011; Torner, 2018). Developed by the scholar Edwards, from their experience with and research into player behaviour, the GNS method consists of three primary player classification types – *Gamism, Simulationism* and *Narrativism* (Edwards, 2001; Torner, 2018). These player types, or modes, are focused mainly on the behaviours of the players, rather than their characters. The three GNS player types are outlined as follows:

- *Gamism* – This mode of play is defined by the competitiveness between the game's players. Including the players understandings of strategies and tactics.
- *Simulationism* – This mode of participation prioritises exploration of the game's environment over that of the actual game play itself. Often including a focus on investigating the game's internal consistency and logic.
- *Narrativism* – This mode is defined by the player's narrative recognition and creativity. Including their knowledge of narrative themes, role-play skills and collaborative narrative development skills.

These player modes are similar in design to those player types set out by Kim (1998), but

they are still separate from those concepts (Edwards, 2001; Bienia, 2013; Stewarts, 2011). An example of a *Gamism* player would be an RPG player focused on fighting monsters, enemy NPCs, or even other players to improve their skills. In addition to working to unlock additional gear and features of their PC, to make themselves more powerful as efficiently as possible (Edwards, 2001; Torner, 2018). An example of a *Simulationism* player would be an RPG player who spends their in-game time experimenting with the game environment, aiming to determine if it will remain internally consistent (Edwards, 2001; Torner, 2018). An example of a *Narrativism* player would be an RPG player who often sees themselves in the role of the game's protagonist, or primary hero character, as well as the narrative's co-author. These players are focused on ensuring that their role-play actions within the game world are pushing forward the game's narrative, forward towards the best outcome for their character's goals (Edwards, 2001; Torner, 2018).

In both Kim and Edward's described theories, there is a large degree of overlap between the player types they described, with the definitions of these player types being considerably broad and flexible. This broadness was a deliberate design choice to make the models as understandable, useful, adaptable, and as easily applicable as possible. The developers of these models made it very clear that these taxonomies were not designed to be the 'be all and end all' of models, but rather a start point for future research (Edwards, 2001; Kim, 1998; Kim, 2003a,b). Although, these models were widely praised by the scholarly community, they were also identified as being far from perfect models, with a multitude of areas for improvement being noted. These typologies nonetheless showed great potential to be expanded or modified in future research to make more effective or more specialised taxonomies for specific RPG varieties (Stewart, 2011; Torner, 2018; Bienia, 2013).

Another personality categorisation theory to be outlined in this research is the Keirsey Temperament template theory. Although not strictly an RPG player motivation taxonomy, this theory was included in the development of the '*Unified Model'* theory. A video game player motivation typology theory produced by Stewart (2011), will be outlined in the chapter's next subsection, making it necessary to briefly outline this personality taxonomy. The Keirsey Temperament templates are four psychology-based personality models, developed in the 1970s by David Keirsey. These templates were designed as a refinement of the Myers-Briggs (1962) personality types (Keirsey, 1998; Stewarts 2011). These four

templates were defined as – Artisan, Guardian, Rational and Idealist – the table below, *Figure 2.17*, outlines these templates along with identifying their defining behavioural aspects (Stewart, 2011; Keirsey, 1998).

Template	*Artisan*	*Guardian*	*Rational*	*Idealist*
Primary Defining Behaviours	Sensing Perceiving External change	Sensing Judging External structure	Intuition Thinking Internal structure	Intuition Feeling Internal change
Additional Defining Behaviours	Realistic Tactical Manipulative Pragmatic Impulsive Action-focused Sensation-seeking	Practical Logistical Hierarchical Organized Detail-oriented Possessive Process-focused Security-seeking	Innovative Strategic Logical Scientific Technological Future-oriented Result-focused Knowledge-seeking	Imaginative Diplomatic Emotional Relationship-oriented Dramatic Person-focused Identity-seeking

*Figure 2.17 – '*Keirsey Temperament Templates' Summary Table (Keirsey, 1998)

Therefore, these four 'personality temperament templates' can be defined by these behavioural aspects, and as such are outlined as follows (Stewart, 2011; Keirsey, 1998):

- The *Artisan* template has a personal aim to enact change outside themselves, thus they seek out the power necessary to have the freedom to enact their will on those around them.
- The *Guardian* template craves the structure provided by forces external to themselves, thus they seek out the security that comes from adhering to rules and laws.
- The *Rational* template possesses a remarkable sense of internalised discipline thus they gain a considerable sense of self-worth from expanding their understanding of how various systems operate.
- The *Idealist* template is focused on continual internalised self-improvement thus they attempt to guide cooperation between themselves and others toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

Through the establishment of the outline of this psychological personality taxonomy

theory, with its similarities to other RPG player motivation typologies becomes easily recognisable. This includes how such a theory fits within a larger taxonomy model along with these other theories such as Bartle's (1996) and Edwards (2001) player typology theories (Stewart, 2011; Keirsey, 1998).

2.2.4 – "*Unified Model*" Personality Taxonomy Theory

The game design scholar Bart Stewart proposed in a 2011 web article that all the various digital game player type classification systems were in fact all parts of a greater player personality model. Stewart's aim was to create a model that combined the aspects of several player type and personality type taxonomy theories into a single generalised theory. This typology was developed by combining multiple taxonomy theories from several other disciplines, including some psychology theories, to make a useable unified theory of player motivation taxonomy (Stewart, 2011). Producing a typology theory with strong similarities to Bartle's work, which could be used by scholars and developers, to not only evaluate RPG players but for the players of all varieties of digital games. Titled the '*Unified Model'* theory, he attempted to define a theory that could be easily used by game producers or academic scholars, for the analysis of the player population of any type of digital game (Stewart, 2011).

Stewart (2011) built up this unified theory over several stages, layering each of the previously developed typology models and psychological templates on top of each other. This research matched the similar personality and player types together to eventually produce four lists of defining elements, organised under four combined player personality types. These four unified types did not initially directly correlate to specific digital game genres, gameplay mechanics or features (Stewart, 2011). However, they were later cross-referenced with an expansive list of these game features, in such a way that it would allow developers to effectively understand and articulate what players desire. This also included determining why the players desired those things and how the developers would be able to cater to those desires with the right combination of game features (Stewart, 2011).

During this combination process, Stewart needed to identify which aspects of game design were not addressed by the proposed models of Kim (1998) and Edwards (2001), as their player typology designs only included three player types or modes, rather than having four

types like the other typologies being included, such as Bartle's taxonomy. These new fourth aspects of game design would need to fit within the existing *Threefold* and *GNS+* methods, while also being compatible with the other player types being used in this compilation (Stewart, 2011; Kim, 1998; Edwards, 2001). The fourth game design element identified by Stewart (2011) was titled as the *Experientialist* player mode and was defined by a player's focus on a game's aspects of action-orientated gameplay. This led to the new fourth player type to be matched effectively with Bartle's (1996) *Killer* type and Keirsey's (1998) *Artisan* type (Stewart, 2011; Torner, 2018; Bowman, 2018).

The table in *Figure 2.18,* a reproduction of Stewart's original table, outlines this resulting 'Unified Model' Stewart developed (Stewart, 2011). This table demonstrates the *unified model* theory before being cross referenced with the list of various video game genres and other aspects of digital game production. This is because within that version of the 'Unified Model' table there is a large amount of information which, while fascinating, is outside the focus of this research and thus not relevant to this literature review.

Play Style/ Player Type	Artisan Killer Experientialist	Guardian Achiever Gamist	Rational Explorer Simulationist	Idealist Socialiser Narrativist
Primary Motivation	• Power • Manipulative sensation	• Security • Competitive accumulation	• Knowledge • Logical rule-discovery	• Identity • Emotional relationships
Problem solving	• Performance	• Persistence	• Perception	• Persuasion
Overall goal	• Do	• Have	• Know	• Become
Associated Gameplay Features	• action, • vertigo, • tool-use, • vehicle use, • horror, • gambling, • speed-runs, • exploits	• competition • collections • manufacturing • high scores • clear objectives • guild membership • min-maxing	• puzzles • creative building • world-lore • systems analysis • theorizing • surprise	• chatting • roleplaying • storytelling • cooperation • decorating • pets • social events

Figure 2.18 – Stewart's 'Unified Model' Table (Stewart, 2011)

This theory demonstrates, amongst other things, that despite the age and lack of empirical

evidence backing it, Bartle's work is still a valid aspect of player motivation research (Torner, 2018; Bowman, 2018). Therefore, it is an acceptable starting point for the development of a new specialised system of player motivation taxonomy. In other words, "as a starting point for empirical work on player motivation, both Bartle and Yee have provided a descriptive foundation that highlights varied goals players may have in gaming contexts" (Przyblyski et al, 2006, pp 348). However, this '*Unified Model'* is a highly specialised typology model, which makes it less suitable as a starting point for the work to be attempted in this project (Przyblyski et al, 2006). Thus, it will be more useful in guiding the development process and methods to be utilised in the production of the LARP specific typology theory.

2.2.5 – Previous Attempts to Apply RPG taxonomy to LARPers

In this sub-section the previous attempts to develop a LARP Player Motivation Taxonomy will be discussed, including an examination of how that work impacted the development of this study (McDiarmid, 2011; Bienia, 2013; Bowman 2018). As discussed above, most RPGs share similar core features, allowing theories developed for the investigation of one variety of RPG to be compatible, to a certain extent, with other types (Tychsen et el, 2006). Therefore, the similarities between LARP and MMORPGs make it feasible to hypothesise that the theories used for the investigation of MMORPGs could be applied to or adapted for LARP research (Henry. 2015; Söderberg et al. 2004; Bowman and Vanek, 2013).

One attempt to investigate the motivations of LARPers was carried out by the Researcher Bøckman (2002). In their work they attempted to modify the '*Threefold Model'* developed by Kim (2003) for the specific purpose of categorising LARP Players (Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al, 2003). Bøckman was inspired by the advantages possessed by the '*Threefold Model'*, those benefits being that it is "short, concise, uses lay-man's terms and restricts itself in scope" (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 12). He quickly realised that modifications would be necessary for the model to be most effectively adapted to the classification of LARPers (Bøckman, 2002). Stating that "The emphasis on game-mechanics in the original RPG version is not really applicable to (Scandinavian) LARP, where most actions are done in person, not through simulation" (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 12).

Thus, in Bøckman's retitled *Three Way Model*, this aspect of the initial design, the

Simulationism type, was replaced with a new motivation type dubbed the *Immersionist* player type (Kim, 2003; Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al, 2003). Bøckman explains that the *Three Way Model* is designed to identify the importance of the equal validity of the various motivations of LARP participants. Stating that the aim of this model is to define "how the game is played, particularly the style of gaming, but also how settings are constructed, how game style influence players style, level of authenticity and so forth" (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 12). In addition to various other aspects of LARP participation, the *Three Way Model*, much like its predecessor is divided into a three part taxonomy, with its player types designated as *Dramatist, Immersionist* and *Gamist* (Kim, 2003; Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al. 2003).

The table below, *Figure 2.19,* summarises the Three Way Model as it is described by Bøckman. Much like the previously discussed *Threefold Model,* this player motivation typology has a large degree of overlap between the three player types. The terms used to describe the types were not designed to be definitive 'catch all' terms, they are instead purposefully designed to be broad and flexible (Bøckman, 2002). This design choice enabled the taxonomy to have a large range of possible applications to which it can be applied (Kim, 2003a, b; Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al, 2003).

Additionally, Bøckman states that their model "is not intended as a be-all and end-all of LARPing, nor is it necessarily complete" (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 16). Furthermore, explaining that future iterations could include additional player types, designed to cover other aspects of player motivation. Including out-of-game factors, social interactions, or interest in the narrative or game mechanics aspects of LARP (Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al, 2003).

Finally, Bøckman states that although his design has its benefits, it may not be always effective for the analysis of all the variations and varieties of LARP. The flexibility of the model is such that it could be adapted to specifically suit the study of specific LARP event player populations or LARPer communities, rather than always being applicable to all LARPs (Kim, 2003; Bøckman, 2002; Gade et al, 2003). It is for these reasons that this player motivation model will not be the primary focus of this research project's methods. It will instead be an additional concept to further guide the shaping of the modifications to Bartle's taxonomy, and the *LARPer Motivation Typology* developed through this research.

Motivation Type	Type Description
Dramatist	Is the style which values how well the in-game action creates a satisfying storyline. Different kinds of stories may be viewed as satisfying, depending on individual tastes, varying from fanciful pulp action to believable character drama. It is the result of the story that is important (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 13)
Immersionist	Is the style which values living the roles life, feeling what the role would feel. Immersionists insist on resolving in-game events based solely on game- world considerations. Thus, a fully immersionist player will not fudge rules to save its role's neck or the plot, or even change details of background story irrelevant in the setting to suite the play. An immersionist organiser will try to make the plots and setting such that they are believable to the players (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 13)
Gamist	Is the style which values solving a plot or setting one up if you are an organiser. The challenges may be tactical combat, intellectual mysteries, politics, or anything else. The players will try to solve the problems they are presented with, and in turn the organisers will make these challenges fair and solvable to the players (Bøckman, 2002, pp. 13)

Figure 2.19 – The Three Way Model LARPer Motivation types

Another attempt to develop a list of LARP Player motivations was initially developed through the work of the scholar McDiarmid (2011). This was then expanded on by the fellow researcher Bienia (2013) as an entry to the European WyrdCon RPG research conferences, overseen by Bowman and Vanek. Bienia's study was focused on providing the Germen LARPer community with the opportunity to express their opinions on the factors that motivate their participation in LARP. Bienia (2013) explains that "McDiarmid's categorization does not follow an academic discipline, neither psychology, as the study of the individual, nor sociology, as the study of groups" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 100). Further stating that there was no assessment or ranking of the identified motivations of McDiarmid's design, being instead focused on the examination of the narrative structures of LARPs. These scholars used these elements to develop the motivation categories, as well as examining how players initially reacted to the in-game stimuli, and how they then chose to respond to it (Bowman and Vanek, 2013; Bienia, 2013; McDiarmid, 2011).

Bienia's research design presented the sixteen aspects of LARP participant motivations identified by McDiarmid (2011) to the research participants pooled from the German LARP

community. This was accomplished via a survey questionnaire, in which participants voted on which of the sixteen motivating aspects were their biggest personal motivator for taking part in LARP, along with the analysis of an accompanying online discussion of these categories. The Participants were also able to add to the list if they felt that the aspect of LARP that most motivated them wasn't already provided. The results of the survey votes and participant additions was then collated into a summary table, which was then analysed to determine the primary motivations of LARPers in the context of the German community (Bienia, 2013; McDiarmid, 2011). These sixteen German LARP Player motivations, as identified initially by McDiarmid (2011) and expanded on by Bienia (2013) in their continuation of that initial work, is outlined in the table below, *Figure 2.20*. This table was developed as a summary of these points and is arranged in alphabetical order rather than in respondent popularity to the motivations, as Bienia's table was. The research project took design inspiration from the work of Edwards (2001) and Kim (1998), in addition to that of McDiarmid (2011) (Bowman and Vanek, 2013; Bienia, 2013).

This research design placed considerable "emphasis on the categories as they inclined the voters to choose from given categories rather than putting effort into thinking of other categories" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 103). Through the analysis of the admittedly limited collected data, Bienia (2013) was able to determine that there were patterns in the responses. These resulting patterns were similar in design to those player types previously described in the *GNS Model*, as defined by Edwards (2001). It became clear that some of the participating LARPers were driven by "the experience of embodiment of a character while being together with their fellows in a fictional world" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 104). Meanwhile, others were more interested in the social interaction opportunities of LARP events and the surrounding community rather than aspects of competition (Bienia, 2013; Edwards, 2001; McDiarmid, 2011). Additionally, Bienia (2013) strongly suggested it would be more effective to consider LARP as its own physical activity rather than as an alternate form of TTRPG. Stating that "LARP is a flexible system that can be combined with new possibilities beyond popular genres or the desire to immerse in fantastic settings" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 104). Explaining that the focus on categorising LARP motivations using only those aspects defined for other forms of RPG would be limiting to the growing variety of LARPs as they continue to evolve (Bienia, 2013). The work of this thesis will benefit greatly from the contents of this proposed typology, as it will assist in the definition of themes of LARPer motivation drawn from the primary research material. However, as

Bienia's work is focused specifically on German LARP groups, it will have only a guiding role in the work of this thesis and will not be its primary focus.

Motivation Category	Descriptions from McDiarmid (2011) and Bienia (2013)
Audience	"Experience a great story" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Catharsis	"Experience emotions through your character" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Competition	"Compete with others and win fights, plot solving and role-playing" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Comprehension	"Solve problems and riddles" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Crafting	"Create real things like costumes or props" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Education	"Learn something new through LARP (history, abilities) or by role-playing it" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Embodiment	"Play your character: think and play from your character" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Exercise	"Enjoy the physical exercise of fighting, walking around a fictional location, making camp in nature" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Exhibition	"Show your costumes, props, abilities (fighting, role-playing, playing an instrument)" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Exploration	"Experiencing a fictional setting and explore the game world" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Fellowship	"Spend the time with your friends and meet new people" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Flow	"Immersive, dive into the atmosphere/ambiance" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Leadership	"Be important for the LARP event or the community" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Protagonist	"Be important for the plot and have influence on the game world" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Spectacle	"Experience the spectacle (costumes, props, locations, non-player characters)" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)
Versatility	"Collect important things (spells, lore, benefits)" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102)

Figure 2.20 – German LARP Player Motivations

Type of Immersion	Description
Immersion into activity	For larpers, Rob McDiarmid's *exercise*, *flow*, and *crafting* categories are understandable as immersion into activity. Exercise refers to enjoyment of physical activity, flow is "losing oneself in the moment", and crafting refers to "creating non-ephemeral things". (Bowman, 2018, pp.383)
Immersion into game	For larpers, McDiarmid's *comprehension*, *competition*, and *versatility* categories can be seen as immersion into game as they focus upon ludic goals. Comprehension refers to figuring out puzzles and solving problems, competition refers to winning or competing with others, and versatility involves collecting important items for use in game situations. (Bowman, 2018, pp.384)
Immersion into environment	In larp, McDiarmid's (2011) *exploration*, *exhibition*, and *spectacle* categories fall under immersion into environment. Exploration refers to experiencing the fictional setting; Exhibition indicates showing off costumes, props, and abilities, and spectacle refers to experiencing these and other aspects of the game world, including sets and non-player characters (NPCs). (Bowman, 2018, pp.385)
Immersion into narrative	In larp, McDiarmid's (2011) *audience* and *protagonist* categories involve immersion into narrative. Audience refers to "experiencing a satisfying narrative", while protagonist involves becoming important to the story or personally impacting the game world. (Bowman, 2018, pp.386)
Immersion into character	In larp, McDiarmid's (2011) categories of *catharsis*, *embodiment*, and *education* describe *immersion into character*. Catharsis refers to experiencing emotions through the character, embodiment involves decision-making based upon the character, and education refers to acquiring new knowledge or understanding through play. (Bowman, 2018, pp.387)
Immersion into community	In larp, McDiarmid's (2011) categories of *fellowship* and *leadership* fall under immersion in community, with Bienia (2012) finding fellowship to be the most important motivation in his sample group. Fellowship refers to enjoying time with members of the community, whereas leadership involves feeling important to the player group. (Bowman, 2018, pp.389)

Figure 2.21 – Bowman (2018) RPG Immersion type in relation to LARP Summary Table.

As an extension of the work of McDiarmid (2011) and Bienia (2013), the work of Bowman (2018) organised the elements defined by McDiarmid in terms of the six types of immersion experienced by RPG players. Despite not strictly considered as an attempt at developing a LARPer classification taxonomy, the work of Bowman's investigation of the

immersion types present in RPGs, could be used as such. Thus, it is worth taking the time to briefly outline their discoveries here, with the table above in *Figure 2.21.* This table list the six RPG immersion types and how they relate to the defining features of German LARP as described previously in *Figure 2.20*. Although each of these could be potentially developed further into a RPG player motivation type, they are not currently in the form of a player classifying taxonomy. Therefore, they will not be used as the template for the development of the *LARPer Motivation Typology* being produced in this thesis. However, these concepts will still have an influence on the interpretation of concepts of immersion and embodiment as identified in the analysis of the study's primary research results data.

In a blog post by David Henry (2015), he attempts to apply Bartle's theory to LARP from the perspective of a game developer or organiser rather than an academic. Henry identified several points in their research that were also identified in this project's initial field research. For instance, that Bartle's *Killer* player type is often observed to be detrimental to the LARP player experience. Thus, it is up to organisers to maintain effective controls and counter measures to limit that type of player behaviour. Henry (2015) identified that there are some major difficulties that arise when trying to apply the standard versions of Bartle's theory to LARPs. This is because of the inherent differences between the way the players interface with the world of MUDs and those of LARP games.

As a reminder, MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) are RPGs that take place in virtual environments on the internet and are accessed remotely by participants from computers around the world. Players can manipulate their player character (PCs) avatars through the computer interface and the guiding authorities manipulate the digital environment in a similar way (Bartle, 1996). Whereas on the other hand, LARPs take place in the real world, in real time, with players completely embodying their PCs in their costume, movements, and speech. Where the guiding authorities use set dressing, improvised acting skills, and out-of-character instruction (Vartiainen, 2015; Tychen et al, 2006).

As a result of this, some player behaviours that are par for the course in MUDs, can sometimes be offensive, toxic, inappropriate, or simply not possible in the physical worlds of LARP (Vartiainen. 2015; Yee. 2006; Henry. 2015). The solution for overcoming these difficulties would be to develop a new modified theory of player behaviour and motivation that will be able to address these shortcomings.

These previous projects were effective attempts to tackle the taxonomy theories of LARPer motivational behaviour types, however they were all lacking in some aspect of their design. Whether that be a lack of supporting empirical data, a suboptimal experimental method, or the need to further refine the identified player types. Despite this, these pre-existing studies still provide a more than adequate starting point for the work of this research project (Bowman, 2018; Torner, 2018). The work of Henry (2015), Edwards (2001), Bienia (2013) and McDiarmid (2011) guides the methods and research aims of the experimental design protocol of this research project. Thus, through an understanding and consideration of these previous attempts to identify the motivations of LARPers it will be possible to develop an effective method by which to categories WA LARP participants.

Bartle's (1996) theory was like wise chosen as the core aspect of this research project because of its own imperfections, as detail previously in this chapter (Bartle, 2004; Henry, 2015; Yee, 2006). It is in these flaws that the opportunities of this taxonomy reside, as these aspects provide the guidance for the further development of specialised customisations and improvements to the specifics of WA LARP events and surrounding community (Pryzbyski et al, 2006; Torner, 2018; Stewart, 2017).

2.3 – Panoramic and Cinematic Virtual-Reality Filmmaking

The main aims of this research project are to investigate and develop the use of player motivation taxonomies in relation to LARP. Due to LARP's nature as a collaborative emergent narrative, that must be experienced to be fully understood, it is difficult to record effectively and completely through conventional data recording methods. Adjacent to the main goals of this thesis, the project also aimed to explore the effectiveness of panoramic video production in the collection and presentation of audio-visual fieldwork research results data (Cox, 2019; Spierling and Szilas, 2008; Ryan, 2008). The fifth research objective of this thesis is to evaluate the viability of using panoramic video as a method of scholarly research, in the collection and review of audio-visual fieldwork data. In addition to assessing the medium's effectiveness in conveying meaning to an audience through the screening of the collected audio-visual data. It examines this useability in comparison to traditional 2D, fixed-frame, flat-screen video recording methods through the investigation of LARP, a cultural phenomenon that is notoriously difficult to document.

Panoramic video is a form of new media video production that uses specialised technology to record a scene from multiple angles around the camera simultaneously. This enables the creation of a near "equirectangular (unwrapped sphere)" video file that allows the viewer to control which aspect of the scene they observe as they view the footage (Jaunt, 2017, p. 8).

The purpose of this investigation is to validate a potential option for cultural studies researchers to utilise in their future research projects. Thus, providing scholarly researchers with a new tool they can use in their fieldwork, enabling them to gain new insights and make new discoveries that were not previously possible. For instance, the investigation of previously difficult to document cultural groups or activities, such as those defined by the notion of 'having to be there to understand', such as LARP (Cox, 2019; Rothe et al, 2019; Steele, 2016).

LARPs have always been difficult to document and record, even for those running events and with great experience of the activity. This is because at their core LARPs are 'embodied co-constructed emergent experiences' that are unique to each participant's linear perspective, and once experienced it can never truly be repeated or retained in its true entirety (Steele, 2016; Lampo, 2016). For each LARPer, LARP is an act of first-person, ephemeral, and subjective experience that they develop in cooperation with the other participants for no real purpose except their own enjoyment (Cox, 2019; Spierling and Szilas, 2008; Roush, 2009). This results in a past time that is difficult to chronicle by conventional means, as there can be tens or even hundreds of individual journeys that are occurring at the same moment during a LARP event. It is because of this that LARPs are notoriously difficult to document or record with fixed-frame flat-screen audio-visual recording methods. As with so much occurring simultaneously during a LARP event regular fixed frame cameras will inevitably miss content. Thus, the advantage of panoramic recording methods would be that they are able to record so much of the scene at once, it is therefore less likely to miss something important in the context of the experience. This means the researcher can review the data multiple times, going through to identify and track each aspect of the scene, and gaining a more detailed overview of what is going on in the recorded scenes (Ryan, 2008; Bender, 2019).

2.3.1 – Definition of Documentary Methods and Interactive-Narratives

The aim of the thesis was not to produce a fully realised documentary production about the WA LARP Community, in either the traditional or the Panoramic style. However, this thesis did utilise documentary filmmaking techniques, and 2D audio-visual data recording methods within the design of this research project's data collection procedure. It is therefore necessary to provide a definition and overview of the documentary genre, before proceeding with the detailed discussion of the aspects of panoramic video (Manning and Adam, 2015; Kalof et al. 2008; Skains, 2018).

Documentaries can be defined as audio-visual texts that recount real-world narratives involving real people and actual events which have occurred in either the current or historical context (Chapman. 2009; Bernard, 2011). The documentary genre is defined by its ability to bring the world to an audience; for the viewer to experience, by portraying factual text and imagery assembled into some type of narrative structure. A narrative framework that compellingly captivates the audience to either passively absorb, or actively question, the facts being presented to them (Bernard, 2007; Rabriger, 2004). The goal of the documentary filmmaker is to provide an accurate, compelling, and engaging film, which can also provide a new perspective or argument on the content being presented (Nichols, 2017). The nonfiction narrative structure of documentary films is most effective when it is a simplified, streamlined design that can easily bare the weight and complexity of the compelling, detailed account of the film's subject matter (Bernard, 2011).

In short, documentary film is described as "a discursive formation, presenting first-hand experience and fact by creating a rhetoric of immediacy and 'truth' using photographic technology" (Chapman, 2009 p. 8). As the study does not aim to produce a stand-alone panoramic or 2D documentary, further discussion of the defining features and production history of documentary is surplus to the requirements of the study. Therefore, it can be argued that a precise definition of the documentary genre is not entirely necessary for the investigation of the medium's usefulness (Bernard, 2007; Nichols, 2017). Furthermore, it can be said that such definitions can "conceal as much as it reveals", however the basic understanding of the genre as presented here is a valid step in this investigation process (Nichols, 2017, pp. 5). Thus, the role of documentary in this thesis is to provide a structure through which panoramic and traditional film methods can be easily used and compared.

2.3.2 – Definition of Panoramic Video and Filmmaking

Panoramic video and Cinematic Virtual Reality (CVR) filmmaking refer to the production of visual texts using specialised equipment that capture at least a 180-degree field of view, seen in *Figure 2.22* (Mateer, 2017; McGinity et al, 2007). This is achieved by using specially designed recording systems, that use either several cameras or a single advanced omni-directional camera, such those shown in *Figure 2.23*. These camera set-ups can simultaneously capture footage from multiple directions around the camera set-up to produce "equirectangular (unwrapped sphere)" video files (Jaunt, 2017, p. 8). These video files are compiled using a process where the multiple angle recordings are 'stitched' together within the camera or in a specialised editing program, as demonstrated in *Figure 2.24.* These processed video files can then be screened through a device that grants the audience a degree of control over whichever part of the video they experience. The screening systems that can be used to screen panoramic videos include the likes of tablet computers, or head mounted display (HMD) units, as seen in *Figure 2.25*, as well as on to specially built screening systems that project the panoramic film onto either a cylindrical, or vertically orientated dome shaped screen, as presented in *Figure 2.*26 and *Figure 2.27* (Rizzo et al, 2004; Bender, 2019; Daniel, 2016).
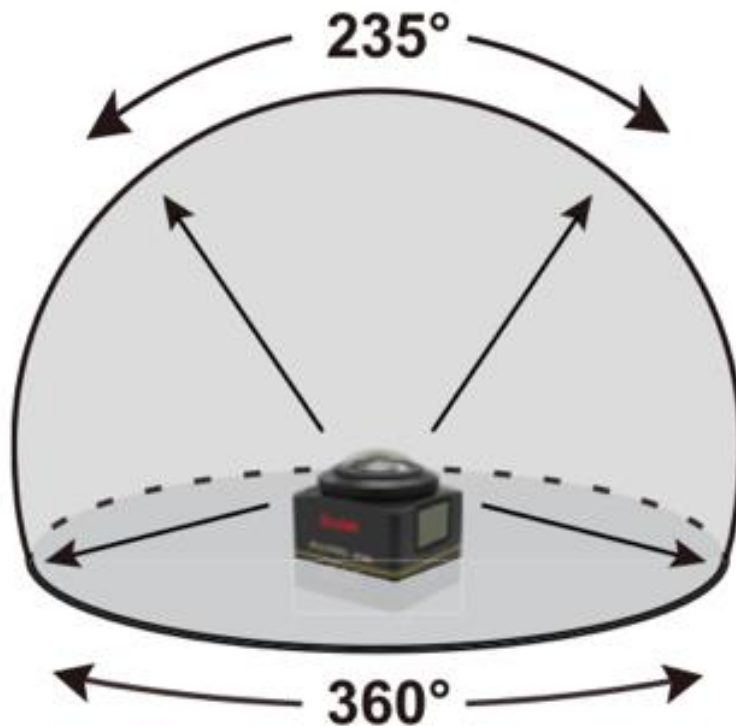
Figure 2.22 – Panoramic Camera's Angles of Recording (Kodak Inc., 2015, pp. 24)

JAUNT GP16 CAMERA   KODAK PIXPRO SP360-4K & RICOH THETA CAMERAS

Figure 2.23 – Examples of Panoramic/CVR camera systems (Jaunt, 2016, pp.14, 16)

Remove lens distortion, precisely align images, compute color consensus, stitch panoramas

Figure 2.24 – Footage Stitching Program Visual Example (Jaunt, 2016, pp.19)

In other words, panoramic film is defined as a form of new media video production for the developing of audio-visual texts possessing an omni-directional field of view. This is accomplished using recording systems with a field of view far greater than that of traditional flat-panel film production techniques, possible through the utilisation of specialised equipment. These specifically designed omni-directional cameras allow for a scene to be recorded simultaneously from multiple angles around the camera. This almost 360-degree footage can then be processed through unique editing methods to produce audio-visual texts that can be screened through a variety of custom display systems. These projection systems, such as cylindrical or dome-shaped screens, provide the

audience with a degree of control over which of the recorded angles they focus on during the film's presentation (Bender, 2019; Ryan, 2008; MacQuarrie and Steed, 2017).

Figure 2.25 – Head Mounted Display Unit (HMD Unit) Visual Example
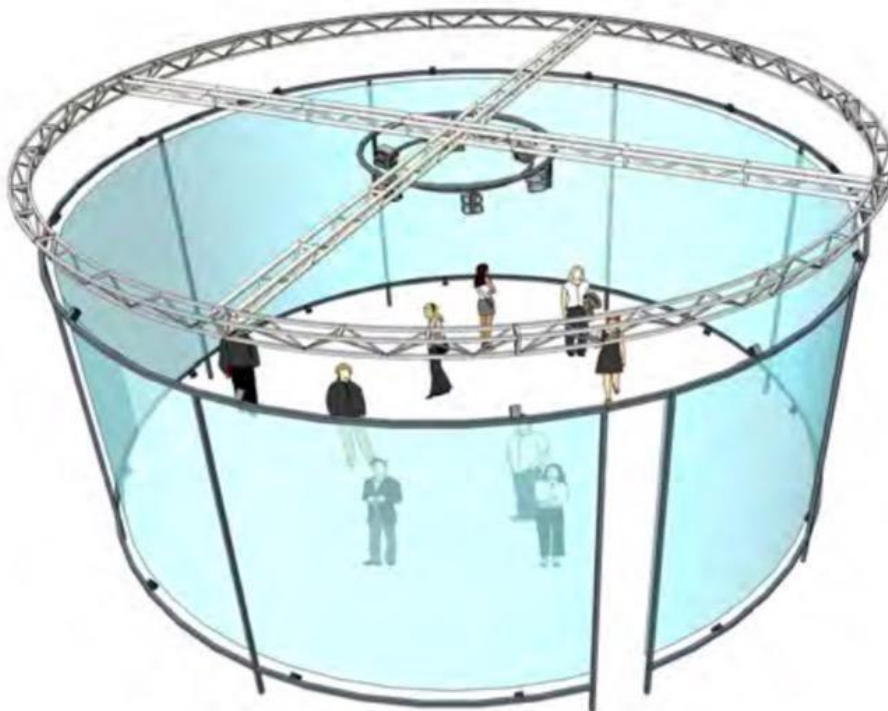
Figure 2.26 – Cylinder-Screen Projection System Example (McGinity et al, 2007, pp.1)

Figure 2.27 – Dome-Screen Projection System Example

The key unique features of Panoramic filmmaking for the purpose of this study are those that offer the potential to overcome the difficulties of recording, reviewing, and presenting audio-visual data of various cultural phenomena. These Cultural phenomena, including LARP, fan conventions, music festivals, and live performances, have been notoriously difficult for previous researchers to document effectively for various reasons (Rizzo et al, 2004; McGinity et al, 2007; Tong, 2018).

The concepts of Cinematic Virtual Reality (CVR) and Panoramic Virtual Reality (PVR) are alike in many ways, but more importantly differ from each other in one specific way (Fauiter, 2016; Mateer, 2017; Rothe et al, 2019). This main defining difference is that CVR texts usually adhere to traditional linear narrative conventions, whereas PVR texts on the other hand are guided by no specific narrative style. Thus, it can be argued that this can give CVR an advantage in its development, as many of the tried and tested methods of film production can be applied to the development of CVR productions (Bender, 2019; Mateer, 2017; Dooley, 2017). Despite the panoramic video genre not yet being widely practiced, creators and scholars have found that many techniques for other cinema forms can be effectively applied to CVR film production. However, this is only possible if the content creators can remain actively aware of the unique aspects of the panoramic

medium and the omni-directional platform's requirements for structural cohesion (Jaunt, 2016; MacQuarrie and Steed, 2017). Although, due to the current lack of scholarly research into these new media genres, this is still a topic of heated debate and discussion, requiring further research.

One of these unique features of PVR/CVR films is that by giving the viewer some degree of control over which aspects of the panoramic footage they view at any point during the screening. This degree of control combined with the viewer being effectively surrounded by the panoramic audio-visual text, can create an illusion in the viewer's mind of immersive control over the film's message. This results in the film going from a passive to an active interactive experience on par with other true 'experiences in embodiment'. However, this is not achieved simply by the nature of this new media form. It is something that must be carefully considered and utilised by creators throughout the production process. In general, this can lead to some content creators falling victim to this assumption of assured audience immersion, with the consequences of this assumption being explored further in the next subsection (Höllerer et al, 1999; Rothe et al, 2019).

2.3.3 – The Assumption of Immersion

The definition of immersion being referred to here is the mental state in which the viewer's conscious comprehension of a text is overridden by their unconscious engagement of the text as if it were reality (Höllerer et al, 1999; Bowman, 2018; Dooley, 2017).

In brief, there are three main forms of immersion, or presence, relevant to the narrative structures of CVRs. First, there is *environmental presence* and *spatial immersion* that is defined by the user's perception of the virtual space and their desire to explore it. Second, there is *personal presence* and *temporal immersion* which describes the users desire to know what comes next and their perception of how virtual worlds react to their input like the real-world. Third, there is *social presence* and *emotional immersion* that outlines their ability to empathise and react to the characters with in the CVR text (Ryan, 2008; Spierling and Szilas, 2008; Roush, 2009).

A notion held by many industry leaders is that panoramic video and CVR simply by the nature of their unique design as an audio-visual medium will automatically create a greater

sense of viewer immersion. Attributing this innate increase in immersion to the audience being effectively, and often physically, surrounded by the media content, and because of the apparent interactivity this provides the viewer. This belief, developed due to early scholarly and industry panoramic video research results, could be referred to as an 'assumption of immersion', a term devised by this researcher.

This assumed state of audience immersion means that it is not immediately clear if this increased sense of immersion is or is not instantly present or guaranteed (Bender, 2019; Bender and Sung, 2020). Therefore, it is important for filmmakers to understand that this increased immersion is not a given outcome simply because of the nature of panoramic video. This is because there has been little in-depth research into checking whether the audience does or does not experience this increased sensation of immersion when viewing panoramic media texts. In fact, the scholars Bender and Broderick (2021) argue that this has been the agenda of the VR industry and academia to overinvest in this assumption, aiming to further 'hype up' the immersive capabilities of panoramic video (Bender and Broderick, 2021).

Similarly, it was initially presumed by some scholars that giving the audience the ability to move their head to view whatever part of the scene they choose, would essentially re-edit a text differently to the director's intent, however this has proven to not be the case (Bender, 2019; Bender and Broderick, 2021). As Bender's work demonstrates the viewer will still follow the same behaviours and instincts that they follow when viewing flat-screen audio-visual texts, as evident in the results from decades of eye tracking research into flat-screen videos matching up with the results of the few panoramic CVR video eye tracking studies (Jaunt, 2017; Daniel, 2016).

Although many academics speculated that viewers will 'edit' the film themselves, despite this general assumption, very little research has explored this empirically. Aside from the work of scholars such as Bender (2019, 2021), Broderick (2021) and Daniel (2016), the results of their research directly discounts these claims (Dooley et al, 2020; Pillai et al, 2019; Dhalmahapatra et al, 2020). Their research evidence indicates that despite the viewer's freedom of attention and ability to move their point of focus, the viewer would still focus on expected and predictable actions occurring in the scene. Thus, the audiences of CVR films can still be easily influenced by and will follow many existing examples of

filmmaking grammar, in terms of visual composition, audio indicators and narrative tropes. For instance, viewers still adhered to many of the classic techniques for drawing their attention, such as the viewers gaze being drawn to the source of voices and sounds, thus following the directional sound cues. However, this filmmaking grammar would often require some minor adaptation to best fit with the new parameters and technology of the panoramic media format (Bender and Sung, 2020; Jaunt, 2017).

Therefore, rather than simply assuming that their content will be immersive because of the technology used to record and screen their audio-visual texts, it must be the focus of content producers to be actively and acutely aware of this fact. This means that they will need to deeply consider their directorial choices when deciding how to draw in the focus of the viewer. They must aim to utilise their knowledge of framing, and other traditional, and new, filmmaking techniques designed to lead and hold the audience to properly maximise their sense of immersion (Winter et al, 2019; Bender and Broderick, 2021; Daniel, 2016).

2.3.4 – Applications of Documentary Style Panoramic Filmmaking

The research into practical panoramic filmmaking methods, including CVR direction, narrative grammar, and the modification of film techniques is still in its early stages of development. The few detailed investigations into the field, indicates that it should be possible for panoramic video production methods to be used in scholarly research. In a similar way as other cinematic filmmaking styles can assist in the gathering and presentation of audio-visual research data. Panoramic film and CVR production processes (eg., file management, editing workflow, etc) are similar enough to the traditional flat-screen video recording processes that are already regularly utilised in scholarly research projects

Panoramic filmmaking methods could provide several advantages over the traditional flat-panel production process. For example, the camera's wider available field of view would allow for the collection of additional amounts of raw data. Furthermore, it can not only record what the researcher has intended to be the focus point of the recording, but also everything else happening around that focal point. Arguably, this data could also be more candid in nature, as the participants under observation will continue to act naturally as the camera goes unnoticed for longer, as they are unfamiliar with the camera's capabilities

and thus are unaware of when they are in frame (Höllerer et al, 1999; Jaunt, 2016; Bender and Broderick, 2021).

There is strong potential for the use of CVR filmmaking in academic research, particularly for the collection, evaluation, and presentation of in-field observational data (Daniel, 2016; Jenkins, 2008; Fauiter, 2016). However, this potential is hampered by issues such as the 'Narrative Paradox' and a 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO). The former defined as the strain between the CVR director's narrative intent and the perceived free will of the CVR viewer. Whereas the latter results in reduced comprehension and engagement in the CVR's narrative, as the viewer attempts to observe all the content, but fails to identify the important story elements (Winter et al, 2019; MacQuarrie and Steed, 2017; Bender 2019). Each of these issues presents challenges for the producers of CVR, who must determine the approach that will best harmonise the film's narrative flow and the audience's interactions with the content. For example, the CVR videos produced by Bender (2019) for his study (outlined in *Chapter 3*), positioned the audience "as either a spectator (not part of the story) or a character (either invisible or acknowledged)" within the CVR films, with each approach altering how the viewer observed the narratives of the film (Tong et al, 2021, p. 4). Although this is not the primary focus of this research, this potential has been explored in this project, with these unique features of panoramic filmmaking technology being used as aspects of the study's research method

LARP by its nature is an improvised co-constructed activity developed through multiple subjective first-person points of view, i.e., each player potentially sees themselves as 'the hero of the realm'. Due to this it is very difficult to accurately record or document LARP events with traditional flat panel, unidirectional recording methods (Steele, 2016; Jenkins 2008; Dooley et al, 2020). However, the potential of panoramic video and CVR production could provide a method that addresses the limitations of flat panel recordings of cultural phenomena, such as LARP. Thus, by effectively using the unique features and potential of panoramic VR video technology one might have a better chance of accurately conveying the experience of LARP to an audience. Producing and presenting audio-visual data of these 'embodied experiences' that is able to capture and then convey an intense perception of immersion for the viewer, resulting in audio-visual observational data and presentation videos that could to an extent simulate the sensation of truly attending a LARP, or some other cultural event (Höllerer et al, 1999; Jaunt, 2016; Ryan, 2008).

The goal of evaluating panoramic film potential as a scholarly research method was considered the fifth main research objective and secondary focus of this research project. The research project aims to investigate panoramic video's possible usefulness as both a method for collecting audio-visual fieldwork data and presenting that collected data to an audience. The results that could be derived from this work would be to potentially prove the viability of panoramic video as a data collection and display tool, thus providing scholars with an effective new method at their disposal. One that could be utilised in the future attempts to research previously difficult to document cultural phenomena, such as those described as being highly subjective, ephemeral, co-operative experiences in embodiment, like LARP (Cox, 2019; Lampo, 2016; Gade et al, 2003).

2.4 – Chapter Summary

In this chapter the topics, themes, and theories of importance to this research project, along with the scholarly research relevant to those points, were presented and reviewed. Firstly, RPGs and LARPs were clearly defined, with the related design elements, histories and aspects discussed in detail. Secondly, the various forms of RPG player motivation typology theories were discussed, with a focus on Bartle's (1996) taxonomy, and previous attempts to define LARPer motivations. Thirdly, the concepts of documentary, panoramic video, and CVR were outlined, with a particular focus on the possible advantages the panoramic video could have on academic field research.

Chapter 3: Data Collection and Methodology – *Phase 1.*

3.0 – Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the experimental method by which the primary research question and research objectives were addressed, with it aiming to accomplish four main goals. The first of these goals is to outline the first phase of the project's two phase data collection process. Secondly, it aims to discuss the methodology behind the study's *Phase 1* data collection procedure. That being the use of observational and interview field work methods in the collection of the data that informed the application of Bartle's typology to LARPers. The results of this evaluation then influenced the initial development of the necessary hypothetical modifications to the player typology theory. Thirdly, it will outline the experimental design of *Phase 1*, including the use of audio-visual recording methods for the gathering and analysis of data from WA LARP community members and events. Fourthly, this chapter will briefly discuss the analysis and coding of the resulting data collected during *Phase 1*. The outcomes of which included the determination that Bartle's work was only partly effective in defining LARPers. This was because many of the motivating behaviours he described were not possible in LARP, due to the differences in the player interface between MUDs and LARPs. However, the typology was found to be effective enough that the development of modifications would significantly increase the effectiveness of the typology.

3.1 – Data Collection Process *Phase 1* Outline

LARP's focus on the player's commitment to the full physical embodiment of their characters is what makes the genre unique amongst the other types of RPG experiences. This means that within the agreed upon imagined reality, imposed upon the physical play area, the player's actions are those of their chosen character (Vartiainen, 2015; Tychsen et al, 2006; Steele, 2016). In the initial literature and field research of this project it was discovered that this difference between LARP and MUDs resulted in the major difficulties in the direct application of Bartle's unaltered typology to LARP (Henry, 2015; Bienia, 2013; Bøckman, 2002). Thus, the development of a new modified theory of player motivation typology, customised specifically for LARP is necessary. This resulting theory will be an

effective method for individual LARPers, LARP Orgs and other researchers to further understand the motivations of the LARP community.

As previously mentioned in *Chapter 1*, the research project's data collection and analysis procedure consisted of two primary phases of research. *Phase 1* involved the recording of observational and interview data from the members of the WA LARP community, the data from which was coded and used to produce two primary results outcomes. The first being a set of proposed modifications to Bartle's player typology that allows it to more accurately categorised LARPers. The second was the development of ten-minute documentary style films, entitled the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*, produced from the footage collected during *Phase 1*. These short documentary-style films presented these proposed modifications to Bartle's theory along with a selection of supporting audio-visual evidence. *Phase 2* of the process, to be outlined in *Chapter 5*, consists of an extensive verification study, that used multi-part surveys, focus group discussions and the screening of the short documentary style films to an audience of WA LARPers. This was done with the aim of determining the effectiveness of the proposed modifications, to then be improved and further refined into the fully realised *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory (Hay, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The primary goals of *Phase 1* were to address the study's first two primary research objectives. The first objective aimed to test the effectiveness of Bartle's (1996) theory when it was applied to the examination and classification of LARP and LARP participants. The second objective was to develop a set of proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's player typology, to enable it to classify LARPers more accurately. *Phase 1* aims to obtain qualitative data using audio-visual recording methods to test the effectiveness of applying Bartle's theory for examining LARPer motivating behaviours (Dunn, 2010; Keans, 2010; Rabiger, 2004). This data collection protocol consisted of conducting detailed observational audio-visual recordings at multiple WA LARP events, including games, training sessions and organiser production meetings. This was in combination with a series of recorded formal and semi-formal interviews with various LARPers from across the WA community to further supplement the observational data collection. The insights gained from the coding and analysis of the collected fieldwork data were used to define the effectiveness of and then develop the proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's taxonomy. This was in addition to the use of the collected footage data to produce the

Primary Research Material Sample Reels for the presentation of these proposed theory alterations along with supporting evidence.

The project's secondary research focus, and fifth objective of this study, aimed to investigate the possible viability of panoramic recording as a method of academic fieldwork. This involved the evaluation of the genre's effectiveness in collecting and presenting in-field data, in comparison to traditional 2D audio-visual data recording methods. The methodology for this assessment used auto-ethnographic methods and creative practice research tools, including techniques to record and self-reflexively examine the researcher's in-field experiences of the panoramic video production process through their personal cultural context (Manning and Adams, 2015; Skains, 2018). These methods were drawn upon and adapted to properly codify the researcher's experiences and impressions of the usefulness of the technologies in a consistent manner. However, that does not mean that this study is to be regarded as a work of creative practice research or as an auto-ethnographic exercise, as only a small aspect of the research used these evaluation methods. These methods are only utilised for the evaluation of panoramic video's usefulness in the collection, analysis, and presentation of scholarly fieldwork data, in comparison to 2D audio-visual mediums (Kalof et al, 2008). The results of these evaluations are reported in several chapters, with *Chapter 4* reporting the evaluation as a data collection method, while *Chapter 6* reports on the medium's data presentation effectiveness, and *Chapter 7* provides the results of the full scholarly assessment.

3.2 – *Phase 1*: Methodology

Phase 1 of the research project's data collection procedure had two primary objectives, an additional two secondary goals, and one tertiary goal. The primary objectives were to firstly investigate the effectiveness of Bartle's typology, and secondly to develop hypothetical modifications to his theory to enable more refined LARPer classification. The first of these secondary goals was to collect the in-field footage that most accurately represented LARPer behaviours at LARP events, to use to produce the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels.* The second of these secondary aims is the development of a method for accurately categorising the various types of LARP events, based on LARP's primary defining elements. The *Phase 1* tertiary objective aimed to evaluate the viability of

panoramic video as a method of collecting in-field observational and interview data, compared with 2D audio-visual data recording methods.

The data collection process for this phase consisted of the detailed audio-visual recording of several WA LARP Community events, including 3 games, 2 LARP Org events, and a LARPer training session. All of which were supplemented with a series of interviews with a broad selection of LARP participants from across the WA community, recorded both during and outside of these LARP events. This data collection process was conducted over 21 dedicated filming days, resulting in approximately 200 hours of footage being collected, including 10 formal, 25 semi-formal, and 15 informal interviews. The details of this data collection process will be further outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

The collected *Phase 1* data, in the form of video footage, along with manually recorded observational data, was then analysed and coded. This coding aimed to identify the important themes within the observed LARPer behaviours and the interview participants responses (Braun and Clarke, 2009; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; King, 2011). These identified features and themes included the defining features of WA LARP, LARPer motivations, and LARPer behaviours, as will be shown in *Section 3.4.2*. Several themes could be easily recognisable as those aspects described in Bartle's theory, and those of other scholars like Yee (2005) and Bienia (2013), while other features were found to be incompatible with previous works. These identified differentiating themes and features provided an insight into LARPer motivations that would directly influence the development of the necessary modifications to Bartle's typology. The coded data was then used to create three primary *Phase 1* research outcomes, in addition to an evaluation of the application of Bartle's typology to LARPer classification, as outlined in *Section 4.2.*

The first of these outcomes, detailed in *Section 4.1*, was a method of classifying the different LARP event types, using the varying ratios of presence of four LARP gameplay design aspects – *Immersion, Role-play, Combat* and *Rules*. This outcome influenced the development of the second main *Phase 1* research outcome, the proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's player typology theory, as detailed in *Section 4.3*. The proposed modified taxonomy dictated the structure of the third research outcome, that being the 10-minute documentary style *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* films, as outlined in *Section 4.4*. The two versions of the film were produced from a selection of the collected

footage data, including examples from both LARP events and LARPer interviews. One version was produced in a standard flat panel format, with the other was produced as a panoramic film, which required specialised equipment to be presented to an audience.

These research outcomes were an instrumental part of the experimental design of the *Phase 2* data collection process, to be outlined in *Chapter 5*, with the purpose of these films being twofold. The films' first purpose in the study was to present the proposed hypothetical LARPer related modifications to Bartle's typology to the verification study audience. The second purpose was to provide the audience response data needed to measure the comparative effectiveness in data presentation between 2D and panoramic screening methods. In addition, through auto-ethnographic and creative practice analysis methods, to conduct a detailed evaluation of panoramic video's viability for in-field data collection, with these results reported in *Section 4.5* (Manning and Adams, 2015; Skains, 2018).

3.2.1 – Audience Stimulus Response Survey

The study's initial design process began with examining the work of researchers such as Anderson and Austin (2012). The research of Anderson and Austin (2012) investigated the effectiveness of documentary in altering the participants' perceptions of marginalised groups. In this case, medical professionals were the study participants, and their disabled patients were the marginalised group (Anderson and Austin, 2012). Their research method involved four stages and included the screening of a documentary film and the use of multiple survey questionnaires. Firstly, the participants completed the initial survey questionnaire before watching the film to establish a baseline reading of the participants opinions of the marginalised group. Secondly, the participants viewed a screening of the documentary film. The film was not developed specifically for the project, but rather the researchers utilised a pre-existing documentary with the permission of the original content creators. The chosen documentary focused on chronicling the lives of a few disabled persons, as they struggle and strive to achieve their goals, to obtain positions within their dream professions. Thirdly, after watching the film, the participants completed the second survey, the results of which are compared to the first survey, measuring the change in participant's opinion following the viewing. Fourthly, in the following months, the participants were recontacted and asked to complete a third survey, to determine whether

their changes in opinion had endured or was only temporary (Anderson and Austin, 2012). The results of this work found that after watching the documentary the attitudes of the study participants towards mental disability was generally improved. They reported an increase of participant comfort in inquiring into mental illness and a willingness to ignore the public stigma of mental conditions (Anderson and Austin, 2012).

The work of Lijiang (2011) is a similar investigation to that of Anderson and Austin (2012) as it uses survey questionnaires and pre-existing films as the basis of the project's experimental methods. However, Lijiang's goals were different to Anderson and Austin, as they used their study participant's opinions to measure effectiveness between fear and empathy based anti-smoking commercials. Their methods utilised comparative surveys and multiple commercial screenings to measure the changes in participants opinions both before/after viewing, and between the two types of material. Their results indicated that both types had a positive persuasive effect on the participant's opinions, however the fear-based types had further negative impacts, while the empathy-based types did not (Lijiang, 2011, p.413). This method of measuring the changes in participant opinions before and after the viewing a visual text used by the previously described scholars was adapted and used in the *Phase 2* experimental design of the present PhD research study.

A similar method to that described above was also utilised in the work of Stuart Bender (2019), although his research aims, and methods differed from those of the previously discussed scholars. In addition to surveys, Bender's experimental design also included the use of eye-tracking software, along with the production of his own narrative driven films, produced in the Cinematic Virtual Reality (CVR) style. The two film texts he produced contained the same narrative and visual action, but one film had a classic third-person viewer perspective, while the other utilised a first-person viewer perspective. In other words, one film positioned the viewer as an outside observer of the narrative, while the other positioned the viewer within the story, giving them the perspective of the film's central protagonist. Specifically, these film texts, were developed to represent specific variables within the experimental design, with the survey questions designed to define the effects those variables had on the audience. Bender (2019) used VR HMD units to screen the films, with the goal of using surveys and eye-tracking software to accurately measure the participant's gaze throughout the films. The results of his study demonstrated that the audience consistently demonstrated active viewing behaviour, following the films audio-

visual cues in the way the director intended. These findings concur with the results of previous 2D film eye-tracking experiments, meaning it is possible for existing 2D cinematic narrative methods to be applied in future CVR text production (Bender, 2019). Bender's work was an important guiding article in the experimental design development of this project, as this study's discussion also touched on testing the usefulness of CVR as a research tool (Bender, 2019; Tong et al, 2021).

3.2.2 – Observational Research

This study's *Observational* research methods, as well as qualitative interview question designs, were developed through scholarly research design knowledge and documentary filmmaking techniques (Dunn, 2010; Rabiger, 2004; Nicholas, 2017; Chapman, 2009). The project adheres to all the necessary ethical research protocols, relevant ethical research practice guidelines, and all other accommodations that were needed. All participants were informed multiple times before filming and all signed the needed participation consent forms and had access to details of the project through the participant information handouts. There are a variety of forms of *Observational* research methods, all of which entail the critical recording of both visual and auditory data of first, or second-hand experiences (Keans, 2010). The type that was used most frequently in this project is referred to as 'Uncontrolled Observation', as this style is not limited to the recording of 'prescribed phenomena' (Keans, 2010). Thus, it enables the researcher to record whatever events occur within the data collection period, while still being guided by research aims and bound to relevant ethical protocols (Keans, 2010). *Observational* research is reliant upon the ability of the researcher to be always acutely aware of both their social responsibilities to those being studied and of the data being collected from them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Manning and Adams, 2015; Kalof et al, 2008).

The recording of the observational data utilised two main camera units, a traditional 2D video-camera, a specialised Panoramic VR camera, in addition to a third camera to act as a backup unit. The goals of the collection of recorded observational footage were threefold. Firstly, the audio-visual recordings aimed to capture in-field observational and interview data more effectively than manual note taking for later analysis. Secondly, the capture material that would be used to illustrate the researcher's evolving theory of LARPer Motivation types for use as video stimulus in the *Phase 2* verification studies.

Thirdly, it was to provide practical in-field opportunities to use the panoramic recording gear along with standard recording gear, an experience that informed the evaluation of the method's viability. During the observations of LARP events the cameras were set up on a monopod, providing a balance between mobility, to follow the action of the event, and stability while stationary. During game events the LARP Orgs also informed the attending researcher of the details of important in-game events, which allowed for the use of more complex camera set-ups. During the recording of formal interviews, each camera was mounted on their own tripods for maximum stability and a backup audio recording unit was also utilised. For the recording of in-game observations, the attending researcher dressed in a costume appropriate for the event's game world and used the 'out-of-character headband' specified by the game rules. The costume was to allow the researcher to be less noticeable to the players, while the headband identified the researcher as a non-interaction participant. Thus, when noticed the LARPers would instantly know to not interact with the researcher, which reduced disruption of the player's experience and allowed more candid observations to be recorded. The attending researcher recorded events for as long as they could, waiting for the encounters to reach their natural conclusions then swiftly moving on to find the next important event to record. The ability to record observational data was also limited by the battery life and recharge speed of the available equipment, along with the researcher's ability to keep pace with the action of the event.

The collection of the *Phase 1* observational and interview data recordings was conducted over the course of five fieldwork expeditions, or field shoots. Each of these field shoots was focused on the recording of specific LARP events, with each having its own aims and goals for footage collection. This included which activities were to be observed and what questions were to be focused on during interviews, these goals were adapted and changed as needed over the progression of *Phase 1*. Before the commencement of the official data gathering period, a test shoot was conducted to evaluate the recording equipment, interview procedures, and question design. These tests enabled the improvement of the procedure in preparation for the first data collection expedition, with the process being further refined through the experience gained from conducting the in-field research. This development of practical experience continued throughout the entirety of the *Phase 1* data collection period. The experience and research data gathered during the data collection period influenced the focus of the data being collected, as well as

refining questions being asked for the subsequent shoots. This experience included, how to use the panoramic cameras, learning its practical limitations, the equipment's average battery life and how to overcome these limitations most effectively. This, in addition to a general increase of in-community short-hand fluency and experience with the equipment, improved the quality of the collected data over the course of the study.

Field Shoot 1 (October 2018) was focused on the recording of game six of *Shattered World LARP.* The goals of the shoot were to gather as much practical examples of LARPer behaviour as possible, as it was the first attempt at recording a full LARP event. This shoot was also able to provide visual examples of various abstract concepts discussed in the literature reviews. This included visual examples of immersive role-play, in-character socialising, player costuming, and mechanically driven gameplay, as well as one-on-one and team based simulated LARP combat. In addition to obtaining first-hand descriptions from LARPers and LARP Orgs on the various aspects of the game event, including set up, planning, mechanics, character creation, umpiring and crafting. This shoot additionally aimed to establish an initial impression of the WA LARP community's general structure, population, and diversity, defining the broad age, gender, and ethnicity ranges present. Several potentially useful candidates for future interviews were also identified during this shoot, such as LARP Orgs, Warband leaders, players exhibiting deep characterisation, or highly detailed costumes. Most of these candidates agreed to take part in informal, in-game, or semi-formal interviews during the event, while others organised to participate in full formal interviews outside the event, conducted in *Field Shoot 3.* These interviews provided further information to improve the practical understanding of LARPers and LARPing, adding to the initial impression or 'snapshot' of the WA LARP to be built upon in the remaining shoots

Field Shoot 2 (November 2018) was focused on the recording of a LARP Org committee meeting and a player training session. The LARP Org meeting observations aimed to collect footage data that demonstrated how the LARP Org committee goes about planning and organising a LARP event. This included those preparation activities needed to organise a LARP, the allocation of member roles, and the responsibilities or tasks of each committee member. These tasks or areas of responsibility range from construction, story development, accounting, mechanical game-play design, and overall project management. The player training session aimed to collect footage that further demonstrated the

camaraderie of the LARP community and development of the game-play mechanics of LARP. This was accomplished through the observation of out-of-game interactions between players, as well as the players practising the game-play mechanics being tested by the GMs present at the training session.

Field Shoot 3 (January 2019) was dedicated to the conducting of the formal interviews and interview data collection techniques that were most ideal for this research project (Dunn, 2010; Rabiger, 2004). Scholarly interviews are versatile and effective methods of data collection, being able to gather knowledge of 'complex lived experiences' normally inaccessible to other methods (Dunn, 2010, 102). Research Interviews are a method that can 'respectfully empower' the participant to divulge their opinions openly without worrying about whether they concur with the researcher's hypothesis or not (Dunn, 2010, 102). The form of academic or documentary interviews can vary greatly depending on the situation or goal of the interview. However, interviews can be broadly classified into one of three main categories, these being; unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Dunn, 2010; Rabiger, 2004). The interviews conducted in *Phase 1* were mostly semi-structured, possessing a pre-planned structure but aiming to remain versatile in the execution of that structure. This enabled the researcher to obtain the needed data while maintaining the ability to easily adapt to the data presented by the participants in responses, or to changes in schedule and environment (Dunn, 2010; Rabiger, 2004). The *Phase 1* interviews were organised into three main set up types, those being informal, semi-formal and formal interviews. Each of the formal interviews *of Field Shoot 3* took between two and four hours and had their own dedicated scheduled filming days (Dunn, 2010). These interviews were conducted in the participant's homes, often in the areas where they worked on or stored their LARP related gear. This was to improve the participant's comfort during the interview and so they could easily refer to the equipment during the interview if they so desired. In addition to these formal interviews, each of the other field shoots involved at least some semi-formal interviews and unstructured informal interviews (Dunn, 2010). The semi-formal interviews ran from between five and thirty minutes and were normally conducted just to the side of the LARP game's action, so the event's setting could still be seen in the background. This was to provide further interest and context to the footage for later analysis, while also ensuring that the out-of-character discussion did not disrupt the other players' immersion. The informal interviews aimed to gain clarification on an event that had just been observed in-game and usually took no longer than five minutes to complete.

These interviews were often conducted in-character, with the attending researcher asking those player characters (PCs) watching the event unfold for additional context to the observed event. This avoided compromising the player's immersion for those involved with the recorded event and provides insight into how LARPers 'play-out' their PCs, refining the representation of their player-type. The full outline of the questions asked of the interview participants is detailed in *Appendix 1.1* and *Appendix 1.2*, as well as being discussed further in *Section 3.2.3* of this chapter.

Field Shoot 4 (March – April 2019) was focused on the recording of a LARP Org run community Building weekend, and a game of *Warhearts LARP*. The build weekend was an event set up by the *Shattered World LARP* committee which invited players to volunteer and help the construction teams add to the game's semi-permanent sets between events. This footage demonstrated examples of further LARP Org planning discussions, as well as participant teamwork, creativity, and community spirit. The goals of the *Warhearts LARP* recording session were to gather footage data that presented how a different style of LARP game is carried out. For example, the difference in the game's combat style, role-play structure, the change in the LARP Org's role in-game, and how these affected the way LARPers 'play' the game in comparison to other LARPs. This shoot additionally provided insight into the WA LARP community's second-hand gear and artisan aspects, as a small market was also held during the recorded *Warhearts LARP* game event.

Lastly, *Field Shoot 5* (May 2019) was focused on recording *Shattered World LARP* game seven. This shoot was designed to gather further footage data on all the previously investigated points. In addition to providing visual evidence to support the points brought up by the formal interview participants. This shoot essentially covered the same, or similar aims as *Field Shoot 1*, but with an improved focus to confirm the discoveries made in the other previous field shoots and provide greater detail and examples.

3.2.3 – Interview Question Development

In the designing of these interviews, along with the later *Phase 2* surveys and focus group discussions, the structure of the questions is crucial to the overall effectiveness of the data collection method. Scholarly research questions must aim to be focused on the exploration of a specific aspect of a phenomena or topic being investigated in the interview. Effectively

structured questions need to be designed to be consistently understood with ease by the intended participants, as well as considering their specific environment and frame of reference (Korjenevitch and Dunifon, 2011; Dunn, 2010). The development of the interview, survey, and focus group questions was guided by the variety of resources previously discussed in this thesis. The general content of the questions being devised through the in-depth examination of the work of Bartle (1996), Yee (2006), and results of other previous LARP focus research projects. The question's structural designs were developed through the guiding influence of the likes of Meriläinen (2011), Przybylski (2012), Fowler (2009), Cope (2010), and others (Keans, 2010; Rabiger, 2004).

In brief, there was a set of standard core question topics that was then expanded or adapted depending on the interview structure and the specific context of the interview participant. The topics explored through these questions included, defining LARP, player behaviours, player motivation, the media representation of LARP, and memorable LARP related experiences. All of these interview question sets were designed to adapt to include any participant responses that generated unpredicted points of interest or relevance. The formal interviews contained the most questions, involving the entirety of these core question topics, along with specific questions developed to explore the unique knowledge of individual participants. The semi-formal interviews covered a varying selection of these core questions, often focusing on only one or two of the main topics, however if the participant had the time, more topics were explored. The informal interviews often did not use these prepared core questions, as it was more effective to develop specific questions in reaction to the observed unexpected phenomena. The aim of these interviews was to gather the data needed to define LARP in WA, to test Bartle's theory, and clarify previous observed player behaviours.

The footage data from both the interview and observational research methods, was then examined in detail after each shooting session, and then again in full after the completion of the *Phase 1* data collection period. The collected footage data was analysed and coded using several scholarly methods, along with industry methods employed in the editing of documentary films (Dunn, 2010; Nichols, 2017). The key to the coding methods that were used in this project is the efficient, accurate, and consistent identification of the important elements or themes present in the collected qualitative data (Brookfield, 2009; Gay et al, 2011). A multitude of methods from numerous resources, were used to work through,

organise and interpret the collected participant data, such as the 'Margin Coding' method (Cope, 2010; Cameron, 2010). Margin Coding is the method by which the important aspects of transcribed participant data are classified and organised using a simplified categorising system of either colours, or symbols (Cameron, 2010). In addition to these methods, the recorded audio-visual data that most suited a variety of factors were edited into the short film presentations (Rabiger, 2004; Chapman, 2009; Nichols, 2017). These edited films were a crucial element for the completion of *Phase 2*, as discussed in detail later in *Section 4.3*.

3.3 – *Phase 1*: Experimental Design

This section outlines the experimental procedure that was used to conduct *Phase 1* of the project's data collection process. This includes the participant recruitment procedure, observational data collection protocols, and interview question design. This project's data collection process consisted of the detailed observation and audio-visual recording of multiple WA LARP events, including games, training sessions, and organiser production meetings. This was also supplemented by a mix of 50 formal, semi-formal and informal interviews, conducted with a 'convenience sample' of various WA LARP community participants.

Through communications with various LARP Org committees, the researcher obtained initial consent for the project and learnt of the community's key figures to assist in early participant recruitment. The researcher additionally attended a LARP Org committee meeting and a LARPer training session, prior to the commencement of *Phase 1*, to gain an initial impression of the WA LARP community. This enabled the researcher to refine the experimental procedure based on an understanding of the members and structure of the community before recording of data even began. The researcher expanded the list of interview candidates by taking note of those believed to represent specific aspects of LARP or insights into LARPer behaviours. This process was refined over the course of the data gathering period, as the collected data narrowed the research focus, while revealing other perspectives and areas that required further exploration (Kalof et al, 2008).

Most of the interview participants were selected through either the 'snowballing' method, or

at the convenience of the researcher or during the recorded LARP events (Hay, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). 'Snowballing' is the process by which one connection between the researcher and another individual quickly escalated, as the researcher met more key community members, and word of the study spread. In addition to this process the researcher also approached LARPers as the opportunity arose to attempt to get interviews during quiet moments of the recorded LARP events. At the start of each of the recorded LARP events being recorded, the LARP Orgs would point out the attending researcher to the players. This was to brief the players on the researcher's presence at the event, and to inform them that they could volunteer to be interviewed for the study by approaching the researcher out-of-character. The researcher aimed to choose participants from a variety of different player demographics, approaching players of various ages, genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds. The participant's level of LARP experience, role within the game, observed playstyle, and level of importance within the community were also considered amongst other factors. All the approached candidates were free to decline being interviewed, with those who agreed being either interviewed on the spot or contacted later via social media to take part in a formal interview.

As previously mentioned, the recording of observational and interview data took place over five field shoots, involving 21 dedicated filming days, and included 10 formal, 25 semi-formal and 15 informal interviews. Data collection was conducted at 3 full LARP game events, a LARP Org committee meeting, a LARP training session, a community building weekend, and formal interview participant's personal residences. During the conducting of these field shoots the observational data recordings were made using three cameras and an additional audio recording device. The cameras were normally mounted together on a single monopod to provide a reliable, stable, and mobile audio-visual recording platform. This enabled the researcher to keep up with, and easily relocate themselves, to gather as much observational data as possible and to get close to the LARP events dynamic action. During moments such as the chaotic large capture-the-point battles, however, each camera was mounted on a tripod, and positioned either around the edge of the battlefield or on the battle's objective marker. This was intended to provide an additional observational perspective on these specific LARP event phenomena.

The interviews were conducted, recorded, and coded with academic research methods in mind, with the interview participants in *Phase 1* being the LARP Orgs and LARPers of the

WA community (Rihoux, 2006; King, 2011; Brookfield, 2009). The interview questions were designed using the documentary interview style, aiming to elicit answers that respond to ideas from the theoretical framework(s) of Bartle (1996) and Yee (2006). The interview questions were divided into several topic-based sections with each of the main questions having a selection of secondary questions to further prompt the participants to discuss their opinions on the topics in greater detail. These topics included:

- LARP related topics – (define LARP, Elements of LARP, immersion, rules, combat, roleplay, etc)
- Player type theory related topics – (player motivations, aspects of player behaviour, etc)
- Media representation topics – (how is LARP currently represented in media, how can it be improved, etc)

The full list of interview questions for the formal interviews and the semi-formal interviews are attached to this thesis in *Appendix 1.1 – 1.3.* The developed questions were open ended, with additional prompting sub-questions, giving the participants the ability to answer to the best of their abilities without being led, thus reducing interviewer bias.

For the most part, participants did not have any previous knowledge of Bartle's work, so the interview questions were designed to keep this fact in mind, rather than explaining Bartle's theories, and risk altering the Participants opinions and statements with the new information. The questions were designed to get participants to discuss the aspects related to Bartle's points with the colloquial knowledge they already possessed. For example, questions such as "What aspects of LARPing do you most enjoy?" or "What motivates you to LARP?" will obtain responses that relate to aspects of Bartle's taxonomy, without the need to discuss it with the participants directly (Cope, 2010; Keans, 2010; Dunn, 2010; Cameron, 2010). As a more detailed example, one of the formal interview questions is "How did you develop your character?", this question can gather data on several topics, depending on who it is being asked of and in what context. In some cases, the participant would explain the specific game mechanics surrounding character creation, while others would discuss the narrative, role-play, or creative aspects that effect player character creation. Either way, the participant's response would reveal something about their personal motivations and behaviours. For instance, if the participant answers by

discussing how they first examine the game mechanics, determining what their team needs, to then build a character with the skills and gear needed to fill that role most effectively. After which they then create a basic character personality, focused on making what they build fit with the existing game lore and their team's design, then it would be clear that that participant is more combat and mechanically minded in their behaviours and motivation. On the other hand, if the participant explained how they first developed the embodiment aspects of their character – "their character's voice and walk, the way they move, how they dress, their personal history and reasons for being on the adventure with the rest of their team" – then it is a strong indication that they are motivated more by the immersion and role-play aspects of LARP (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3). They only look at what they need to do within the games mechanics to make their character fit within the rules afterwards, then it is a strong indication that they are motivated more by the immersion and role-play aspects of LARP.

Additionally, this style of question was effective in getting participants excited to further discuss other aspects of LARP in subsequent questions. Such as the secondary questions "What aspects of LARP gameplay motivates you as a player?" or "How would you describe your play style?" for example. Depending on the order in which these secondary questions were asked, it was possible to gain further information on the topics the participant prioritised and the ones they sidelined. These follow up questions give the participants the opportunity to go into greater detail, on the topics that they have already started discussing while answering the primary questions. The participant's responses now included more detail, and specific examples from their own experiences, in this case of either the game-like elements or player embodiment aspect of LARP. As a detailed example, the main question "What types of players have you seen?", along with its secondary questions; "What are some of the positive player behaviours you've witnessed?" and "What are some negative player behaviours you've had to deal with?". These questions aim to get the participants to discuss examples and aspects of LARPer behaviour that stand out to them. They encouraged them to give specific examples in their responses and encourage the participant to focus on specific aspects of their experience with other LARPers. The participant's responses to these questions can also reveal concepts that can be used to define LARP and LARPer motivations. For instance, the participant's responses on what behaviours they classify as negative reveals aspects that can be used to identify the motivating drives of other LARPers. For example, some participants might consider role-

play behaviour as positive and competitive behaviours as negative, while for other participants the reverse could be true. Thus, it can be determined from the participant responses that role-play and competitiveness are LARPer behaviours that could be used to determine the differences between LARPer motivation types. This means that the responses to this question can be used to define the behavioural aspect of LARP, which can be later used to define possible LARPer motivating factors (Bender and Broderick 2021; Braun and Clark, 2006; Bender, 2019).

Semi-formal and informal interviews were also conducted, these additional interview types were designed to be quicker than the formal interviews and could be conducted in-character at LARP events. These semi-formal interviews took on average 20-minutes to be completed and would contain 3-5 main questions and focus on only on one or two of the formal interview's main research topics. The informal interviews took only a few minutes to complete and consisted of questions developed in response to observed, often unexpected LARPer behaviours that required further context and clarification (Dunn, 2010). During all the interviews additional follow-up questions were devised as needed to gain further detail and clarification on any unexpected or interesting points that warranted further investigation (Keans, 2010; Brookfield, 2009).

The lead organisers of the LARP committees were also asked extra questions about their responsibilities, such as the rules, narrative and plans for their respective games. Participants on the board of the *LARP West* organisation were asked for further details about the structure, goals, and role of that organisation within the WA LARP community. As an example, during interviews with LARP Orgs, the question was asked of them if a method for predicting LARPer behaviour would be of use to them in developing future LARP event content. For many participants this was sufficient information to provide an adequate response, but other participants needed further information to clarify the question before they could answer. In such instances, a brief explanation using Bartle's taxonomies as an example was provided for the participants, who could then provide an answer to the question. Further questions were also developed on the fly when it was revealed that participants had unexpected additional information that could further enrich the study. For example, these included extensive experience with *US* and *Nordic LARP*, experience with the treatment of disability, and the acceptance of various LGBTQI+ issues within the WA LARP community.

The *Phase 1* footage data, both the interviews and LARP event observations, were all recorded using both panoramic and traditional recording equipment. The two types of footage data were analysed and compared during the coding process, providing insight into both LARPer motivational behaviours and the viability of the panoramic research method. This aimed to determine if the possible advantages of panoramic film would prove beneficial and worth the additional effort required to use these technologies in fieldwork. The panoramic footage was evaluated multiple times to effectively examine all the content beyond the standard 2D camera's field of view. Much of the panoramic footage directly corresponded to footage captured by the 2D camera, meaning both cameras recorded observational data of the same event from the same position. In these instances, the two cameras can be directly compared, identifying what is visible in the panoramic data beyond the framing of the corresponding 2D footage.

In other words, the footage coding process noted down what the panoramic footage was able to capture that the standard camera missed, such as additional background activity, as demonstrated in *Figure 3.1* and *Figure 3.2* below.

Figure 3.1 – Interview with the 'Black Prince', Flat-Panel Footage

Figure 3.2 – Interview with the 'Black Prince', Panoramic Footage

These images presented stills from the in-character interview with the 'Black Prince', one from the 2D camera (*Figure 3.1*) and one from the panoramic camera (*Figure 3.*2) that was used. In the flat panel image only the 'Black Prince' himself and one of his legionnaires can be seen, with the mess hall tent behind them. Meanwhile, in the panoramic still, more of his legionaries are visible, as well as other LARPer groups setting up additional tents in the right of the shot. These advantages of panoramic video research data are further discussed in later thesis chapters. In brief, this proved particularly useful during the analysis of data where there was more chaotic action occurring, such as in the footage of the larger battles and in role-play debates between Warbands.

A particularly good example, as shown in *Figure 3.3* and *Figure 3.4* below, was the footage data captured of the trial of a captured Warband leader. In this footage data the point of focus shifts between the actions of multiple individuals, including the judge, prosecutor, and the prisoner themselves, in addition to the reactions of the gathered crowd. The 2D camera could only capture so much of this action at once, while the panoramic camera was able to capture considerably more. The wider field of view of the panoramic camera manages to capture more detail than the standard flat panel camera is clearly demonstrated (Bender, 2019; Bender and Sung, 2020). Thus, when combined with the other observational fieldwork notes, these video recordings were able to be used to

assess the overall usability and effectiveness of the technology in terms of fieldwork. This also includes suggestions on how the technology could be used more effectively in future research projects (Jaust, 2017; McGinity, 2007).

Figure 3.3 – Trial of the Viking Warband's General, Flat-panel Footage

Figure 3.4 – Trial of the Viking Warband's General, Panoramic Footage

The footage from the field recordings of LARP events, and interviews with LARP participants were coded using a variety of academic methods (Keans, 2010; Brookfield, 2009). In addition to being coded using the information gathered from the literature research, particularly the work of Bartle (1996), Yee (2006) and Henry (2015). It was from this coding that the data needed to assess the effectiveness of Bartle's theory, and to develop a set of hypothetical modifications to that theory were derived. These examinations were conducted immediately after the conclusion of each data gathering session and repeated after the conclusion of the *Phase 1* Data Collection period. Each recording was watched in detail and the type of footage was noted down in the footage index document.

In this document the gathered footage data from each shoot day was catalogued, along with the manual observation notes, which was all then coded using a form of 'margin coding' (Cameron, 2010). The 'margin coding' used in this case involved the use of a colour-based data organisation system, over the course of multiple viewings of both the panoramic and 2D footage data. The interview recordings were either fully or partly transcribed, and were coded through a margin coding system, using a coding key that involved the use of colours, symbols, and time codes (Cope, 2010). Additionally, noted down in this document was how the footage referred to the main topics of the study, the other concepts that appeared and recognised how the footage could be used to produce the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels* (Dunn, 2010; Chapman, 2009).

These coding methods were supplemented using 'Paper Edits' and draft editing exercises to further code and assess the content of the observational and interview data. This technique involved the footage clips, representing the same or similar elements or themes, being arranged together in a draft, or test, documentary style sequence (Rabiger, 2004; Nichols, 2017; Bernard, 2007). These sequences are organised and produced in various ways to examine the evidence of the different aspects of LARPer behaviours or player motivations. Through the creation and review of these draft sequences, possible interpretations of how to organise the important points of the footage data began to present themselves. For example, a sequence could start with footage explaining a particular point, and then group together footage of similar opinions in the middle providing one set of thoughts on the topic. The end of the sequence could then consist of a grouping

of differing or apposing opinions of the topic, to provide a counter argument to the point previously presented. Thus, by reviewing the sequence it is then possible to determine what the consensus may be and whether it makes sense or not. Therefore, by continuing to review and redevelop these sequences, they can then be arranged together to formulate a coherent argument, supported by the evidence presented in the footage data.

Following this draft sequence examination, the investigation was continued into the production of the brief 10-minute documentary style films, the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*. This film was a crucial component necessary for conducting the next phase of the experimental design, the verification study and screening tests. The editing process, as demonstrated in *Figure 3.5* below, involved selecting the footage which best satisfied several content and quality factors, which were then edited into the two short film presentations. These content and quality factors included the participant's eloquence of speech, participant answering efficiency, relevance to the film's purpose, and overall entertainment factor of the footage (Rabiger, 2004; Chapman, 2009; Nichols, 2017). The flat panel version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* produced for this study is accessible via the link provided here (https://youtu.be/0KHGUA5xd6A).
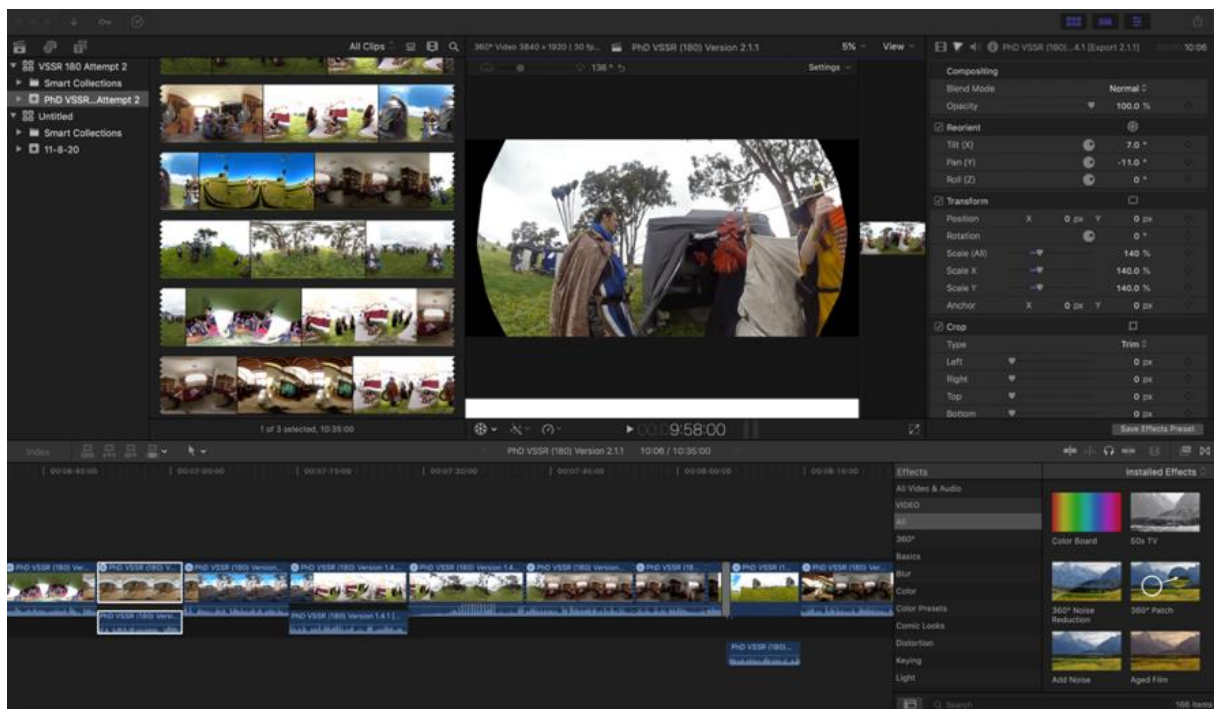
Figure 3.5 – Editing Program Screen Shot, Panoramic Sequence Drafting

3.4 – *Phase 1*: Results Data Analysis

This section of the chapter will outline the results of the analysis and coding of the recorded audio-visual data, which includes both the qualitative observational and interview data (Dali, 2014; Hay, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Listing the themes and features identified through the margin coding, thematic analysis and other methods used in the analysis of the data collected in *Phase 1*, themes and features to be used to outline the *Phase 1* research outcomes, including the applying of Bartle's work to LARP, and the proposed modifications to Bartle's theory as detailed in *Chapter 4*. The data collection process resulted in a total of 1.5 terabytes of audio-visual data, including 50 interviews with a diverse selection of LARPers. This data was further complemented with manually recorded observational research data. Through the thematic analysis and margin coding of the collected footage data several themes and features were identified (Braun and Clarke, 2009; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Cameron, 2010; King, 2011). In total 23 initial features and themes of LARPer motivations or behaviours were identified and supported with evidence from the footage results, consisting of 11 features and 12 themes. These initial defining features and themes were used in the production of the primary research outcomes of *Phase 1*, as well as providing insight into the study's secondary research aims. These identified *Phase 1* themes and features will be listed in *Figure 3.6* below, with each being defined and supported with examples from the collected *Phase 1* footage.

Defining LARP features	**LARPer motivational behaviour themes**
• *Act* • *Combat* • *Embodiment* • *Emergent narrative* • *Game-world* • *Immersion* • *Interaction* • *Mechanics (rules)* • *Objective based gameplay* • *Players* • *Role-play*	• *Advancement* • *Accomplishment* • *Communication* • *Competition* • *Challenge* • *Creativity* • *Customisation* • *Discovery* • *Escapism* • *Relationships* • *Socialising* • *Teamwork*

Figure 3.6 – Identified *Phase 1* Features and Themes Summary Table.

Role-play is an important feature that influences both LARPer behaviour and the structural design of LARP events. The act of role-playing being defined as the process of "creating a persona with a background story and interacting with other players to create an improvised story" (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102). This theme encompassed the measurement of a LARPer's interest in the role-playing elements of a LARP, which can determine their play style. The degree to which a LARP event is focused on role-play game design aspects will affect its overall structure. There are many examples of this in the recorded data, including the casual negotiations taking place between a trio of Warband leaders at the tea shop recorded during *Shattered World LARP*. For another example, the footage of a black knights Warband member unsuccessfully trying to plead his case as he was locked in the pillory by the sheriff NPC as punishment for starting a fight in town.

The *Embodiment* feature is an important theme for defining both the behaviours of LARPers and LARP itself, in addition to being strongly connected to the Role-play theme, as it deals with how players can physically take on the persona of their character. Their ability to experience the emotions, story, and thoughts of their character, meeting other people, and experiencing the game environment from the character's perspective. There are several examples of this in the collected footage data, such as their banter between apposing characters preceding the large battles during *Warhearts LARP* and *Shattered World LARP*. Another supporting example would be the footage of the empire trading council that occurred at the end of the *Warhearts LARP* event day.

Immersion as a feature relates to the elements of role-play, embodiment, and the game-world. The feature refers to the capacity for LARPers to become integrated into another world, becoming a part of its story and taking on the characteristics of a different being to achieve this integration. This feature is important not only for the defining of LARPer behaviours or motivations, but the defining of LARP events themselves. Any of the in-character, in-formal interviews are examples of this feature, as well as the likes of the footage of a group of LARPers singing songs under the shade of a tree between battles.

Emergent narrative as a feature is important for the defining of LARP itself more than that of the behaviours of LARPers (Ryan, 2008). Although it still relates to the knowledge possessed by LARPers, including narrative element recognition and improvisational skills,

to function. This feature is defined by the nature of the overall narrative framework of LARP game events. The outcomes of the story arcs and narrative beats being decided by the words, actions, decisions, and interactions between players of the LARPers taking part in the story. An example from the footage that supports this feature includes an interview response from a LARP Org, as they recounted how the story arc of the previous game concluded in an unexpected way, The LARP Org explained how a Warband accidently destroyed the homeland of another team they had allied with, due to misunderstanding how a magical treasure they obtained worked. The Warband thought the relic attracted a race of fire vampires that had been plaguing the realm, so they planned to use it to destroy their enemies. They crafted a powerless copy of the artifact, giving the fake one to their allies to hide their plan by looking impartial, while giving the real one to their enemy so they would be overrun by the evil creatures. However, the item did not attract the fire vampires but repelled them, thus the Warband's enemy was protected, while their ally's lands got overrun by all the displaced monsters.

The *Mechanics* (*Rules*) feature is related to the underlying game-like rules and protocols that are developed by LARP Orgs to define how their LARP game functions. This also refers to the measure of how much these mechanical rules determine the structure and function of a LARP. The footage from the LARPer training session with the Game marshal teaching the *Warhearts LARP* rule set to some new players is an example from the evidence that supports this theme. Along with footage of the discussions of the mechanics and rule sets from the formal interviews with the LARP Org committee leaders.

The *Combat* feature covers the descriptions, variety, and prevalence of combat gameplay mechanics within a LARP. It is also a measure of a LARPer's perceived interest in and ability to take part in the combat aspect of LARP, as well as the other physicality elements of the LARP experience. The multiple examples of combat footage from the LARP game events and training session are clear supporting examples of this theme. Furthermore, footage from the various formal interviews in which the interviewees discuss the numerous aspects of LARP combat, along with their opinions on the subject is also evidence of this theme.

Objective based gameplay is a feature that defines both an aspect of LARP design and a motivating desire of some LARP Participants. This style of gameplay appeals to the

LARPers who enjoy using tactical or strategic thinking to achieve the quest objectives of the game-world that the LARP Orgs have set out for them. These quests are often designed to be understood and balanced from the perspective of the player but may not be integrated seamlessly into the game world as perceived by the player character (PC) (Bøckman, 2002). Examples from the visual evidence includes the footage of the sailor themed Warband reading through their quest objectives connected to an in-game clue, an old sea shanty with hidden meaning. In addition to the footage of these Warband members discussing how to proceed with the quest by working out the secret message hidden within the song.

The concept of player actions or ability to act upon other players or the game world is referred to as *Act*. This feature covers the individual's motivation to take control of or impose their will upon other aspects of LARP (Bartle, 1996; Bienia, 2013). In other words, it "measures how inclined a user is to objectify" or "manipulate" aspects of LARP for their own "personal gains and satisfaction", with these aspects including other players, the game environment, and the games mechanics. (Yee, 2006c, pp. 13). Footage of *Shattered World LARP* players gathering resource cards is an example of this theme in action on the game-world. On the other hand, a group of LARPers leading another player into a trap and attacking them to collect a bounty is an example of this theme in action on other LARPers.

The feature of interaction (*Interact*) is important for the defining of both LARP itself and the motivations of LARPers. The theme covers all the possible methods LARPers can use to engage with aspects of the game environment and with the other LARP participants. There is a multitude of evidence to support this theme in the coded data, such as the dwarven Warband leader and the black knights Warband leader discussing trade embargos on other nations. Any sample of footage that contains players communicating with one another at a LARP event, while in-character would be an example of this feature.

Players in the context of an identified feature refers to those individuals taking part in the activity of LARP and who participate in the expanded WA LARP community. This includes LARP players, LARP organisers and to a lesser extent those who watch from the sidelines as they are currently unable to participate but are still considered to be part of the community. This feature is evident in a large percentage of the coded data, players

checking in at the start of *Warhearts LARP* is footage that demonstrates the variety of LARPers who attend these events.

The feature of the *Game-World* relates to the game environment and *magic circle* of the LARP and how they are perceived by the LARPers. This feature covers the immersive ambiance of the game environment, the agreed upon imagined world within the minds of the LARPers, and the physical aspects of the real-world play area (Montola, 2012). Any of the footage that presents the LARPers moving about *Shattered World LARP*'s physical play area while in-character, such as the player faction strongholds or tavern, would be evidence of this feature.

The theme referred to as *Advancement* encapsulates the feelings of satisfaction obtained from the completion of in-game activities. Footage data from the LARP game events involving a Warbands being able to solve the mysteries of their quests and receiving their next clue or a major reward is evidence that supports this theme.

The *Achievement* theme refers to the participant's desire to collect artefacts of importance and symbols of in-game rewards (Bartle, 1996; Bienia, 2013; Yee, 2006c). A specific example is the footage of the pirate themed Warband from *Shattered World LARP* deciding on the type of ships to build after obtaining and using a magic potion which will enable them to harvest magically strong trees to rebuild their ships with, by using the potion to coat and empower their tools.

The *Communication* theme encompasses the interactions between the LARPers, both in and out-of-game, as well as the sensations of kinship that comes from interactions with like-minded individuals. The formal interview footage in which the participants discussed how they communicate with their fellow players through social media provides support for this theme. The footage data from the game events showing the player team leaders calling out commands to other players in battle, or players talking to one another are also evidence of this theme.

Relationships is a theme that is focused on defining the interactive emotional connections LARPers endeavour to forge between one another, as well as to interpret the level to which an individual LARPer prioritises seeking out this variety of interaction. Some

examples of this theme from the data include a story told by the tea shop owner NPC, who described how she met her husband at a LARP and that their relationship, both in and out-of-character, grew over the course of multiple game events.

The *Socialising* theme refers to the value that LARPers place on interacting with other LARPers, either during or between game events. This theme encompasses chatting, helping to plan events, making, and maintaining friendships, as well as interacting via social media technologies. The conversation between a group of LARPers discussing the planning of a meet-up to celebrate one of their birthdays, recorded at the LARPer training session, is an example that supports this theme. Another example is a segment from one of the interviews where the LARPer discussed their tradition of hosting a post-game barbeque the weekend after a game of *Shattered World LARP*.

As a theme *Teamwork* refers to the focus and value LARPers puts on their ability to work together with other LARPers to accomplish common goals and the satisfaction derived from the success of this cooperation. This can refer to both in-game instances, such as repelling a siege, or out-of-game activities, like organising to split the cost of hiring a moving truck to get everyone's stuff to game. Coded data examples that support this theme includes the LARP Orgs coordinating with each other at the planning meeting and supervising the on-site LARP event preparation work preceding a game event.

The theme of *Competition* refers to the LARPer's "desire to challenge and compete with" their fellow LARPers and the game itself (Bienia, 2013, pp. 102). However, this theme is most heavily focused on how the LARPers interact with the specific 'win/lose' and game-like scoring aspects of LARP game designs. Footage data that serves as evidence for this theme includes the footage of *Shattered World LARP* LARPers betting on in-character card games or doing odd jobs for NPCs to increase their personal supply of in-game currency.

The *Challenge* theme refers to the LARPers ability to push themselves to achieve, which includes gaining new skills, surpassing personal records, and improving mental or physical fitness. Although *Competition* is focused on the more tangible indicators of success and progression, this theme is focused on the more abstract notions of the concept. Collected data examples that supports this theme include footage of 'honour duels' between strongly

combat focused PCs, or these PCs challenging the Sheriff NPC to duels to test their prowess.

The *Customisation* theme relates to the ability of LARPers to use their creative skills to adapt and alter existing creative content to better suit their various desires. This will most often focus on the elements of player creation developed in the time out-of-game and between events. Examples of this theme would include footage of LARPers showing off their costumes and hand-made props.

The theme of *Creativity* encompasses the passionate enjoyment of the act of creation, including the creation of props, costumes, characters, narrative elements, and other forms of artistic endeavours. This theme is focused less on the personal adapting of existing content, and more on the creation of new personal content, as well as the acquiring of the necessary skills for that content production. This theme also relates to the in-game creative aspects, such as creating poems about in-game events, or sketching other players. The footage of various *Shattered World LARP* Warbands showing off and testing their siege weapon props, such as the shark shaped battering ram, the catapult 'Chucki-boi', and the stone golem costume.

The theme of *Discovery* encompasses the LARPers efforts to find the satisfying feelings associated with the successful investigation of the various aspects of the LARP. These aspects can include, but are not limited to, the game's narrative threads, game-like rules, characters, and the game environment. It is about "Finding and knowing things that most other players don't know about" the LARP event for the sake of having made those discoveries (Bienia, 2013, pp.102). An example of this theme in action in the footage data includes LARPers at *Shattered World LARP* finding the location of the resource nodes hiding within the play area. Another example is the footage of a pair of LARPers from the blue and white knights Warband searching through the library for the item they need for their quest.

The *Escapism* theme relates to the ability of LARPers to, for a time, step away from the responsibility and pressures of their regular existences, to be immersed into the world of the LARP. This concept appeared repeatedly throughout the collected audio-visual data,

including in footage from several interviews that presented explanations of this theme in the context of LARPing.

3.5 – Chapter Summary

In summary, the result of the analysis of the data collected by *Phase 1* is three-fold. First, to provide a clear answer on the effectiveness of Bartle's typology for the classifying of LARPer motivations, supported by the collected evidence. Second, to develop a set of proposed hypothetical modifications of the typology, to be outlined in *Chapter 4*. Third, to produce two *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*, documentary style films, from the recorded audio-visual data, for use in *Phase 2*.

This chapter aimed to achieve four primary goals. Firstly, it outlined *Phase 1 of* the research project's data gathering process. Secondly, it described the methodologies used to develop and the execution of the design of the *Phase 1* procedure. Thirdly, it presented an outline of the experimental design that was carried out during the *Phase 1* fieldwork and data coding process. Fourthly, it began the discussion of the analysis and coding of the collected data, identifying the defining themes and features from the data to develop the *Phase 1* research outcomes.

Chapter 4: *Phase 1* Results and Discussion

4.0 – Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the research project's *Phase 1* results and the subsequent discussion of those results. This discussion was produced from the coding of the footage data gathered during *Phase 1*, including the identified themes outlined in *Chapter 3*. This chapter will aim to outline the five main points of discussion. Firstly, a new method of classifying the various types of LARP events, titled the *LARP Event Type Spectrum*, will be outlined. This method uses the varying ratios to which the defining elements of LARP gameplay design are present to some degree within all LARPs to differentiate events from each other. Secondly, this chapter will discuss how effectively Bartle's (1996) taxonomy can be applied to the study of WA LARP and demonstrating how the gathered evidence supports Henry's (2015) hypothesis. This will include a discussion of the primary issues that limited the effectiveness of Bartle's typology for the categorising of LARPers. Thirdly, the chapter will outline the proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's typology. These proposed modifications are considered hypothetical because they have been developed to be tested by the experimental design of *Phase 2*. Fourthly, the structure, purpose, and production process of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* films will be explained, including an examination of their role in the *Phase 2* data collection process. Fifthly, the initial results of the evaluation of the viability of panoramic video as a scholarly data collection method will be presented. It will also provide an explanation of how this investigation will be continued into the next phase of the study.

4.1 –The *LARP Event Type Spectrum* Development and Outline

In this section a method by which the LARP event types can be categorised will be discussed, along with the process used to develop it. This method of classification will be referred to as the *LARP Event Type Spectrum*. This method enables LARP games to be plotted on an interest graph, in the same way as Bartle (1996) did with his MUD player types.

As discussed in *Chapter 2*, there are several ways the types of LARPs can be organised

and classified. For example, they can be classified by the geographic region the event is taking place in, or which type of RPG inspired its structural framework (Hellstrom, 2011; Gade et al, 2003; Zagal and Deterding, 2018). However, classifying the large variety of LARP events into consistent categories is a challenging prospect. For example, LARP events could be categorised in terms of narrative genre (fantasy, western, sci-fi, post-apocalypse), story themes (mystery, survival, adventure), or by the mechanical gameplay aspects (player vs environment, player vs player) (Tychsen et al, 2006; Koljonen, 2016). Although, such a system would ultimately become confusing and ineffective, as potentially few LARPs would fit accurately into a manageable number of these categories. Therefore, during this study's research process, an alternative method of categorising the types of LARP events was developed.

The development of this method is based on the notion that it is more effective to consider the variety of LARP event types as a spectrum of possibilities, rather than a series of distinct categories. This method relies on the varying ratios between the defining themes of LARP's structure, as identified through the project's literature research review and the results of the *Phase 1* data collection process. A spectrum that can be organised and presented through graphic representation, such as in the graph presented in *Figure 4.1* below. This spectrum is based on the interaction between the focus of the LARP's design on each of the four main aspects of LARP gameplay design – *Role-play*, *Combat*, *Immersion* and *Rules*. The X-axis expresses the ratio of consideration between *role-play* focused gameplay verses *combat* focused gameplay, with high role-play and low combat focus at one end, and the reverse at the other. The Y-axis describes the relationship between *immersion* focused game design verses *rules* focused game design, where one end of the scale is high immersion focused design versus low rules focused design, with the opposite ratio on the other end.

Through the visualisation of the relationships between these two axes the general flow of the spectrum can be observed. On one end of the scale there are high role-play/low combat LARPs, such as *Parlour* LARPs, which rely completely on character interactions and the threat of combat but no actual combat. These games are similar in design to improvised theatre games, where problems are solved through words rather than simulated violence. Whereas on the other end, there are low roleplay/high combat LARPs, such as *Boffer* LARPs, that are heavily focused on physical combat related activities,

game-like mechanics and scoring points. These games have more in common with traditional sports, as the role-playing elements are mostly surface level to give some context to the battle than just hit your opponents with a LARP-safe weapon to earn points (Henry, 2015; Gade et al, 2003; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Koljonen, 2016).
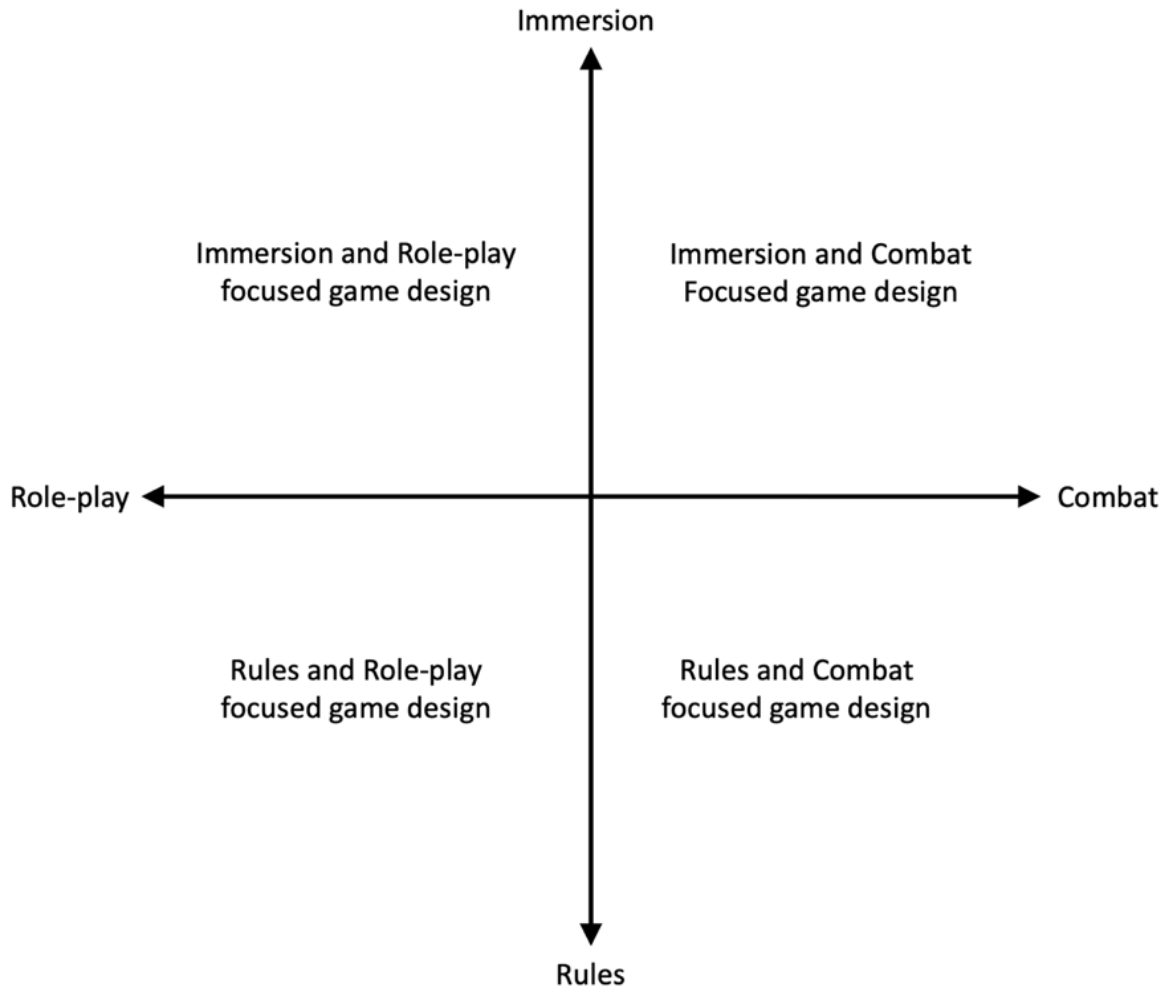
Figure 4.1 – LARP Game Type Spectrum Graph

Apart from a few outliers, most LARP games can be plotted on this graph, and thus within this spectrum, and can be demonstrated by using the current WA LARP events as examples. For instance, the wild west themed game known as *Boot Hill* is a WA example of a *Parlour* LARP, and thus would fit in the top-left quadrants of the spectrum. In these game events rather than shootouts at high noon or bar room brawls, the narrative and inter character issues of the game environment are settled through poker and fast talking.

On the other end, *Warhearts LARP* is an example of a heavily combat and rules focus game, that still has a significant emphasis on role-play, but has less of a focus on immersion, fitting in the spectrum's bottom-right quadrant. Each event day consists of several 30-60 minute long in-character battles between the different player factions, referred to as Empires, or some non-player enemy that the player Empire have encountered. These short battle games often involve an empire attempting to capture or defend a specific point of the play area, which represents some important resource in a particular area of the game world, from another player or non-player faction, with the outcomes of the battles dictating the progress of the game's overall narrative, as well as the relative strengths of each of the player empires. For example, if one Empire succeeds in capturing the point from their enemy, they are rewarded with accessing the fictional resources of that point, they can then choose to fortify that position or to keep pushing forward to obtain more land. Their decisions will determine who they will fight next and what sort of position they will have in that fight.

In the middle of the scale are the high roleplay/high combat LARPs, these are a good example of the wide range of possible LARP experiences and are focused on high immersion and development of emergent character-based narratives. *Shattered Worlds LARP*, the biggest LARP in WA, is an example of this kind of LARP, over the course of three days (9am-9pm), players fully embody their character within the high fantasy setting of the game. They interreact and battle with other characters to achieve their personal goals, the goals of their team (Warband), their allies (faction), and the 'Titan' they have chosen to serve.

Through the establishment of this method, in conjunction with the other research outcomes to be outlined in this chapter, it is now possible for LARPers and LARP events to be plotted on the same graph, the advantages of which are outlined later in this chapter.

4.2 – Effectiveness of Applying Bartle's theory to LARP

Bartle's player types (1996) are an influential model for academics and game developers to use in the examination of player behaviours within the player populations of various games. For example, Stewart (2011) used Bartle's work in the development of their *Unified*

Model design, as described in *Chapter 2*. Meanwhile, other scholars refer to Bartle's work as a valid, if debated, method for classifying or identifying player motivations (Pryzbyski et al, 2006; Torner, 2018; Henry, 2015). These scholars will often, choose not to use Bartle's theory in their own research, partly because it is not a perfect theory, as clearly demonstrated by the work of Yee (2006) and Stewart (2017). However, this does mean it has room for generalised improvement and specific customisation for the accurate examination of specific game types along with the player populations of those games.

The elements of LARP, as identified and discussed by Henry (2015), demonstrated that Bartle's taxonomy is only somewhat effective at categorising LARPers. Henry's hypothesis for explaining this ineffectiveness revolved around the clear fundamental differences between digital RPGs and physical LARPs. That difference being that LARPers physically embody their characters within the real-world game environment. Whereas, digital RPG players control a representation of their character, separate from their own physical form, within a virtual game environment, through a secondary interface device. This hypothesis has been reinforced by the results of the coded data gathered in this study's *Phase 1* data collection process. Thus, for the taxonomy to categorise the motivations and behaviours of LARPers more accurately, modifications to Bartle's typology theory are necessary.

In other words, In MUDs/MMORPGs, the game world exists solely in a virtual online space, accessible to players through a remote interface device, such as a computer or games console (Yee, 2006). The players of these digital RPGs can access the special time space of the virtual game world from any location or time zone in the world. The game worlds of LARPs, meanwhile, are in real-world physical spaces, transformed through set dressing, and imagination, to enable the players to physically enter the *magic circle* (Montola, 2012). Where upon entering the designated game area, the players embody their characters, joining with each other and the LARP Orgs to immerse themselves into a shared altered reality, but only during the event specific location and times (Vartiainen, 2015). It is this fundamental difference that causes the difficulty when applying Bartle's theory to LARPers, as many acceptable MUDs/MMORPGs behaviours are physically impossible or considered to be unacceptable, toxic behaviours at most LARPs.

The LARPers interviewed for this study were asked what motivates them and what behaviours they see in LARP. Their responses often matched several of those described

by Bartle, but several also corresponded to those arguments made by Henry (2015). Several of the *Phase 1* interview participant responses matched up with many of the motivational player behaviours described by Bartle in his theory. These interview responses were also further backed-up by the results pulled from the coded observational fieldwork data of player behaviours during LARP events. For example, many behaviours and motivations that defined the socialiser type, such as communication, role-play and co-operation were observed in the footage of LARP events. In addition to being mentioned by multiple interview participants, who also stated that they could see themselves and those they know being able to fit into such types. The interview participants further stated which elements of player behaviour could be used to differentiate different LARPer types including many of the concepts Bartle used in his typology, such as LARPers being motivated and focused on elements of role-play, story focused, victory focused, immersion focused, or the escapism aspects of LARP.

However, other defining aspects of Bartle's design were only briefly hinted at in interview responses, and rarely seen in the field observations. Meanwhile, other participant responses and behaviour observations did not match any of Bartle's described behaviours, such as the concepts of LARPer creative design (like costumes and props). Whereas many of the motivating factors and player behaviours that defined Bartle's player types were not present in the coded results data. Many of the behaviours and motivations used to describe the *Killer* and *Explorer* type were not seen in the collected observational data, and rarely discussed in the interview footage. When it was mentioned in the interviews, it was to describe behaviours that are not conducted at LARPs, as they were either impossible, unsafe, or annoying for the other players and LARP Orgs. For instance, picking at the code or damaging the structures of a virtual play space are common *Explorer* type behaviours in a digital RPG, but such behaviours in LARP are impossible or considered vandalism. As another example, the *Killer* player type behavioural aspect of attacking other players for no reason other than to torment them is very common in digital RPGs, but in most LARPs it is very toxic behaviour.

As *Chapter 3* outlined, the themes identified through the coding of the qualitative research results data, further detailed this differential between the Bartle's taxonomy and LARPer motivational behaviours. This meant that most of the defining elements of the *Achiever* type and *Socialiser* type were observed in the field and mentioned in interview responses.

Meanwhile, only some of the defining behaviours of the *Explorer* type were observed in the recorded data, such as game environment and mechanical investigation. Whereas other aspects of the *Explorer* type, including computer code examination and additional game lore consumption, were not observed in the *Phase 1* results. This was due to the lack of external narrative lore resources for the game events, along with the absence of exploitable digital programming code, as the game-world was instead defined by LARPers' collective imagination. In addition to the overall size and limited detail of the real-world game environments restricted the players ability to conduct an in-depth exploration (Cox, 2019; Steele, 2016; Lampo, 2012). Furthermore, many aspects of Bartle's *Killer* type were not observed in the field, as they were defined in interview responses as negative behaviours in most LARPs and thus actively discouraged in-game. Meanwhile, other aspects of the *Killer* type were present in the data, but these aspects had manifested differently to how Bartle described them, so they were difficult to recognise. These findings are all consistent with the hypothetical suggestions of Henry (2015), however the *Phase 1* results also uncovered additional data beyond these predictions.

The interpretation of the collected observational data demonstrated that the observed WA LARPers could be partly placed within some of the player types described in Bartle's typology. However, the types often operated more effectively when the defining elements of the type were interpreted differently from their usual definitions. Meaning that the taxonomy was able to be applied more accurately to LARPers when the context of the player type elements was altered and reinterpreted through the LARP community's perspective and language. In this case, the *Socialiser* and *Achiever* types worked reasonably effectively at describing the behaviours of some LARPers, while the *Killer* and *Explorer* types were only slightly more effective. For instance, The *Killer* could effectively encompass the LARPers that enjoy LARPs combat aspects, but their motivations do not match up with the motivations of the MUD players Bartle was examining. This is because of the differences in the specific game mechanics and the player interface of digital RPGs and LARPs. Rather than trying to be disruptive to the other players, they are instead motivated to fight to test their own strengths, aiming to improve their skills. Similarly, the *Explorer* type was revealed as not sufficiently compatible with the definition of LARPers, due mostly to the differences between LARP and Digital RPGs. Some LARPers have similar motivating drives, of seeking out the mysteries of the game environment, however it does not manifest in the same way as the player behaviours that Bartle describes. This is

again because many of those digital RPG behaviours are not feasible within the physical game environment of a LARP. The game environments of LARP are either simply too large with insufficient time, or too small with very limited detail, for the LARPers to enjoy investigating them. Along with many of the common digital RPG *Explorer* type behaviours being tantamount to vandalism in a real-world space, and thus are discouraged by LARP Orgs for insurance and common-sense reasons. The extent to which the differences between the virtual aspects of the various forms of digital RPGs and the real-world aspects of LARP has a major impact on the applicability of theories such as Bartle's. Therefore, it is also an important aspect of this thesis and a major consideration for the research work involved in this process. (Henry, 2015; Bowman, 2018; Jenkins, 2008). As such, discussions of these differences and the affects they have the viability of applying RPG theories from digital RPGs to LARPs, or vice versa, can be found throughout this thesis.

In summary, the interviews and observational data seems to confirm that Henry's criticisms of Bartle's typology, when directly applied to LARP, are valid. This is because of the changes in player behaviours that occurred due to the shift from the virtual game environments of digital RPGs to the physical game environments of LARP events. A change in behaviours that rendered some of the player types that Bartle described, such as the *Killer* and *Explorer* types, as being ineffective for describing LARPers. This is a very important point of discussion to come from the analysis of the study's Phase 1 results, which will have considerable impact on the development of the remainder of the research discussion, and the *Phase 2* experimental design. This will include a further discussion and investigation into the extent to which the differences between real-world and virtual digital interfaces affects the use of digital RPG theories for LARPer classification. Therefore, arguably Bartle's typology is only somewhat effective at classifying LARPers and thus will require specific modifications to be more effective, with these alterations outlined in the next section.

4.3 – Proposed LARP Modifications of the Player Motivation Typology

Bartle's (1996) theory is not perfect, as shown by the work of other scholars such as Yee (2006), Henry (2015), and even Bartle himself (2004). However, it was this imperfection that was a major part of its appeal, and the reason for it being used in this study, instead of

the other digital RPG player typologies previously described in this thesis. This is because this theory has ample room for general improvements, or specific customisation for the accurate examination of specific game types along with their player populations (Pryzbyski et al, 2006; Torner, 2018; Stewart, 2017).

Through an examination of the collected *Phase 1* results, including the observational, interview, and audio-visual data, the following proposed modifications to Bartle's typology were developed. Each of these proposed hypothesised changes to the player types were in response to some identified limitation of Bartle's typology and were designed to counter those limitations. These proposed changes to the player types are referred to as hypothetical because they have been developed to be tested by the experimental design of the *Phase 2* verification study. Although the *Socialiser* and the *Achiever* player types required significate modification, it was the *Explorer* and *Killer* player types that require the most modification.

The proposed theory shows that the classification of each player type benefits from specific customisations to better describe the player motivations of LARPers. To eliminate confusion, the first step in this process of developing these proposed LARPer focused modifications to the player motivation typology, was to rename the four player types as follows:

- *Achievers* are now known as *Warriors*
- *Socialisers* are now known as *Diplomats*
- *Explorers* are now known as *Adventurers*
- *Killers* are now known as *Fighters*

4.3.1 – The *Warrior* Modified Player Type

The *Warrior* LARPer motivation type is focused on finding the most efficient ways to achieve the LARP's quest goals or win-conditions and accumulate as much in-game wealth as possible. *Warriors* relate strongly to the emergent narrative aspects of LARP, by completing quests, achieving the game's win-conditions and progress the story of the game. Players of this type often desire to become stronger and gain access to items of value relevant to the game, advancing through the narrative, and having an impact on how

that story plays out. They will often create their characters primarily to achieve these goals more efficiently, or to strengthen weaknesses in the makeup of their team. Instead of being inspired by other influences, such as characters from books or television narratives, this ensures that their team is most effectively able to compete against the other teams at the event (Yee, 2006; Bartle, 1996; Bienia, 2013).

LARP games with clearly presented objectives, a low to moderate level of role-play and a moderate to high focus on combat, can be the most appealing games for *Warrior* type LARPers (Pryzbyski et al, 2006; Torner, 2018; Henry, 2015). This is because these games provide opportunities for players to satisfy their motivations to act on the game world in a meaningful way, to feel that they have truly accomplished something amazing. Examples of such games in the WA LARP scene include *Warhearts LARP* and *Shattered World LARP* and would also include *Boffer* LARP style games for similar reasons.

Warriors are focused on attempting to achieve the win-condition or objectives of the LARP, however the nature of these objectives can vary widely between the different LARP types and games. For instance, if a LARP's win condition is based on completing a series of tasks on a quest list the players may need to talk to other players or NPCs to get certain information or collect stories. Alternatively, they might need to explore the play area to find hidden objects, or perhaps they need to battle a set number of enemies in a certain way to achieve their quest objective. Thus, *Warrior* type players will often crossover with aspects and behaviours that define these other LARPer motivation types.

A major change to the *Warrior* type in comparison to the *Achiever* type is the additional shift in focus on to the emergent narratives aspect of LARP, instead of entirely on MUD-style reward systems. Most LARPs lack the same style of wealth token (currency, weapons, magic gear, experience points) that are a staple of MUDs and other types of RPG games. Instead for the most part, the LARPer's actions in-game are more consistently rewarded with the continuation of the LARP 's narrative, on either a personal, team, or game wide narrative scale. Thus, 'winning a LARP' is more often about who can create the most exciting narrative for their team rather than which team got the most points or gold, although that can still be a part of the experience. Despite this change of focus the core motivation factor of the *Warrior* and *Achiever* types remains the same, which is

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described as the feeling of satisfaction felt from accomplishing a competitive challenge (Bienia, 2013).

In summary, this player type requires only minor alteration from its original form as described by Bartle. The *Achiever* type players are focused on the collection of in-game wealth and methods of improving their player character, while also focusing very little on the MUDs narrative (Bartle, 1996). Meanwhile, the *Warrior* type players are focused on making their character as effective as possible to drive forward the LARP game's emergent narrative, to most benefit themselves and their team.

4.3.2 – The *Diplomat* Modified Player Type

Diplomat players get their enjoyment from using their characterisation and communication skills to interact with the other characters in the game to foster memorable role-play moments and create lasting relationships between these characters. It is these social interactions that they crave, rather than merely 'winning' the game, they flourish in LARPs that focus on high immersion and heavy role-play, such as *Parlour* LARPs (Pryzbyski et al, 2006; Torner, 2018; Henry, 2015).

Diplomat players are drawn in by the opportunity to interact with the other players and are deeply tied to the concepts of roleplay, embodiment, and immersion, along with the social interaction aspects that define LARP (Bartle, 1996). The *Diplomat* type is also defined by the LARPer's desire to inhabit a fully realised in-depth character and experience an immersive world populated with other such characters. Through mutual communication and assistance, they work together to progress their own personal stories, as well as the world's narrative, developing meaningful, supportive relationships with each other along the way (Yee, 2006). Some examples of current WA based LARP games this sort of player would enjoy would include the western themed *Boot-Hill LARP* and sci-fi themed *Arecibo Circle LARP*.

Diplomat LARPers are primarily focused on in-character social interactions and the role-play characteristics of LARP games. They often ignore aspects of the game that other player types, like *Warriors*, pursue with great vigour, to instead interact with other PCs and NPCs within the game's shared imagined world. This sort of player is focused on roleplay,

character development, and embodiment, they will progress the narrative, fleshing out the world of the game by sharing stories, legends, and lore with each other. During the observational research they were often heard telling stories of past adventures, discussing the differences in the anatomy between sea-elves and goblins, or getting into light tussles over insults or old debts. In addition to attempting to play out their own personal sub-plots that the other PCs willingly build on and carry forward, such as a sailor searching for a missing set of sails, or a doctor warning other PCs of possible toxins in the area. Another example observed was the sharing of exotic food stuffs between characters, food that is delicious to one species but caused side-effects in other species, which players improvised and played out in-game. These player behaviours were done simply for the amusement of the players themselves, which adds to their own characters and sharing with the others, and often has no real effect on the game.

However, such dedication can at times result in some less than desirable effects, such as in cases where players have not understood a story element, or misheard LARP Org instructions. As discussed in the interview responses, this normally has only a minimal negative effect on the player's enjoyment of the event but can sometimes have a consequence for the game's overall narrative. For example, a LARP Org interview participant discussed how a player developed rumour about a plague coming to the land quickly got out of hand at one of the early *Shattered World LARP* events. In this case the LARP Orgs had to intervene, to get things back under control, this involved introducing a new plot element to wrap up the encounter before it completely derailed the event, in this case a cure to the fictional plague. In rare cases, LARP Orgs will rewrite the history of events, known as 'Retconning', to remove the troublesome effects of such an encounter, to prevent any lasting harm or damage to the game and players. Although, these crazy situations can sometimes become some players' favourite memories of an event, which they will reminisce about and possibly even further develop in subsequent games.

The *Diplomat* player's focus on 'role-play over mechanics' even occurs during combat encounters, where some players choose to maintain characterisation over tactical decision making. These choices often result in more enjoyable and exciting combat for the *Diplomat*, who as a type do not often enjoy combat as much as other aspects of the game. For example, an interviewed LARPer told of a time during a large-scale battle where he decided to spare an enemy archer that had gotten separated from the rest of her

Warband's formation. He could have taken her down easily as archers are not good at defending against sword and shield wielders at close range, but that is not how he felt his character, a simple fisherman conscripted into the fight, would handle the situation. Thus, In-character he said to the archer "We are not on your side… you should run" (*Phase 1, Field Shoot 3*), and that was exactly what she did. After the fight the archer came up to him out of character to thank him for his kindness and informed him that her character, a fierce noblewoman and leader of her own Warband, chose to honour his kindness by not firing at him for the rest of the battle.

As with all the motivation types there are instances where 'Diplomats', in order to accomplish their primary motivating desires, will exhibit behaviours that better define the other motivation types. For example, *Diplomats* will often have to explore the game world to find the NPCs and PCs they want to talk with. The socially focused nature of the *Diplomats* often leads them to take other PCs along with them on these mini adventures, particularly new players. This is with the aim of helping these new players to get more comfortable within the game environment and improve their role-play skills. The social interactions of these players can also lead them to achieving the goals of their quests without even realising they were doing so. For instance, following a conversation with a merchant NPC, a *Diplomat* player bought an item from them just to show they had appreciated the interaction. The player later discovered that the item was the final component their Warband needed to complete their main quest arc.

In summary, the *Socialiser* type has undergone only some minor adaptations to be developed into the proposed *Diplomat* type. The primary alteration between the two types is the mode and context through which the players communicate with one another. Players of MUDs communicate via the in-game text messenger systems, with the in-game and out-of-game communications differentiated by game specific text commands and gramma. Meanwhile, LARPers communicate with their voices and body language, as they physically embody their player character once they enter the game's environment. Their actions and words becoming those of their PC, unless they use the game specific movement, of placing their hand over their head, to break that immersion and communicate out-of-game. However, the core motivations between the *Socialiser* and the *Diplomat* type remains constant, this being to use role-play and communication skills to form meaningful relationships with other players.

4.3.3 – The *Adventurer* Modified Player Type

The proposed *Adventurer* LARPer motivation type describes those players who are compelled by the desire for discovery. Those who immerse themselves into both the imagined and physical aspects of the game world, in addition to investigating the unique mechanical rule sets, which dictate the LARP's operation. This play style is focused on seizing opportunities to interact with the game world itself, while learning all they can about the narrative lore, game mechanics, rules, and the physical play area (Bartle, 1995). They seek to not just know and experience everything they can about the world, but to also contribute to its continued development as well.

Adventurer type players will often build their characters around a concept they want to explore within the game mechanics, as they enjoy trying out different abilities and skill combinations beyond those used by most players. Alternatively, they can use their knowledge of the world to make a character that is best suited to exploring and investigating the in-game world (Yee, 2006). LARPers of the *Adventurer* types are drawn to LARPs with interesting rule sets, settings, and mechanics, along with LARPs based around detailed, in-depth narrative worlds that satisfy their wanderlust (Henry, 2015). Some examples of WA based LARP games that would appeal to *Adventurers* would be the fantasy based *Shattered World LARP*, or the high immersion post-apocalypse themed *Avoss LARP*.

The *Adventurer* player motivation type requires greater modification from Bartle's *Explorer* type to effectively define the behaviours and play style of those types of LARPers. This is because of the difference of MUDs/MMORPGS as opposed to LARPs in their shared imagined space-time, that their respective player populations will inhabit and interact with differently. *Explorer* players often explore not only the expansive rendered virtual worlds of MUDs/MMORPGs, but also the programming code that creates that virtual world. Sometimes even creating or discovering glitches in that code, then exploiting those anomalies for their own amusement and satisfaction. Meanwhile, this is simply not possible in the real-world spaces where LARPs take place, so for *Adventurers* this behaviour manifests in another form. A form that often has such players referred to in-community by the moniker of 'rules lawyers', which refers to players who are most known

for memorising, overanalysing, and experimenting with the game-like mechanics of a LARP (Edwards, 2001; Przybylski, 2006; Gade et al, 2003). This extensive knowledge can lead to these players to discovering exploitable loopholes, unorthodox character builds, and other unique tactics within the LARPs game-like mechanics. This behaviour comes close to being 'cheating' but will rarely actually break the rules, however it can occasionally 'break the game' itself, which requires LARP Orgs to update rules and fix these loopholes.

Although this sort of behaviour can be frustrating for LARP Orgs and other players, it is important and useful for a game's player population to consist of a proportion of *Adventurer* type players. These players can help LARP Orgs enforce the rules during game events, with many of these players being deputised as additional Game Marshals or umpires. Their interest in investigating a LARP's game-like mechanics they can also help LARP Orgs identify faults or flaws in the rules that may have been missed, so can be fixed before the game events. This provides the LARP Orgs with the opportunity to deal with these issues and maintain the quality of the LARP event. Furthermore, based on the interview data, it is common for players of the *Adventurer* type to be on LARP Org committees, or running their own LARP events, while also being players in other events.

The physical nature of LARP games and their worlds also have an impact on how *Adventurers* approach each game, as well as differentiating them from Bartle's *Explorer* type. The virtual game worlds of digital RPGs are accessible to the players from almost anywhere, at any time for as long as they want, and requires minimal physical effort to explore, but the physical game world of a LARP is only available during the LARP's designated game time and location. The LARP world is defined by the real-world space available for the LARP and the various terms the LARP Orgs need to abide by to use that location. They are also constrained by their available budget for set dressing and other decorations needed to transform the real-world space into a facsimile of the game's world. Hence, there may simply not be the level of detail in the game world to satisfy the investigations of the *Adventurers*. Some LARP games can have quite large game areas available to them, thus requiring considerable physical exertion from the players to fully explore the whole area in the time they have available. This can influence the number of *Adventure* type LARPers within the player population of any given LARP but there will always be a percentage of them present on game day, although this can also be stated for all four of the LARPer motivation types outlined in these initial proposed modifications.

In summary, the *Explorer* type required more extensive alterations to be developed into the *Adventurer* type, in comparison to the previous *Warrior* and *Diplomat* types. Although again the primary motivating factor remains consistent between the *Explorer* and *Adventurer* types, with this motivation being to satisfy a thirst for the discovery of game knowledge. The primary factors that differentiate the adventurer from the explorer type is caused by the shift between the fundamental nature and origins of the game world. On one hand, there are the bountiful possibilities of the expansive detailed online digital game environments of MUDs created by full-time game development studios. On the other hand, there are the game environments of LARPs, which are far more constrained in their size and level of detail, due primarily to the unavoidable practicalities of the real-world and the tight budgets of small volunteer, non-profit organiser committees (Vartiainen, 2015; Gade et al, 2003).

4.3.4 – The *Fighter* Modified Player Type

Those of the *Fighter* type are more motivated by the physical aspects of LARP, they enjoy LARP in the way others participate in traditional sports. This type includes those players who gain joy from creating physical artifacts, learning new practical skills, and the physical fitness aspects of LARP, particularly the simulated combat. The *Fighter* motivation type is strongly related to the combat mechanics aspects of LARP, meaning that they measure their enjoyment of LARP based on the type and intensity of physical activity they can engage in during an event. *Fighters* enjoy pushing their bodies to the limit, improving their overall physical fitness, and expanding their mastery over various physical skills, including the variety of simulated combat types available.

For a *Fighter* the narrative reasoning for a fight is not as important as the fact that they get to fight, and similarly they do not need much excuse to don their armour or other elaborate costumes. This player type will often build a simple character that is designed to be fun to fight and can best show off the costume they have just completed. Several interview participants reported that LARP provided them with the opportunity to 'set aside their everyday lives and real-world problems for a while and be someone else" (*Phase 1*, Field shoot 1). They are also able to gain the satisfaction of creating personalised and detailed artefacts that allow them to inhabit the character more easily, which exemplifying the

notions of escapism and creativity. (Yee, 2006; Bienia, 2013). The training sessions, build days, *Warhearts LARP*, and *Shattered Worlds LARP* would be of great interest to the *Fighter* type, as these events allow them to challenge themselves to improve, learn, and create.

Those of the *Fighter* type can be defined as those players who gain satisfaction from the physically creative or constructive aspects of LARP, both during and between game events. They take great joy in learning and using new skills, such as carpentry, metal working, sewing, or leather working to create elaborate costumes, props, armour, and mechanical weapons, such as catapults or rubber band guns. These players create not only for themselves but for others in their Warbands, or even whole factions, enabling their team to have a unified look in their costumes and even the decoration of their campsites. These players often take on the roles of generals and heroes within the game world, seeking to make themselves strong enough to lead the charge into battle. Players of this player type report feeling like "invincible juggernauts" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 4) when they wear their full plate armour and feel the physical exhilaration of combat. For them the narrative reasons for the battle are a secondary concern, whereas the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in battle and the thrill of the fight are their main drive.

Although the '*Fighter*' type required the most modification from Bartle's (1995) theory, the primary motivating factor he outlined is partly applicable, as these LARPers can still be described as acting on other players (Henry, 2015). However, similarly to the primary motivation of the explorer type, the focus of the motivation has been altered, from a focus on power and control to that of competition and challenge (Yee, 2006; Bienia, 2013). The methods by which these motivation defining behaviours manifests is different to and is arguably much healthier than that observed in MUDs/MMORPGs. For example, rather than presenting as behaviour that is deliberately disruptive and puts down other players, the behaviour of *Fighters* manifests as the player raising themselves and others up. It is these types of players who also help to lead their fellow players in preparations for game events as well as on the in-game battlefield.

These players assert power over other players to help them gain the most out of the LARPs they attend, making sure each Warband member remembers to bring what they need for each event. For instance, they will coordinate the transport of teammates and

gear to the game site, dividing them up amongst the available cars or by organising and dividing the cost of hiring a moving van. They are also the ones that develop their team's in-game tactics and strategize, turning their fellow players from a confused rabble to an effective layered defensive formation on the battlefield. They seek not only their own joy and glory, but to make sure everyone, from first time players to the most experienced players, has a good, safe, and satisfying experience at game.

This sort of tactical thinking and organisation does exist amongst MUDs players, but in that game type this behaviour would be better attributed to the definition of the *Achiever* type. As *Achiever* type players would want to rally their fellow players to a common goal, such as clearing a dungeon and collecting the treasure. Whereas the *Killer* type of player would more likely attempt to forge ahead of the team to show their power, or even wait to attack a team of successful players as they leave the dungeon, to take the treasure for their own (Bartle, 1996; Torner, 2018; Stewart, 2011). It is these sorts of behaviours that are often not possible in LARP or seen as very negative player behaviour, apart from a few LARPs where such actions are part of the gameplay mechanics. However, in these cases, this behaviour will come with in-game or game mechanics-based consequences for those involved. These consequences could be as simple as other players coming to the aid of the players under attack, or it could be more complex. For example, in *Shattered World LARP*, a player faction can decide to not fully commit to one of the daily 'king-of-the-hill' style battles, instead only sending a small force, to see who wins the treasure. The player faction can then lay siege to the winning faction's fortress with their full force, while those in the fortress are exhausted and weakened from the effort of winning the previous battle. The attacking faction will likely win the siege and take the treasure themselves, however it is also likely that they will be attacked later in the game by one or more of the other factions. Thus, the actions have reasonable and fair tactical consequences to a team taking such actions and it does not affect the long-term enjoyment of the players.

However, even though this is hardly ever done in true malice, these behaviours can at times come across as overbearing and can be interpreted negatively by other players, as if only the opinion or character journey of the *Fighter* type player matters. Although this or similar negative player behaviours can occur within the *Fighter* type, it can also occur with each of the other proposed modified player motivation types described in this chapter. That is why LARP Orgs and LARPers both maintain constant vigilance to identify and

counter these kinds of issues. They do their best to negate these issues as much as possible while still encouraging all players to enjoy the LARP in their own way.

In summary, The *Fighter* type players do not really care about the game's narrative or the reasons it provides to contextualise the fights. These players are only interested in the fight itself, and the opportunities for self-improvement it provides. Out of all Bartle's types, the *Killer* type required the most extensive alterations to be developed into the proposed *Fighter* LARPer type. This is due largely to the changes in player behaviour associated with the shift from the digital platform to the physical real-world game environment, and the varying perception of the defining player behaviours of the *Killer* type in LARP, many of which are consistently considered negative. In addition to the heavy shift in the focus of the primary motivating factors that dictate the players behaviours of the two types. *Fighters* are motivated by challenge and competition, while *Killers* are motivated by power and control. This means the unlike the previously proposed LARP focused modified types, the primary motivation of the *Fighter* type is drastically modified from that of the *Killer* type as originally described by Bartle.

4.3.5 – Additional Motivation Typology Modifications

These four proposed modified Bartle player types, as described above, can be briefly outlined in the summary table presented in *Figure 4.2* below. As is the case with MUD players and Bartle's original player typology theory, no LARPer will fit neatly and completely within just one of these defined motivation types. Instead, they will shift and crossover between two or three of the types, depending on numerous factors, such as personal mood and the type of LARP. However, most if not all players will still have a primary motivation type that will dictate their behaviours at game and those aspects of LARP they most enjoy.

These modifications can be additionally expressed on an 'interest graph', as presented in *Figure 4.3*, combined with the visual representation of the *LARP Type Spectrum* along its axes. The Y-axis of this interest graph represents the ratios between the themes of *Act* and *Interact*, as well as the LARP themes of *Role-play* and *Combat*. In this context *Act* refers to the player's ability to act on, or impose their will upon, the other aspects of the LARP game. Meanwhile, *interacting* refers to the player's ability to interact with, or work

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alongside the other aspects of the LARP game (Aytemiz and Smith, 2020). Furthermore, *Role-play* in this context refers to a player's personal preference or enjoyment of the role-playing aspects of the LARP event. *Combat* refers to the player's enjoyment or preference for the focused combat gameplay aspects of LARP events. Thus, the axis itself can visually express the player's degree of enjoyment, or preference for, the role-playing aspects of the LARP in comparison to the combat aspects, and vice-versa.

Player Type	Identified Defining Themes and Features	Basic Outline
Warriors	- Emergent narrative - Objective based gameplay - Combat - Achievement - Advancement - Competition - Challenge	- Players act on the game world - Focused on achieving goals and collecting indicators of in-game wealth - Would most enjoy high combat and low role-play style games, with clear 'win/lose' conditions
Diplomats	- Role-play - Embodiment - Communication - Relationship - Socialising - Teamwork	- Player interacts with the other players - Focused on the formation of relationships, social interactions, and cooperation - Would most enjoy low combat high role-play style games, with abstract 'win/lose' conditions
Adventurers	- Mechanics - Immersion - Embodiment - Discovery - Mechanics - Immersion	- Players interact with the game world - Focused on investigating the rules that dictated the game world, and exploring the physical game world - Would most enjoy LARPs with interesting rules, unique settings, as well as an expansive and/or detailed physical play space
Fighters	- Combat - Creativity - Escapism - Customisation - Competition - Challenge	- Players act on other players - Focused on the combat and other physical aspects of the game, in addition to the related out of game creativity - Would most enjoy games with high combat, opportunities for physical exertion, and artefact creation

Figure 4.2 – Summary of Proposed LARP Modifications to Bartle Player Types

The X-axis of the interest graph represents the ratios between the themes of *Players* and *World*, along with the themes of *Immersion* and *Rules.* In this context, *Players* refer to the other LARPers and participants inhabiting or taking part in the LARP event. Whereas *World* refers to the LARP events physical in-game environment. Furthermore, *Immersion*

in this context refers to the player's personal preference for the immersion focused game-play design aspects of LARP events (Aytemiz and Smith, 2020). *Rules* refers to the player's personal preference for rules and mechanics focused game-play design aspects of LARP events. Thus, the axis itself can visually express the player's preference between mechanics and immersion focused game design.

Combat
&
ACT

FIGHTER
Acting on Other Players
Immersion and Combat focused Play

WARRIOR
Acting on the game world
Rules and Combat focused play

Immersion
&
PLAYERS

Rules
&
WORLD

DIPLOMAT
Interacting with other players
Immersion and Role-play focused play

ADVENTURER
Interacting with the game world
Rules and Role-play focused play

Role-play
&
INTERACTING
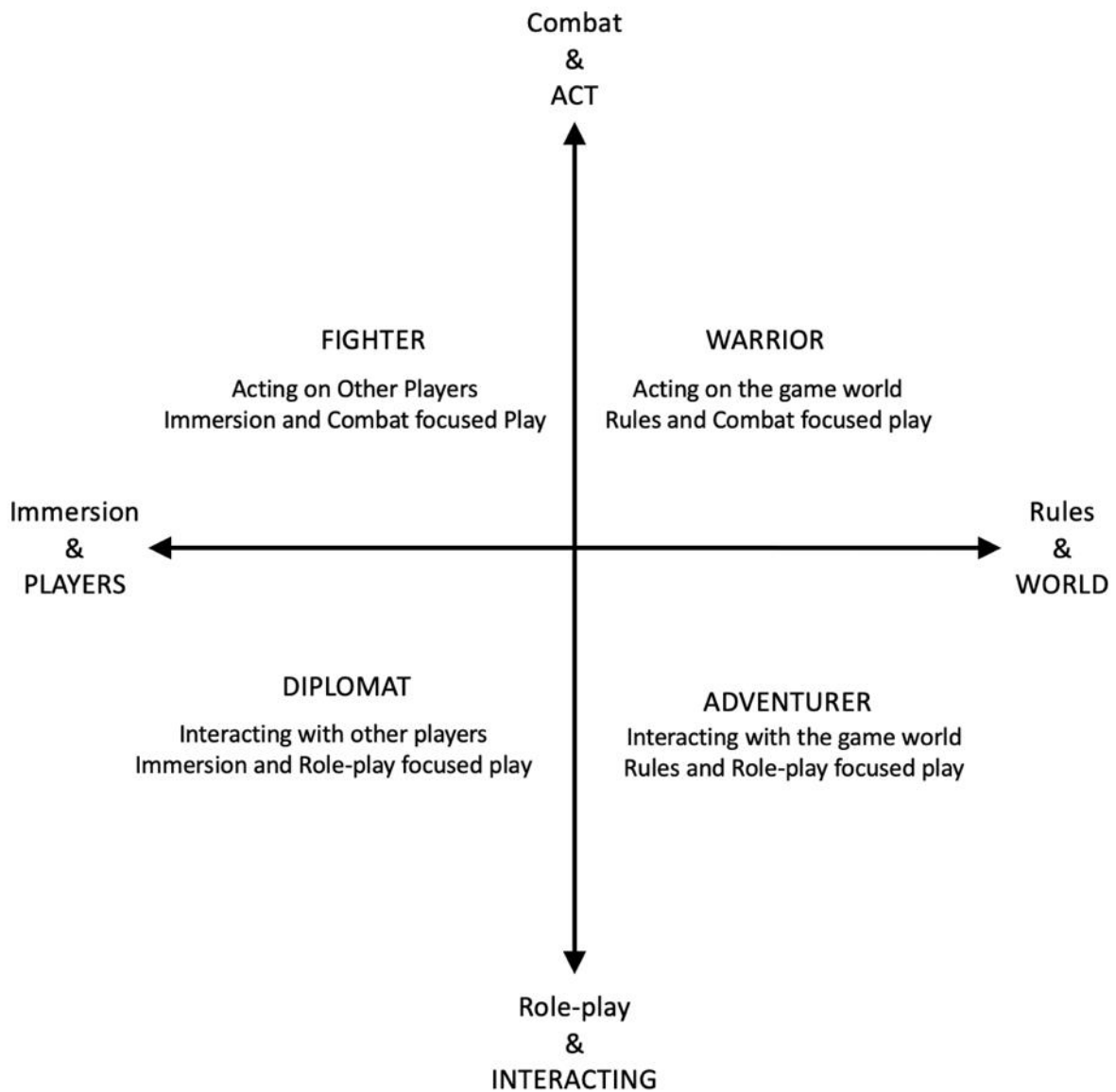
Figure 4.3 – Proposed LARP Modifications to Bartle Player Types Interest Graph

This graph allows for the visual organisation of individual LARPers, or groups of LARPers, within the proposed player typology theory. As with Bartle's original taxonomy, the outer corners of the graph's quadrants represent the ideal version of each of the modified player

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types (Bartle, 1996; Torner, 2018; Bartle, 2016). Additionally, these modified player types are not rigid boxes, but rather more flexible in nature, with this graph able to visually represent this flexibility. For example, a player could be identified as a *Fighter* type, but also enjoy elements of the *Warrior* type, thus they will be plotted in the *Warrior* quadrant, but very close to the Y-axis separating the types. Hypothetically, this combined graph could be used to plot not only the alignment of individual LARPers but also to catalogue the various LARPs operating in WA.

As previously mentioned, the types and variety of LARP games can be described as existing on a spectrum, defined by the inclusion ratio of the major defining elements of LARP. This scale can be used to represent the ratio of the four proposed LARPer types within a LARP event's player population, achieved by plotting a sample of a LARP game's player population onto the graph. This data needed for the graph can be gathered through interviews or the observations of player behaviour to determine the LARPer types from a sample of the player population. After which these data points can be placed on the graph to visually determine the spread of the player types within the player population sample. LARP Orgs can then easily examine the graph for any apparent patterns or clusters, so they can consider this information about the player population as they develop future content. Choosing to meet their player's expectations, by adding more content to the areas that the players have been shown to enjoy, or alternatively, they could instead choose to subvert their player's expectations, by adding game features that their players would not expect but could still enjoy.

The key to using this proposed theory effectively, as with using Bartle's theory, is to remember that a balanced player population is not an equal ratio of each of the four player types. Rather it is maintaining the ratio of each player type that is right for each individual LARP game, and the design of the game should aim to maintain that ratio over the lifetime of the LARP events. This proposed typology could be used to predict how players may approach a particular stimulus present within the structure of a LARP event. For instance, a *Boffer* LARP will have a low number of *Adventurers* and *Diplomats*, but a high number of *Warriors* and *Fighters*, where as a *Parlour* LARP will have a different ratio. This means that this typology can help focus the creative energies of the LARP Orgs to where it is needed most. For example, if most of an event's players are of the *Warrior* or *Fighter* type, the LARP Orgs can focus on developing more interesting combat encounters. Whereas if

the sample is shown to have more *Diplomat* LARPers, then the LARP Orgs will need to focus their efforts on expanding the narrative lore of their game world. Meanwhile, if the population consists of mostly *Adventurer* type LARPers, the LARP Orgs will need to dedicate more in-game time for player exploration or have interesting mechanics for those players.

4.3.6 – Limitations of The Proposed Modified Player Typology

These initial proposed modifications to the player motivation typology developed by Bartle (1996), despite providing a more effective method of defining LARPer behaviour, does have its limitations. In fact, there are several aspects of the LARP experience, that still do not fit effectively within this hypothetical typology, in addition to more than a few examples of observed LARPer behaviour. For instance, the aspect of *Player creativity*, although currently attached to the *Fighter* type, could arguably fit in one of the other proposed modified types, while also possibly not fitting properly into any of the types.

A further example is the proposed *Fighter* LARPer type, which required the most modification from Bartle's (1996) *Killer* player type. Since many of the key defining behaviours of *Killers* are not compatible with LARP, some even being considered as toxic behaviours that are actively discouraged by LARP Orgs (Henry, 2015). During this modification aspects of the *Killer* type have been altered and separated into two possible LARPer motivation types. These being the positive behaviours, that were collected to define the *Fighter* player type, and the remainder being the perceived negative, or not LARP compatible, aspects of the *Killer* type. It could be possible that these remaining aspects of player motivation and behaviour could be used to define another LARPer type, one that provides a definition of a '*Bad LARPer*'.

However, LARP Orgs take great effort to properly identify and defuse such behaviour in their games and are assisted by most of their player base. All of whom endeavour to maintain an acute awareness of each other's and their own behaviour, stepping in, when necessary, with as measured a response as can be mustered. Thus, such a type would be more problematic than it would be useful in a LARPer motivation typology, however that is an issue to be addressed when the typology is put to the test. As a counter point to this argument of excluding a 'bad LARPer' player type it is possible that having a formal

consistent profile of a bad player could be a useful definition for LARP Orgs because it would enable them to more effectively identify and deal with such individuals before they can do any damage to events, other players, or the community in general.

Although this is a valid point, a player type that defines negative player behaviour will not be included in this proposed modified typology, due to four main reasons. First, it is very unlikely that anyone would be motivated to participate in LARP solely for the purpose of making things unpleasant for other players the observed structure of the LARP community and the time and financial expense barriers to LARP participation would effectively discourage most purposely malicious individuals long before they could make it to an event.

Second, the problems commonly present in all communities particularly alternative communities, have been observed in the LARP community. For instance, poor social skills, gate keeping, miscommunication and un-resolved resentment. However, these flaws would not be restricted to a single aspect of the player base or playstyle, and these are issues that those individuals will need to address for themselves.

Third, it is clear from the literature and in-field data that many of the positive player behaviours that could be used to differentiate player types, if taken to their extremes, would be perceived as negative player behaviours. Thus, demonstrating that there is not one way to be a bad player, just as there are so many ways to be a good player. Furthermore, the typologies of Bartle, Yee and others did not contain specific 'bad player' types, for a similar reason, as many behaviours that could be seen as negative to one player group were seen as positive to another player group.

Fourth, it would be more effective to consider the negative player aspects as a list of common LARPer mistakes, which LARPers of any type and level of experience could make. For example, "main character syndrome or lone wolf syndrome" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 1,3,5), which is a reference to when players forget that LARP is a collaborative experience and fail to effectively work together with the other players. This happens frequently with newer LARP players, as they transition from other RPG formats to LARP, or those who are still developing their real-world social skills, however veteran LARPers can also make this mistake.

In Summary, the existence of these various limitations of the proposed modification designs means that it is necessary to develop, then execute, a method by which these possible deficiencies can be identified and addressed. The aim of the *Phase 2* data collection procedure is to test these proposed modifications to Bartle's taxonomy and to then develop these initial alterations further into a refined LARPer motivation typology theory.

4.3.7 – Summary of Proposed Player Type Modifications

In summary, the proposed hypothetical modifications of the Bartle player typology, developed through the evaluation of the collected *Phase 1* data, are as follows:

- *Warriors* – are focused on achieving goals, along with collecting in-game wealth indicators, even when the win/lose conditions of a LARP are more abstract.
- *Adventurers* – are focused on exploring the rules or mechanics of a LARP, as well as its narrative lore.
- *Diplomats* – are focused on the role-play, and social interactions along with the character embodiment aspects of the LARP experience.
- *Fighter* – are focused on the physical combat aspects of LARP, as well as the creative and skill improvement aspects.

However, the overall clarity of the modified theory is not ideal, thus the purpose of *Phase 2* is to examine the effectiveness of these proposed customisations, gathering the data needed to then further refined and improved the typology (Hay, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Manning and Adams, 2015).

4.4 – *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* Film Production Process

The *Phase 1* primary research material discussed above, was utilised in the production process of two brief documentary style film presentations, referred to as the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*. These films are a crucial part of the next phase of the project's data collection process, the purpose of the films was two-fold. Firstly, it presents the hypothetical modified player typology, along with samples of supporting evidence, for

collecting feedback from participants of *Phase 2* of the data collection process. Secondly, it is the stimulus that was used to test the merits of *Panoramic Film*, in the context of the capturing and presenting of research data, in comparison to flat-panel filmmaking methods.

As previously discussed, the recordings were coded to identify themes based on those found in the literature review, particularly the work of Bartle (1996), Yee (2006) and Henry (2015). Through this coding the proposed modifications to Bartle's player typology were developed to be tested and refined in *Phase 2* of the study by the thesis author (Cope, 2010; Brookfield, 2009). Following this the footage data that best satisfied several factors was selected from the pool of coded footage data from both the 2D and 180-degree cameras. These selection factors included response's topic relevance, participant's eloquence of speech, efficiency of answer, and the overall entertainment factor of the footage data. The selected footage was then edited together, using the proposed modifications to the typology as a framework, to produce the two versions of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel.*

The editing process used to produce these sample reels relied on the researcher's previous documentary film editing experience, in addition to their newly acquired knowledge of the various unique 360-degree video editing techniques. The films went through several iterations during the considerable post-production and editing period. This editing process utilised of conceptual 'paper edits', which involved using the coding notes and descriptions of the collected footage data to draft out the designs possible sequence structures. Thus, to develop a better familiarity with the footage and the ways it could be used before even attempting to interact with the footage in the editing programs.

The test sequence edits were also utilised, which involved using the collected footage for the practice of new editing techniques and to experiment with the various possible methods of arranging the films content. Several rough test sequences, based on the previously developed 'paper edits', were edited together in order to test the viability of the various conceptual structures of those initial outlines. This aimed to determine which methods were better able to convey the meaning or message that the films were being produced to convey to the audience of *Phase 2* participants. These test sequences were often edited using only the flat-panel footage, as the relatively smaller file sizes and

rendering times enabled the work to be completed at a faster rate. This is because the panoramic footage data files were an order of magnitude larger than the 2D footage data files, as they recorded with a much greater field of view, as demonstrated by *Figure 4.4* and *Figure 4.5*. The larger the files used in the editing programs the longer the rendering process will take to complete, and this can range from a few minutes to several hours. The rendering process being the method through which all the separate audio, video files and the modifications made to them in the editing process are converted into a single playable audio-visual file. Thus, using the smaller sized files in the production of test sequences that likely will not be used within the completed films was the most efficient course of action.
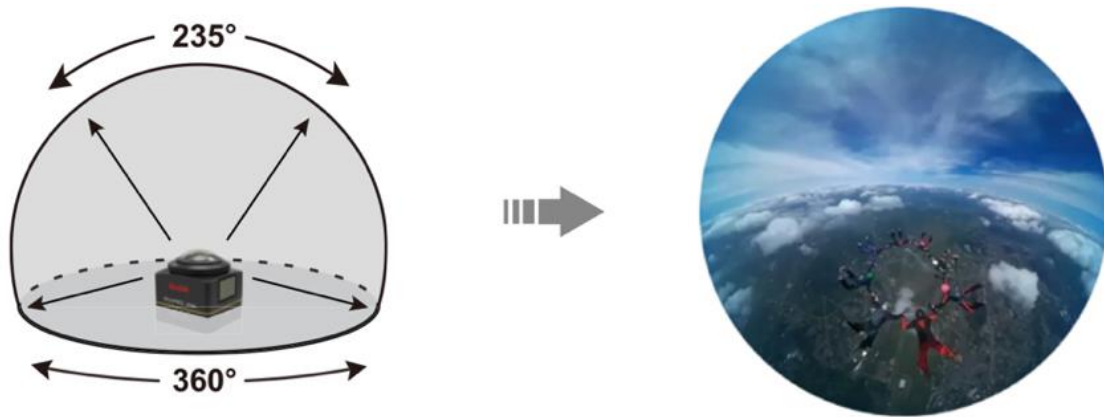
Figure 4.4 – Panoramic camera field of view (Kodak, 2015, pp.24)
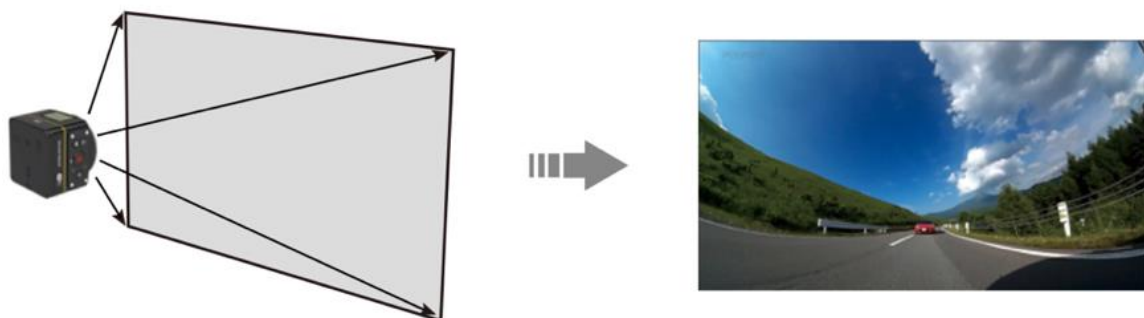
Figure 4.5 – Flat-Panel camera field of view (Kodak, 2015, pp.24)

The more promising test sequences were then reproduced using the corresponding panoramic footage, allowing the concepts to be tested in the various 360-degree display

options, including VR HMD units, YouTube's panoramic VR display applications and the vertical dome projection systems, that were eventually used for the project. Through the consideration of elements such as theme recognition, discussion cohesiveness, and argument clarity the most effective structure of the selected footage that would achieve the films' purpose were selected. This framework development process, the method by which the guiding framework of the edited films was produced, resulted in an effective and achievable editing outline for the films. An outline which eventually lead into the full editing process through which the final edits of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels* were created.

Before finally settling on the framework design that was eventually used for the film, several other framework designs were considered. This included arranging the footage data to present the recorded events in chronological order to demonstrate the aspects of the proposed modified theory against this backdrop. Following the members of a few specific Warbands or the LARP Org team as they participated in a game of *Shattered World LARP*. Documenting them preparing for the next game event through the training sessions, meetings, build days and participating in other LARP events, with each point illustrating an aspect of the proposed player taxonomy modifications. The films' climax would involve everyone returning for the next *Shattered World LARP* event, showing off all that had been learned and providing a summary of the proposed player type modifications. Ultimately, however, this framework design, amongst others, was not suitable for the purpose of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels* and its role in the design of *Phase 2*, as these frameworks required a longer run-time, and a much longer time for editing, while also drawing too much focus away from the presentation of the proposed modified player typology.

Eventually a suitable design framework for the structure of the films which would most effectively achieve their purpose/goal within the studies experimental design was developed and executed. After which, the post-production process immediately progressed to the next step, being the full-scale editing of the two *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*, a panoramic and a flat-panel version. However due to the expected time constraints, the relatively large file sizes and the time needed to edit the footage, it was decided that the panoramic version of the film would be the first to be edited. This process took longer than predicted, thus a specialised program was used to

reframe and convert the edited panoramic film into the needed flat panel version, saving time in the preparation process for *Phase 2*.

In other words, it was the researcher's intent to edit together these two films as separate projects, using the 180-degree footage for the panoramic version, and the 2D footage used for the flat panel version. The footage selected and used in the sample reel edits was to match and correspond to each other, shot for shot, to produce essentially two versions of the same film that differed only in video format. Unfortunately, this method would have taken twice as long to produce the films needed for *Phase 2*, thus, to maintain the study's schedule, only the 180-degree version of the sample reel was edited. Following this a specialised editing program, Insta360 Studio 2020, was used to extract a 2D version of the film from the completed panoramic edit of the sample reel, as shown in *Figure 4.6* below.
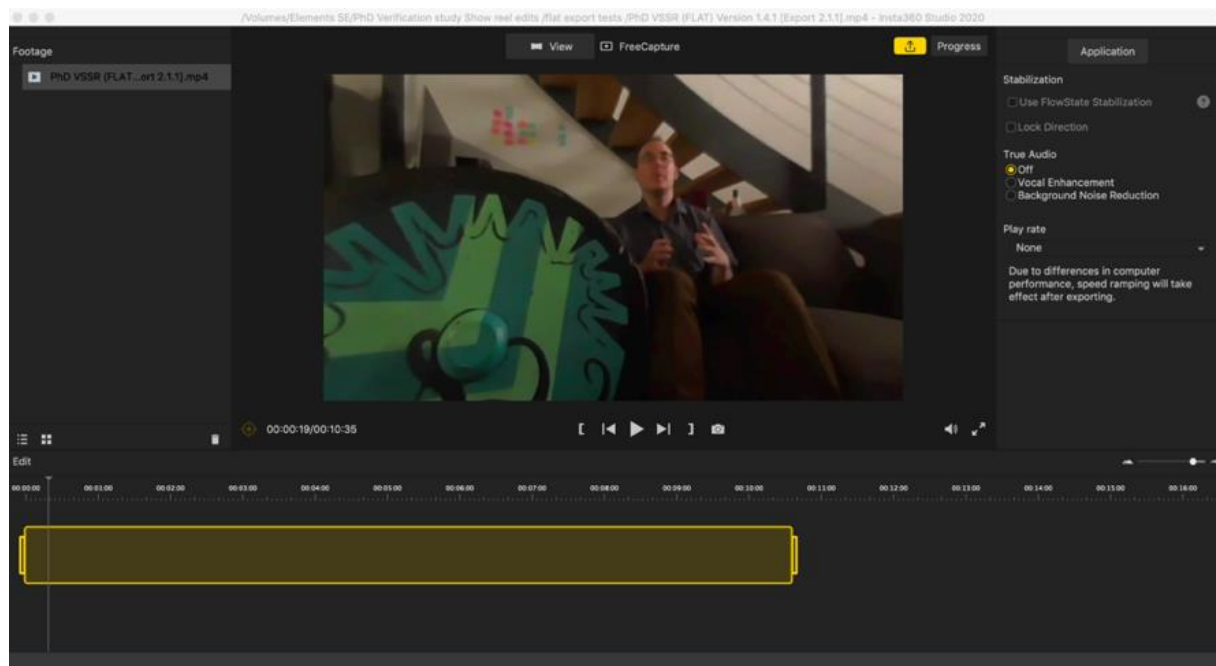
Figure 4.6 – Screenshot of panoramic-to-flat panel format conversion program

This had the advantage of halving the workload of the researcher in the preparation of the *Phase 2* verification study. Unfortunately, this did have the disadvantage of lowering the audio-visual quality of the flat panel film to a minor degree and producing a noticeable fish-eye lens curvature to a small number of shots. However, as it was the comparisons of display method between panoramic video and 2D video that were to be investigated in

Phase 2 rather than video format as initially intended, this trade-off was deemed to be acceptable for the films to still be used. Thus, the plan for *Phase 2* could proceed, as this is still a valid and useful comparison to explore and did yield beneficial study results. Although, a full format focused comparison study between panoramic and 2D videos would be a worthy objective for future research projects.

The final *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* presentations were ten-minutes long and consisted of several edited sequences using *Phase 1* recorded footage data. The edited films' final design did not include any sequences that aimed to provide a definition of LARP, a description of the WA LARP community, or explanation of the various filmed game events. This was done because the films' anticipated target audience was members of the WA LARP community participating in *Phase 2* of the study. As they are experienced LARPers, they would already be acutely aware of what LARP is, what games are running in WA, and what it is like being a part of the community. All of which is the exact expertise the researcher sought to engage with through *Phase 2* of the data collection process. Thus, it was determined that explaining such topics to the film's anticipated target audience would be an ineffective used of the film's short run-time.

The first sequence was an introduction to the topic and purpose of the film, followed by a sequence discussing the aspect of player creativity. Since the concept of *player creativity* did not fit effectively into the proposed typology modifications, it was given its own sequence, so it could be more easily discussed later in *Phase 2*. The next four sequences each presented one of the four proposed player type modifications– *Warrior, Diplomat, Adventurer,* and *Fighter* – with the final sequence summarising the full discussion.

The film's framing and footage choices were made to satisfy a sense of necessary compromise, while maintaining an overall coherent discussion and sense of cohesive narrative design. This meant that the technical editing choices made were a balance between those that would be best for the 2D video, and those most effective at utilising the unique aspects of the panoramic video (Rabiger, 2004; Jaunt, 2017). Much of the footage used for the sample reel was taken from the formal and semi-formal structured interviews. The observational data recording being used for 'cut-a-ways' to assist the presentation of the discussed concepts, acting as contextualising evidence for the modified player types.

The completed *Primary Research Material Sample Reels* were produced to be screened during the *Phase 2* data collection process. As this was the method by which the evidence gathered during *Phase 1* of the study was presented to the participants of *Phase 2* and were an important research outcome critical for the next stage of the research project. The 2D version of the completed *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* film is accessible via the following link (https://youtu.be/0KHGUA5xd6A).

4.5 – *Phase 1* Panoramic Video as Data Collection Method Assessment

As discussed in *Chapter 2*, Panoramic filmmaking methods have the potential to be used in academic research in the same way that other forms of audio-visual recording methods are used. This style of filmmaking is being used in the collection and presentation of qualitative observational or interview research data during fieldwork expeditions (Bernard, 2007; Bender 2019). Furthermore, Panoramic or CVR filmmaking may even have some distinct advantages over traditional flat-panel filmmaking techniques. This includes the increased field-of-view that panoramic cameras possess being able to capture considerably more raw audio-visual data in comparison to conventional cameras (Höllerer et al, 1999; Jaunt, 2016; Ryan, 2008).

The aims of this aspect of the research project were to provide an assessment of the practical usability and viability of panoramic filmmaking techniques as a tool for the academic field research. During the *Phase 1* fieldwork, the attending researcher made detailed notes of their experiences with using the panoramic equipment. This included detailing their opinions on equipment set up, reliability, overall effectiveness, and any limitations or difficulties that were encountered. In addition to taking note of their experiences with the conventional camera equipment during those same points within the same context, thus providing the data needed for later comparison.

The fundamental nature of LARPing and LARP events makes it an excellent cultural phenomenon through which to test the practical viability and possible advantages of panoramic film in this role. LARP is an immersive improvised co-constructed emergent narrative experience, where participants are each granted a first-person perspective and is thus described as an activity that needs to be lived to be understood (Lampo, 2016; Cox,

2019; Steele, 2016). It is this instantaneous, immersive, multi-perspective aspect of LARP that makes it so difficult to document, however this also makes it ideal for examining the possible advantages of panoramic video's unique features (Fauiter, 2016, Rizzo et al, 2004; Ryan, 2008). These possible advantages being, to provide more complete recordings of in-game events and to convey the LARPing experience more effectively to an audience. in addition to reducing the impact of the recording process on the LARPer's immersion during game, as the unfamiliar designs of panoramic cameras meant the participants were less aware of the camera's presence, allowing for the recording of more candid natural interactions between the LARPers.

The fieldwork notes of the researcher were analysed and compared, along with the coded footage data, as described in *Chapter 3*, to achieve the secondary research objectives of *Phase 1*. Through this assessment, it was determined that the hypothesised advantages that panoramic filmmaking can provide, in the context of a data collection tool, were present and viable. Due to the wider field-of-view the collected footage data was more candid and natural, as well as being able to capture more of the action occurring within the game event, particularly during the larger combat encounters and the more chaotic role-play moments, such as the 'council meeting' at the end of the *Warhearts LARP* game, as shown in *Figure 4.7* and *Figure 4.8*.

These footage data stills demonstrate the difference in the fields of view between the 2D camera (*Figure 4.7*) and the panoramic camera (*Figure 4.8*). In the 2D footage the viewer could only observe the activity of four attending Empires (player factions) and two of the three 'speakers of the house' (roles filled by the LARP Orgs) who were presiding over the meeting. Meanwhile, in viewing the panoramic footage the actions and reactions of every Empire and all three of the LARP orgs could be observed and reviewed.

In addition, as mentioned briefly in *Section 3.3*, a benefit of panoramic video data collection that was identified by this research is the medium's ability to effectively gather more data from a LARP event. Through the capture of more of this background activities occurring around and in response to the events that would be the focus of the narrowed 2D camera's field of view. This panoramic footage data can provide more contextualising information for the researcher to use to understand and evaluate the recorded events more completely.

Figure 4.7 – Warhearts LARP's Empire Council, Flat-panel Footage
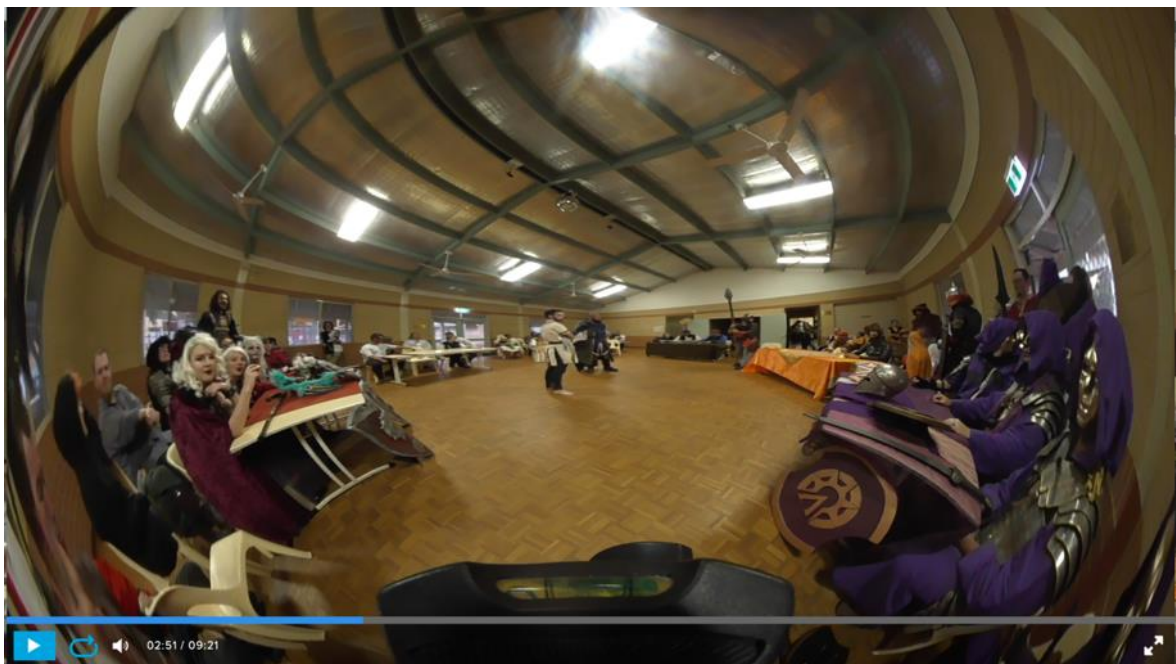
Figure 4.8 – Warhearts LARP's Empire Council, Panoramic Footage

This is of particular benefit when examining the more chaotic and fast-paced moments of LARP events. An example of this would be the Viking themed Warband leader's trial, attempted escape, and eventual execution, recorded during the seventh game of

Shattered World LARP (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 5), as presented in *Figure 4.9* and *Figure 4.10* below.

Figure 4.9 – Trial of the Viking Warband's General, Flat-panel Footage

Figure 4.10 – Viking Warband's General, Panoramic Footage

This event is an instance of the more chaotic interactions within a LARP, where the panoramic camera's wider field of view can capture more observational data than the narrow focus of its fixed framed camera counterpart. The footage of the 2D camera, as demonstrated with the footage data still, as presented in *Figure 4.9*, can capture all the details of the Viking general's perspective on their trial, including his reaction to his accusers claims, as well as him cutting down the judge with their own sword and eventually his final moments. However, it fails to capture much of the action surrounding it and thus much of the context for his reactions and how it interacts with the other stories occurring simultaneously within the LARP event's world.

Meanwhile, the panoramic camera footage data still, as demonstrated in *Figure 4.10*, captured approximately the same moment as the previous still, but provides considerably more observational data. This included capturing the accuser's performance as he called in the witnesses from the surrounding crowd, reactions of the judge to the claims and the passing of their judgement. In addition to the crowds' reactions when the prisoner ripped his would-be executioner's sword from their grip attacking them with it. This also included the nearby guards rushing toward the prisoner and the healers rushing in to pull the judge away to safety.

The panoramic footage was additionally able to capture a side story, where one of the other characters who requested to be executed at the same time as the Viking was, is seen collapsed on the ground to the right side of the image. This arose from this PC wanting to explore some of the new in-game lore that was added to contextualise some newly added game rules. New rules in which players who have played the same character for a long period of time could choose to add extra risk to their experience. This extra risk being the possibility of their character permanently perishing during in-game events, rather than respawning as they usually would. This was the first time this rule was going to be carried out, so the players went out of their way to make it a spectacular moment in the game's narrative. A big narrative moment that was more effectively captured using the panoramic camera, while the flat panel footage may have been closer and clearer, it still missed much of the scene's content, and thus missed much of its relevant context and drama.

Several difficulties were encountered during the *Phase 1* field work and field shoots, these

were mostly technical or user experience issues. This included the panoramic camera's overheating and battery issues, along with its lack of a real-time footage review system. However, this data collection phase was effective overall as an initial investigation of the useability of panoramic film as a method of academic research. Although, it would be more beneficial for this research to be considered as a starting point for future research projects. These future projects would benefit from making use of greater access to panoramic video recording equipment, along with a greater number of more experienced camera crew members.

4.6 – Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to demonstrate the research outcomes developed through the coding and analysis of the results data gathered during *Phase 1* of the project. The chapter was focused on accomplishing five main points of discussion. Firstly, to develop and outline a method of visually organising the varieties of LARP event types, dubbed the *LARP Event Type Spectrum* method. The interacting ratios between four of the defining elements of LARP events – *Role-play, Immersion, Rules* and *Combat* – were used as the main differentiating factors of this spectrum.

Secondly, to determine the overall effectiveness of applying Bartle's taxonomy to the classification of LARPers. Determining that Henry's (2015) hypothesis was supported by the collected observational and interview data. Demonstrating that the player types developed by Bartle were only somewhat effective at categorising LARP participants. Thus, providing solid reasoning for the need to make alterations to Bartle's theory to modify it for LARPer classification.

Thirdly, the chapter aimed to develop a proposed set of hypothetical modifications to Bartle's player type theory, to make it more accurate in defining the motivations of LARP players. These proposed modifications to the theory consisted of four modified LARP player types – the *Warrior*, *Diplomat*, *Adventurer* and *Fighter* types – in place of the four MUD player types described by Bartle. These modifications will be tested in *Phase 2* of the data collection process.

Fourthly, the production of the audio-visual representations of the proposed modifications, with supporting evidence. These ten-minute documentary style films, known as the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*, were produced in both panoramic and 2D versions from a selection of the *Phase 1* footage data. These films formed a critical aspect of the experimental design of the *Phase 2* data collection process.

Fifthly, to provide an initial assessment of the usability of Panoramic video as a qualitative fieldwork data collection tool, in comparison to 2D audio-visual in-field data gathering techniques. This assessment outlined that some of the theorised potential advantages of utilising panoramic film were demonstrated during this project's fieldwork. However, it was also clear that further research is necessary to provide a more definitive evaluation of the method's viability.

Chapter 5: Data Collection and Method – *Phase 2*

5.0 – Chapter Overview

The research project's next stage was to develop and conduct a verification study method, by which further data was collected and coded to produce the refined *LARPer Motivation Typology*. This chapter aims to cover four main points of discussion. Firstly, it aims to restate the structure of the project's data collection process, with a primary focus on the goals of *Phase 2* and justifying the study's two-phase experimental approach. Secondly, the chapter discusses the relevant methodologies that influenced the development of *Phase 2's* experimental design. Thirdly, the chapter describes the research protocols for the verification study, in addition to reviewing this experimental design in practice. Fourthly, the coding and analysis methods used to assess the data collected through these protocols are outlined, as well as an initial assessment of the verification study results.

5.1 – Data Collection Process Outline

As previously mentioned, the research project's data collection procedure consisted of two phases. The first phase was the collection of audio-visual field work data, gathered from several WA LARP events, and using that data to develop a proposed modified Bartle player typology. The second phase was to carry out a verification study with the aim of testing and improving those proposed modifications. This approach was adopted for the purpose of producing a more refined results than would have been possible with a single data gathering and analysis stage. In addition to enabling the concept of panoramic video as a scholarly research method, in comparison to 2D video recordings. The two-phase plan was able to evaluate the potential of the medium as both a field work data collection tool, in *Phase 1*, and as a data presentation method, in *Phase 2*.

The experimental design of *Phase 2* aimed to accomplish *Research Objective 3* and *4* of the study. *Research objective 3* being to devise a method for testing the effectiveness of the proposed modifications to Bartle's player type theory, and to then execute that method. Whereas *Research objective 4* aims to use the data gathered from this method to improve

and refine these proposed changes into a fully realised LARPer motivation typology. Resulting in the development of a new research theory that can provide a better understanding of WA LARPers for scholars, LARP Orgs and individual LARPers. The *Phase 2* verification study consisted of two main parts, these being the two digital survey questionnaires, in-person screenings of the panoramic sample reel film with accompanying focus group discussion sessions.

Firstly, study participants were recruited using recruitment material in the form of social media posts on the main Facebook groups of the WA LARP community. This material contained the relevant information and instructions for how participants could take part in this phase of the study, including links to the online survey questionnaire. This online survey questionnaire, available in *Appendix 2.1*, consisted of several question modules and two audio visual presentations. These presentations were i) a four-minute information video (presented on camera by the researcher) outlining Bartle's typology theory, and ii) the flat panel version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel*, accessible via the following link (https://youtu.be/0KHGUA5xd6A). The online survey would take participants around an hour to complete, via their personal computer, laptop or other internet enabled device.

Secondly, following the initial launch of the online survey questionnaire, additional participant recruitment materials were posted on those same Facebook groups. These posts aimed to recruit volunteers to participate in the verification study's in-person screening and focus group discussion session component. Participants must have completed the online survey questionnaire before attending these sessions. Copies of the digital survey and focus group discussion questions are available in *Appendix 2.2,* and *Appendix 2.3* respectively. Each screening session consisted of a brief participant briefing presentation, followed by the participants completing the first half of the digital survey questionnaire. Once complete, the participants would then view the panoramic version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* on the specialised dome projection system. After which they would complete the remainder of the survey questionnaire and then take part in a recorded focus group discussion with the other attending participants. The verification study was conducted over the course of a month, following which the online survey was deactivated, and with three in-person dome screening sessions having been carried out within that time frame.

The experimental design of the *Phase 2* verification study aimed to accomplish six primary research goals.

- First, this phase set out to determine the defining features of LARP and the primary motivating behaviours of LARPers, to confirm or re-evaluate those identified through the *Phase 1* results. This is to determine which of these themes or features is of the highest importance and could be used to be the core motivation of a potential LARPer type.

- Second, this study attempted to re-evaluate and confirm the ineffectiveness of applying Bartle's unaltered player type theory to the categorisation of LARPers. This is to ensure that the discoveries made in *Phase 1* were interpreted consistently, through the introduction of new data.

- Third, the verification study investigated the overall viability of the experimental modifications to Bartle's taxonomy developed from the *Phase 1* results. This was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the hypothesised set of modifications, data that will influence the development of the refined version.

- Fourth, the verification study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of applying a pre-existing empirical method of categorisation to the study of LARPers, specifically the survey method used by Yee (2006) to classify MMORPG players by motivating themes.

- Fifth, the study aimed to measure the truthfulness of LARP's representation within the two versions of the sample reel, to identify if either was more effective in the accuracy of its presentation. In order to determine the usefulness of the panoramic method, by indicating whether the accuracy of the panoramic film's representation of LARP is equal or superior to the 2D version.

- Sixth, the study endeavoured to evaluate the viability of panoramic video technologies as a method for presenting collected scholarly footage data to an audience. These results aim to justify the possible inclusion of panoramic data presentation methods in future scholarly research projects.

Overall, the verification study aimed to confirm the defining themes or features of LARPer motivations, behaviours and of LARP itself as identified in the analysis of the *Phase 1*

data. This was to confirm or alter those listed themes and features, as well as assessing the importance and frequency of these themes and features. As the more frequently they appear, and the more important they appear to be, the more likely it is that this theme or feature could be used to define a player type. For instance, determining that those themes considered to be primary LARPer motivation in the results of *Phase 1* are as important as they appeared. This is achieved by utilising questions designed to directly address the participant's knowledge and lived experience to define LARP. In addition to questioning the participants' own personal LARPing behavioural motivations and the defining motivating behaviours of LARPers in general (Meriläinen, 2011).

The verification study also aimed to reassess the effectiveness of applying Bartle's theory to LARP. This was accomplished by providing the participants with a three-to-four-minute information video and factsheet that briefly outlined Bartle's theory. After reading this information the participants were asked to use it along with their lived experience as LARPers to answer questions designed to examine how effectively Bartle's typology could be applied to LARP (Bartle, 1996; Daniau, 2016).

Additionally, the study aimed to evaluate the functionality of the proposed hypothetical modifications to the Bartle player taxonomy. This primary objective of the study was achieved by using the primary research material show reel to present these modified player types to the participants. The participants were then questioned directly about the effectiveness of the proposed modifications, along with asking them to explain how they would modify the typology based on their own experiences (Dunn, 2010).

The study also set out to test whether a pre-existing empirical survey method used for classifying other RPG player types, with only minor alteration, could be used to determine the motivations of LARPers. This objective was achieved by having participants complete an adapted existing empirical survey method, specifically Yee's (2006) MMORPG player motivation survey. In addition to answering self-determination style questions, through which the participants placed themselves within one or more of the described player types. After which the results of the two player classification methods were coded and compared with each other to assess the accuracy of the resulting classification, and thus the comparative effectiveness of Yee's (2006) empirical method (Yee, 2006b; Przybylski et al, 2006; Rihoux, 2006; Dali, 2014).

The verification study penultimately aimed to determine the effectiveness of the representation of LARP in the *Primary Research Material Sample Reels*. This was accomplished through a selection of questions through which the participants provided their opinions and assessments of how effectively the experience of LARPing was presented on screen. The results from the 2D version focus questions, and the 180-degree version focus questions were compared to determine which of the two films more accurately represented the experience of WA LARPing (Cox, 2019; Lampo, 2012; Looy et al, 2011).

Lastly, the verification study aimed to assess the practical usability of panoramic video technologies as an academic method of presenting collected footage data to an audience. A goal that will be achieved primarily through the analysis of the participant responses to the panoramic video related questions of the dome screening session digital surveys and focus group discussion questions. In addition to comparing responses to the specific film related questions from both the online survey and the personal screening session surveys (Jaunt, 2017; Steele, 2018).

5.2 – *Phase 2*: Methodology

In order to continue refining the proposed modifications to Bartle's player motivation typology, a system for testing and verifying these hypothesised changes needed to be developed. The aim of these verification studies was to develop a method by which LARPers could use their personal LARP experience combined with a basic understanding of Bartle's (1996) theory to examine the evidence collected during *Phase 1*. To determine whether they agree with the current form of the proposed LARPer typology or discover different approaches of typology organisation. This feedback can then be used to further develop and refine the typology, bringing it closer to the stage where it can be used as an effective tool for examining the players of LARP (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Manning and Adams, 2015; Kalof et al, 2008).

The combined screening and survey method design of *Phase 2* was influenced by similar approaches of the research projects conducted by Anderson and Austin (2012) and Lijiang

(2011), as outlined in *Chapter 3*. These scholars used the screening of audio-visual stimulus and multiple surveys to measure the changes in participant audience's opinions or perceptions on a specific topic. Those topics were the attitudes of medical professionals toward the disabled and the effectiveness of anti-smoking campaigns on the public. These scholarly works influenced the overall structure of the verification studies design, in which the participants complete a survey before the film screening, to gather baseline data, that can then be compared to the data collected in the survey completed after the screening (Lijiang, 2011; Anderson and Austin, 2012). The main modification to this design framework, apart from the project's primary topic of interest, is the types of questions used, and that the audio-visual component used in this study was produced specifically for this research project (Bender, 2019).

The *Phase 2* survey questions were developed using a process similar to that used for the production of the *Phase 1* interview questions. However, these survey questionnaires required the use of alternative wording, and different answering systems to obtain the response data required. A combination of binary, Likert-scale and short answer question designs were used throughout each of the survey components. The mixture of different answering formats enabled clear empirical style participant responses, as well as more detailed responses, by providing the participants with the opportunity to elaborate. This participant elaboration added qualitative data to capture greater detail in the binary and Likert-scale question responses (Hay, 2010; Yee, 2006).

The online survey questions aimed to answer several research objectives, including confirming or reidentifying the defining features of LARP, and to reassess the effectiveness of applying Bartle's theory to LARP (Cameron, 2010; Daniau, 2016; Dunn, 2010). These questions will also explore the motivational behaviours of LARPers, investigate the accuracy of the proposed player typology modifications, and evaluate the sample reel's representation of LARP. Additionally, the online survey contained a selection of questions design for evaluating the effectiveness of applying an existing empirical player classification survey tool to WA LARPers (Yee, 2006a, b). Yee's (2006a, b) work developed a quantitative survey method through which one can determine the player types of MMORPG participants. This survey consisted of forty questions, answerable through a five-point Likert scale, ranging from '1. Strongly disagree' to '5. Strongly agree'. Some examples of the question statements used in Yee's MMORPG player classification tool

include the following: "1) I find myself having meaningful conversations with others" and "3) I have made some good friends in the game" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 46). These questions were slightly modified for use in this research project to better align with the context of LARPs, as LARPers often use different language to MMORPG players to refer to the same concepts. For example, "5) I like to say funny things in group/guild chat" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 46), was altered in the online survey to become '5) I like to say funny things while interacting with the community'. As another example, "19) This game is too complicated" (Yee, 2006b, pp. 46) was modified in this study's online survey to become '19) I can often find LARP rules to be too complicated'.

The in-person/dome screening digital survey questions aimed to address the same topics as the online survey, providing further data and clarification on the points investigated in the earlier surveys. In addition to having questions focused on assessing the practical usage of panoramic video for the presentation of collected academic footage data to an audience. This is achieved with questions that directly address the use of the panoramic display system, and questions that mirror those from the online survey, the results of which can be directly compared (Fowler, 2009; Fowler, 1995). The focus group questions were designed in a similar format to those of the semi-structured interviews and aimed to provide participants with the opportunity to clarify their thoughts through verbal discussion. Thus, the questions were designed to be open ended, which enables them to further prompt discussion between the attending participants (Cameron, 2010; Dunn, 2010; Przybylski et al, 2006).

Coding is the method by which researchers can organise and label the important aspects of their research data results (King, 2011). These labels applied to aspects of the results that appear to repeat or be aspects of a larger pattern are referred to as themes. These themes can be used to define content that appear over several cases of a research phenomenon or multiple times within the same case. Themes need to be relatively distinct from one another to be most effective at describing aspects of researched phenomenon, although some blurring of boundaries is unavoidable. Additionally, themes are not 'objective facts' but are instead linked to the experiences and interpretations of the researcher developing the themes (King, 2011). This basic design was enhanced with aspects from other academic's work, as well as various ways to develop effective survey questions, data analysis, and coding methods. These included thematic analysis, parallel

analysis, template analysis and qualitative comparative analysis (Bienia, 2013; Rihoux, 2006; Brookfield, 2009).

Thematic Analysis refers to the procedure by which the important or interesting recurring aspects of qualitative research data can be organised in an effective meaningful interpretation. In other words, the critical ability for researchers to identify patterns and interpret those patterns into the themes of their research (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Bruan and Clarke, 2006). These patterns in data, or research themes, produced through Thematic Analysis can often be classified as being either Semantic Themes or Latent Themes. In this case, Semantic Themes are those data elements that are clearly visible through the simple reviewing of the data pools. Whereas Latent Themes are those aspects that are only revealed through the in-depth investigation of the available qualitative data. It is these latent themes that influence the reasons the semantic themes manifest in the way they have in the coded data (Bowman, 2012; King, 2011). This method can be used to summaries and organise research data, as well as further processing the information into a format that the informs the response to the project's research question, and thus bridge the gaps in existing knowledge (Bender and Sung, 2020; Bowman, 2018). In other words, this method of analysis can be used to identify the important themes present within a qualitative data set, which can then be used to define and outline new academic theories. For example, in this research, thematic analysis will enable the defining themes of LARP and LARPer motivating behaviours to be identified in the *Phase 2* qualitative participant response data. Themes that can be used to improve the defining aspects of the refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory.

Template analysis refers to "a style of thematic analysis that balances a high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study" (King, 2011, pp. 426). In other words, the core aspects of this method are the development of 'coding templates' that enable the organisation of themes identified from coded content. Allowing for the themes to be arranged in structured 'hierarchies' based on similarities, relevance to research objectives and 'levels of specificity'. The number of levels and groupings within these hierarchised coding templates varies greatly, as they are customised to best suit the specific needs of the researcher or reflect their research goals (King, 2011). Template analysis is most effective when used in conjunction with other coding methods, such as parallel analysis. Although, the disadvantages of this

method can include a limitation of 'personal engagement' with the content. In addition to the initial development of the coding template being difficult, with researchers often getting caught up in producing a detailed template, instead of drawing these details from their actual coded data results (King, 2011). In the coding of the *Phase 2* results data, the identified themes were organised into several clusters of themes. These theme clusters included for example the definition of LARP elements, LARPer motivation themes, LARPer Behaviour themes, LARPer type defining behaviours, and Negative LARPer behaviours. These groupings of similar themes were then further organised by how they connected to each other, in terms of where they sat within the hierarchy of the template. For instance, the LARP defining themes were positioned above the LARPer motivation themes, whereas the LARPer type defining behaviours is before the LARPer behaviour themes, but both are below the LARPer motivation themes. This method has the advantages of being systematic yet flexible, being easily understood and utilised, as well as being able to accommodate several varied opinions or understandings of the content's themes (King, 2011).

Parallel Analysis refers to an effective method of analysis, used for example by Yee (2006), to interpret empirical quantitative data for use in studies that would normally use qualitative data. This process involves the real empirical data collected from study participants being compared with a set of pre-generated data. These can be produced from completely random data, previously collected data sets, or be used to represent predicted hypothetical results data (Looy et al, 2012; Przybylski et al, 2006; Yee, 2006b). In other words, this method is "based on a comparison of eigenvalues", or empirical characteristic values of the results data, "obtained from sample data to eigenvalues one would expect to obtain from completely random data" (Fabrigar el et, 1999, pp. 279). For example, the Likert-scale questions are designed in such a way that the ideal version of each player type can be defined by a specific combination of responses. These response combinations are represented by specific eigenvalues, and the participant responses to the survey are tallied and then compared to the predicted eigenvalues. Thus, it is possible to determine the player type of an individual solely on the empirical data they provide (Looy et al, 2012). Like other methods of 'mechanical' coding, the results of parallel analysis can be affected by 'arbitrary' factors (Fabrigar el et, 1999). Thus, it works best when dealing with vast amounts of related data, or in combination with other forms of

analysis, such as qualitative comparative analysis method and self-determination theory (Przybylski et al, 2006; Yee. 2006b).

Qualitative comparative analysis, or QCA, refers to a method of coding in which the researcher can compare various samples of qualitative data to achieve two seemingly contradictive objectives. Those being to produce a theory that is both generalised, as well as providing deep complex insight into specific cases of the researched phenomenon (Rihoux, 2006; Hellstrom, 2011; Dali, 2014). Much like the other methods discussed previously, QCA operates most effectively when used in conjunction with other coding methods QCA can be used in a variety of ways. This includes summarising large data pools, searching for coherence or contradictions within the data, and assessing the value of existing assumptions or theories, along with investigating the effectiveness, and further developing new concepts (Rihoux, 2006; Ragin, 1987). QCA has the advantage of being a relatively 'transparent' method, which encourages researchers to independently make clear decisions on how they approach their results data by using that data to justify those decisions. In addition to being able to be applied to both qualitative and quantitative data collected on a phenomenon (Ragin, 1987; Hellstrom, 2011). In this verification study, QCA was used to guide the comparison of the response data between the online survey and the personal screening session survey, as well as the comparison of data collected in *Phase 1* and *Phase 2* of the data collection process.

Another method of research data analysis utilised in *Phase 2* is self-determination theory, which can be applied to activities such as sport, digital gaming, and various forms of RPG participation. This method is defined as the recording of the intrinsic and extrinsic process by which participants of a specific activity define themselves. This is in terms of their own personal motivations, position in the activity's community, and within any specific classifying typology system available to them (Przybylski et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011). This means that in this method researchers provide study participants with the opportunity to define which aspects of an activity motivates them to take part, using their experience as a members of the activity's player base, to express where they fit within a proposed player typology (Przybylski et al, 2006; Meriläinen, 2011; Looy et al, 2012). The position, or player type, that the study participant assigns themselves can then be compared with the player type assigned to them by other methods. Thus, providing a method for testing the viability of either the participants judgement or the other methods being used to

determine player type (Looy et al, 2012; Brookfield, 2009). In this project, self-determination theory was used in the verification process for evaluating the effectiveness of using Yee's (2006b) survey method to categorise LARPers by their motivations.

5.3 – *Phase 2*: Experimental Design

The chosen research methods were designed to determine the effectiveness of Bartle's theory in relation to LARP and therefore how best to modify the theory to be specially adapted for LARP. The aim of this section is to provide a detailed outline of the methods utilised in the verification study, as well as to review the practical process of conducting this data collection procedure. The experimental design for the verification study consists of three main data collection tools, an online survey, an in-person digital survey, and a focus group discussion.

The study included two groups of participants, each group consisting of volunteers from the WA LARP Community. These study participants had all been members of the community for at least a year, were over 18 years old, and were assembled through the various LARP community Facebook groups. At the close of the *Phase 2* data collection period, 26 properly completed participant responses were recorded for the online survey component. In addition to 7 participants who also took part in the in-person screening session and focus group discussion component of the verification study.

5.3.1 – Online Survey Questionnaire

The online survey component was the first component of the Phase 2 data collection procedure. The online survey consisted of five sections of questions, each aiming to address a different research objective or aspect of the project, as well as two video presentations.

The first section of this survey covered basic demographic questions, including how many years of LARP experience they possessed. The aim of this section of the online survey was to provide some context on those LARPers volunteering to participate in this phase of the study (Fowler, 2009; Fowler, 1995).

The second section consisted of the empirical quantitative survey tool, adapted from Yee's (2006b) survey for determining the motivations of MMORPG players. This research tool consisted of 41 questions answerable through a 5-point Likert scale and decoded via the 'parallel analysis' method (Yee, 2006c; Fabrigar et el, 1999). The questions received some minor modification to better match the context of LARP, but the nature of the questions was left unchanged. This section aimed to determine if an existing empirical survey tool could be utilised to determine an individual LARPers player type, its overall effectiveness, and how it could potentially be improved.

The third section began by presenting a 4-minute-long informative video, accompanied by a 1-page downloadable information document both created by the researcher, that provided the participants with a brief overview of Bartle's MUDs player typology theory (Bartle, 1996). After watching the video, as well as downloading and reading the information documents, participants were asked to complete a four-question exercise. This short exercise was designed to check that they understood the theory enough to complete the remainder of the survey. This was achieved using 'pop-quiz' style questions, where they needed to correctly match a description of one of Bartle player types to its title, such is as with the example below:

> **Q:2.1:** Which of Bartle's player types does the following statement apply to: "These players are focused on satisfying their thirst for discovery. Their goal is to uncover every secret of the game world, even down to the mechanics and code of the game itself. They are said to be those players that gain enjoyment purely from interacting with the world"
>
> Achievers – Explorers – Socializers – Killers

The response data from participants who did not correctly complete this section of the survey were not included in the final analysis.

The fourth section contained a combination of quantitative Likert scale response questions and qualitative short answer questions (Fowler, 2009; Fowler, 1995). This section of the online survey aimed to address several *Phase 2* research goals. Some questions were designed to have participants identify those behaviours and motivations that they thought

defined LARP and LARPers. These responses would then be compared to the themes and features used to develop the proposed modifications to the Bartle player typology. Meanwhile other questions aimed to provide another method of determining their possible player type, which would be compared to the results of this survey's second section. This comparison enables the assessment of the degree of effectiveness of the adapted empirical survey method for determining the participating LARPers primary motivating factors (Meriläinen, 2011). Other questions ask the participants to use their knowledge of LARP to assess the possible effectiveness of applying Bartle's typology to LARP, in addition to whether his theory needs to be modified, what those modifications might involve, and how useful having such a method for classifying players might be. Some examples of the type of question covered in this section of the questionnaire includes the following:

Q:3.10: Indicate your response to the following statement –
"*Having a method of categorising a LARP player community, via their primary player motivations, would be a useful development tool for LARP event organisers.*"

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree.

Q:3.16: Which of the Bartle's Player Types do you think best describes your Play Style?
(Please select one or two answers that you feel suit you best.)

Achiever - Explorer - Socialiser - Killer - None of them.

Between the fourth and fifth sections, the participants were asked to watch the flat-panel version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* (https://youtu.be/0KHGUA5xd6A). The video was presented in standard 16:9 video format, as demonstrated in *Figure 5.1*, a still from the completed sample reel which depicted an in-character discussion between a group of LARPers. This was done so participants could easily view the video on which ever personal electronic device they were using to complete the survey.

The fifth section of the survey was focused on recording participant responses to the film

and to record the changes in opinion caused by viewing the film, in comparison to their response to the survey's fourth section. It aimed to test whether participants could recognise the elements of the modified Bartle types and provide their opinions on the effectiveness of those modifications. They could also offer suggestions for further improvements and rate the films' representation of LARP. Some of the questions mirrored those in the fourth section, and were designed to be directly compared, to determine how the film influenced the participant's opinions on the effectiveness of applying Bartle's typology to LARP.

Figure 5.1 – Primary Research Material Sample Reel, flat-panel edit still

The online survey component of the verification study required little intervention, once it was made available to the participants of the WA LARP community. Over the course of the month that the online survey was open to participants, the researcher reposted the participant recruitment material at weekly intervals. This was to maintain participant interest in the project, as well as encourage participants to complete the survey questionnaire.

5.3.2 – Dome Screenings: Digital Survey and Focus Group Discussion

The *Phase 2* data collection procedure's second stage involved the conducting of in-

person screenings of the sample reel and focus group discussions. This aspect of the study consisted of a digital survey, a screening of the full panoramic film on a specialised vertical dome projection system, followed by a focus group discussion. The initial step in this procedure used a secondary social media post to recruit for this component of the verification study, requesting for a selection of WA LARPers, who had completed the online survey, to volunteer to take part. These volunteers were then communicated with directly, via social media messaging services, to organise the sessions around their own convenience and the availability of the specialised screening space. These screening sessions were conducted within the same month-long time frame used for the online survey, aiming to reduce the time needed to complete this stage of data collection.

This aspect of the verification study aimed to provide additional participant response data as well as provide participants with the chance to further clarify their responses to the online survey. The primary focus of the survey in this component shifted away from data collection for the development of the LARPer Motivation Typology theory, moving its focus slightly more towards the analysis of the representation of LARP in film and the usefulness of panoramic film as a scholarly data presentation method. Through the utilisation of the specialised panoramic projection system, the vertical dome screen, as demonstrated in *Figure 5.2* below, enables the investigation of these additional research objectives. *Figure 5.2* depicts one of the two vertical dome projection systems used for the in-person dome screening sessions, displaying the same scene as in the previously presented *Figure 5.1*.

The main goal of this being to assess the effectiveness of panoramic film as a method of presenting academic field work data to an audience. To achieve this the participants were required to use their own portable electronic device to complete a digital survey before and after viewing the panoramic film. Apart from some alterations to be detailed in the following paragraphs, these two-part digital surveys contained similar questions to those of the previous online survey.

The online survey questions were reused to achieve several goals for this component of the verification study, the main reason for this being to gather the data needed for the comparison between the flat-panel and panoramic display methods. This comparative analysis aimed to cover many of the project's research goals, including a comparative assessment of the effective on-screen representation of LARP. Many of the questions

were reworked to more effectively gather data related to the panoramic film aspects of this component of the verification study. This was also done to gather further details on the points that the participants had previously discussed in the online survey, giving them the opportunity to clarify and expand on their previous responses. The online surveys were nonidentifiable, so the comparative analysis was not conducted directly between the participants individual survey responses, but between the fully collected data pools of each component.

Figure 5.2 – Dome Projection System for *Phase 2* Dome screening sessions.

The overall design of this component's survey is like that of the online survey, with some alterations so it was able to address other research objectives more effectively. These alterations included the removal of the Yee (2006b) style questions, the 4-minute information film on Bartle, and the related Bartle pop-quiz from the online survey design. These were replaced with questions inquiring about the participants previous experience with panoramic video and CVR films. This was to facilitate the shift of focus from the development of an empirical classification tool to a practical assessment of panoramic video as a method of data presentation.

The dome screening digital survey consisted of four sections, including sections that

corresponded to those of the online survey document. The first section was a set of demographic questions, the next section was a set of questions designed to assess the participants previous knowledge and experience with Panoramic film (Bender, 2019). The third section was a selection of questions of a similar design to the online survey's fourth section and aimed to address many of the same research objectives, such as the following question examples:

Q:2.6: Do you think that LARPers can be classified into particular 'player types' based on their player behaviours?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:2.7: If possible, please briefly explain those factors that influenced your response to the previous question

These questions were all similar in design to those from the fourth section of the online survey (Anderson and Austin, 2012; Bender, 2019; Fowler, 2009). Following the completion of the digital survey's third section each participant stood in the projection dome, viewing the panoramic version of the film presented in the online survey. After which the participants completed the fourth part of the digital survey, which was similar in design to the fifth section of the previous online survey. These questions aimed to record the participants changes in opinion resulting from viewing the panoramic version of the primary research material sample reel. This section of the digital survey was also further supplemented with additional panoramic film related questions. This was to better address the panoramic video related research objectives of the project, this included questions such as:

Q:3.20: After watching the film, would you agree that modifications of Bartle's theory are necessary for it to most effectively classify LARPers?

Strongly agree - Agree - Unsure - Disagree - Strongly disagree

This question above was an example of a question that mirrors questions from the fifth section of the online survey and can be used in the comparison between the 2D and

panoramic display methods. Whereas the question below is an example of a question unique to the dome screening session digital survey.

Q:3.10: Do you think that being a panoramic film allowed the film to present a more effectively and accurate representation of LARP?

Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

After the attending participants had viewed the panoramic version of the sample reel film and completed the digital survey, they were brought together to take part in the focus group discussion.

These focus group discussions had an informal, semi-free-flowing structure and were video recorded to assist in later data analysis (Dunn, 2010). There were two main groups of questions: i) Panoramic Film focused questions and ii) LARPer Typology focused questions. These separate question groups each aimed to encourage discussion that would address several the projects research objectives (Cope, 2010; Cameron, 2010; Daniau, 2016). These focus group discussions were an opportunity for participants to express any relevant thoughts on the topic of panoramic film as well as the overall usefulness and accuracy of the proposed LARPer motivation typology theory.

The in-person dome screening sessions required a considerable amount of intervention from the researcher, both to organise and conduct. The sessions were organised via participant recruitment posts on the WA LARP Facebook groups and direct messenger systems. The organisation of the sessions was more difficult than anticipated due to the extenuating circumstances of mid-2020. However, the researcher was still able to organise a sufficient number of participants and screening sessions for this verification study component to be viable. Transcripts of the focus group recordings, along with the qualitative short answer questions of both surveys, were coded using Thematic Analysis methods (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Bruan and Clarke, 2006). The initial analysis of the verification study results indicates that the proposed LARPer typology theory is progressing down the right track. However, it still required additional work and further improvement before it could be considered truly effective, with these points being explored further in *Chapter 6* and *Chapter 7*.

5.4 – *Phase 2*: Coding Methods and Initial Results

The experimental design, coding, and data analysis methods of several research fields were utilised in the development of the *Phase 2* data collection protocols. The core design of this verification study focused heavily on modifying methods used to assess the effectiveness of documentary films to alter their audiences' perceptions of a given topic (Lijiang, 2011; Anderson and Austin, 2012; Bender, 2019). This study also utilised a modified empirical survey method, focus group discussion methods and several survey questionnaire design frameworks to achieve the research objectives (Cameron, 2010; Yee, 2006b; Fowler, 2009). The online survey was open to participant responses for a month and was able to collect a total of 36 responses. However, only 26 of these responses were included in the coding process, as the remainder were either incomplete or completed incorrectly. Furthermore, despite the various difficulties encountered, three in-person screening sessions and focus group discussions were conducted, which included a total of 7 participants taking part in this stage of the study.

The data collected from each of the verification study components was compiled and transcribed, to be easily coded, analysed, and interpreted using the numerous chosen academic methods. The focus groups and survey's qualitative short answer questions were coded using various Thematic Analysis methods, while the survey's Likert-scale questions were examined using Parallel Analysis methods (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Bruan and Clarke, 2006; Fabriger et al, 1999). Additional techniques, including template analysis and qualitative comparative analysis were also utilised in the data interpretation process (Cameron, 2010; Cope, 2010). Each of the study's data collection component results were first examined in isolation, then re-examined together as a large combined singular data set (Rihoux, 2006; King, 2011; Brookfield, 2009).

As a result of this coding and analysis process, four primary research results aspects were identified. Firstly, the theoretical modifications to Bartle's taxonomy were somewhat effective, but require further refinement before they can be accurately and reliably applied to LARP. Secondly, the identified themes for defining LARP, LARPer motivations and LARPer behaviours presented several possible ways to approach the refinement of the

LARPer taxonomy. Thirdly, existing empirical classification survey tools are ineffective in the classification of LARPers. Although, it could be possible to create a new empirical survey tool built around a completed and refined LARPer motivation typology, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Fourthly, the study results identified several practical issues that need to be addressed in the LARPer type classification method's design before it can be effectively utilised by future LARP Orgs and scholars. These issues included, amongst others, the reliability of LARPers to respond to the survey tool honestly and quickly, the potential bias within the respondents as well as the necessary frequency of data collection. These results are further discussed in Chapter 6, with a summary of the full coding hierarchy developed from the *Phase 2* data analysis is provided in *Appendix 3.1*.

Additionally, through this coding analysis procedure, three secondary research outcomes were identified. Firstly, that panoramic video does have the potential to provide a more accurate representation of the LARP experience to an audience. The panoramic version of the primary research material sample reel was able to convey the 'feeling of actually being there' more effectively than the flat-panel version of the film. Secondly, however, it was also determined that this effect could have been greatly enhanced by using an altered combination of footage and an overall increase in audio-visual quality. For instance, study participants stated that their sense of immersion within the film would have been greater if more footage of the events was used instead of footage of the face-to-face interviews. Thirdly, the potential for panoramic videos as a method of screening collected audio-visual data to an audience for review and assessment has been demonstrated. In comparing the surveys and focus group responses the audience's recognition, enjoyment, and confidence in presented panoramic version was greater than or equivalent to the flat version. However, further research into this data, and the field in general, is necessary to develop panoramic video into a practical reliable method for data collection or presentation.

5.5 – Chapter Summary

In summary, the *Phase 2* goals of the project were to develop a method with which to test the effectiveness of the proposed hypothetical modifications to the player typology. The

focus of this chapter was on the presentation of the development and execution of the verification study procedure and aimed to accomplish four main goals. Firstly, outline the purpose and basic structure of *Phase 2* of the data collection process, including justifying the two-phase design of the project. Secondly, to discuss those relevant research methods that influenced the development of the verification study protocol. Thirdly, the chapter presented the experimental design of *Phase 2*, outlining in detail the process used in the conducting of the verification study. Fourthly, the data analysis process used in the coding of the collected results data, while providing an initial assessment of the collected results data.

Chapter 6: *Phase 2* Results and Discussion

6.0 – Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the discoveries made from the analysis of the collected *Phase 2* data, discussing how it impacts the further development of the proposed modified player taxonomy. Through the analysis of the coded *Phase 2* verification study results, this chapter aims to accomplish five primary goals. First, the chapter aims to restate the goals of the *Phase 2* data collection process, which includes an assessment of the viability of the overall concept of the *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory. Second, it aims to outline the important theme categories identified in the coding of the *Phase 2* data, including those that define LARPer motivations, behaviours, and LARP itself. Third, it provides an outline of the study participant's evaluation of both Bartle's (1996) taxonomy, and the proposed typology modifications as they apply to LARP. This also includes a discussion and assessment of possible alternative typology designs, influenced by the study participant's suggestions. Fourth, it outlines the results of the attempt to utilise Yee's (2006b) empirical MMORPG player classification survey to categorise LARPers, in order to determine if such a method could be useful in future research. Fifth, it provides an inclusive evaluation of the practical usability of panoramic video methods in the context of presenting collected academic audio-visual data to an audience. Examining the mediums effectiveness in comparison to the standard flat panel display methods, as well as assessing the accuracy of both films' representation of LARP.

6.1 – *Phase 2* Data Collection Process Summary

The *Phase 2* data collection process, or verification study, was primarily designed to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed modifications to Bartle's player taxonomy. In addition to gathering the data necessary to refine these proposed modifications into a fully realised *LARPer Motivation Typology*, capable of benefiting LARPers, LARP Orgs and scholarly researchers. The goals of this verification study were achieved using two main components and two data collection methods. The first being an online survey, involving a multi-part survey accompanied by the flat panel version of the primary research material sample reel. The second being an in-person screening component, which consisted of a

digital survey, focus group discussion and the panoramic version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel.* Both components of the verification study collected demographic data on the study participants, the purpose of which was to provide some context on the backgrounds of those taking part in *Phase 2*, this collected data is summarised in *Figure 6.1* and *Figure 6.2* below.
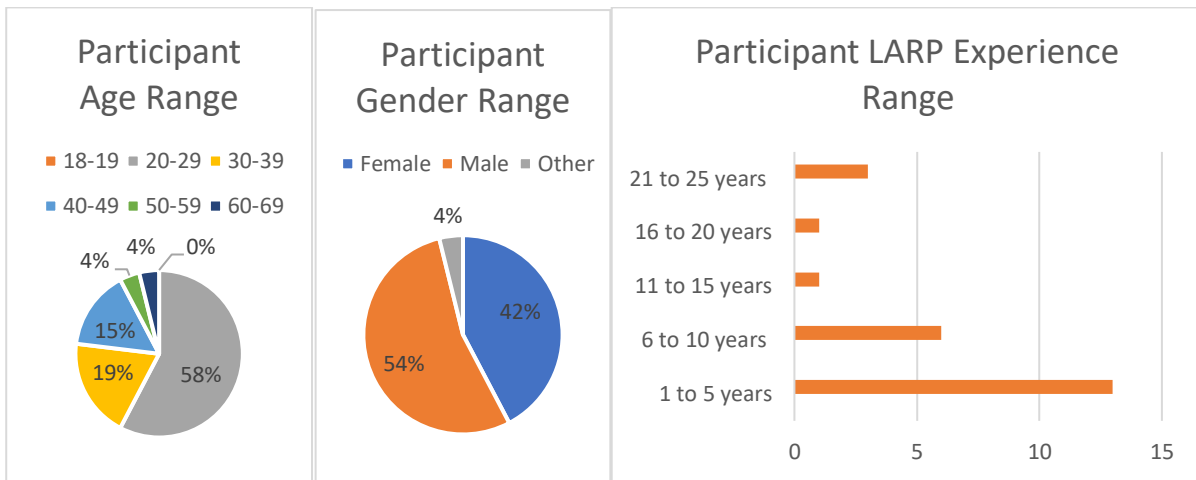
Figure 6.1 – Online Survey Demographic Information Graphs

Verification study components		Online survey	In-person screening
Participant numbers		**26**	**7**
Age ranges	20-29	58%	71%
	30-39	19%	29%
	40-49	15%	0%
	50-59	4%	0%
	60-69	4%	0%
Gender	**Male**	**54%**	**71%**
	Female	**42%**	**29%**
	Other	**4%**	**0%**
LARP experience range	1-5	52%	43%
	6-10	25%	57%
	11-15	5%	0%
	16-20	5%	0%
	21-25	13%	0%

Figure 6.2 – *Phase 2* Participant Demographic Information Summary Table

The three graphs in *Figure 6.1*, along with the table in *Figure 6.2*, demonstrate that the online survey component had 26 participants, 54% were male, 42% female, and 4% who

identified differently. The participants were aged between 20 and 70 years old, but the majority (58%) of participants were in the 20-29 age bracket. The 30-39 (19%) and 40-49 (15%) age brackets were the next most common ages, with the remaining 8% being split evenly between the 50-59 and 60-69 age brackets. In all, the participant group had approximately 216+ years of LARP experience between them, with most having on average between 1-5 years of experience of the WA LARP community.

As presented in *Figure 6.2*, a total of seven participants took part in the In-person Dome Screening and Focus Group Discussion aspect of the project. All the participants, apart from one, had taken part in the online survey component of the verification study before taking part in this aspect of the study. They were aged between 21 and 39 years old, 5 were male and 2 were female, they were from various fields of employment. Each of the participant's experience with LARP ranged from 3 years to 8 years, totalling approximately 40 years of experience between them.

This chapter will outline the discoveries made over the course of the verification study analysis results data. These discoveries cover aspects of LARPer motivations, behaviours, and how they impact the accuracy of the initial LARPer motivation typology. In addition to examining the verification study participant responses to the effectiveness of both Bartle's (1996) taxonomy, and the proposed hypothetical typology modifications as they applied to LARP. Furthermore, investigating the results of attempting to use Yee's (2006) existing empirical classification method to classify LARPers by their motivating aspects will be assessed. Along with outlining the practical viability of Panoramic video as a method for presenting academic research data to an audience.

6.2 – Identified Defining LARP, LARPer Motivations and Behaviours Themes

The Qualtrics program was used to produce and conduct the online and digital surveys. The responses were collated and stored in Microsoft Excel documents, in the form of large tables of raw response data. The raw data tables were copied and broken down into smaller more manageable documents based around the six primary research goals, as outlined previously in *Chapter 5*.

The short answer question responses were evaluated through thematic and template analysis methods using the structure of the excel documents to keep things organised. This enabled the identification of the major and minor themes relevant to the research goals. These responses were coded to determine which of the recurring core themes that the participants believed were the important motivating behavioural aspects and defining elements of what it is to be a part of the WA LARP Community. These themes were organised by grouping together similar themes into categories that could later be refined into theme categories and the defining aspects of a LARP participation. The short answer responses from the two versions of the survey were later merged, along with responses from the focus group discussions to produce a list of identified defining themes of LARP and LARPers (Cameron, 2010; Cope, 2010; King, 2011). These aspects and recurring themes were used to better define the important elements of the LARP experience that will influence the way the player types can be designed. These various theme categories, both major and minor, are outlined within the following subsections, and later summarised in *Figure 6.3* in *Section 6.2.4*. Furthermore, a summary of the full *Phase 2* research data coding hierarchy, developed through the analysis of these results, is provided in *Appendix 3.1*.

As expected, some of the LARP defining themes identified in the *Phase 2* results did confirm those aspects that were previously identified in the literature review and *Phase 1* data collection process, including:

- *Player physicality*
- *Role-playing mechanics*
- *Game-like mechanics*
- *Character embodiment*
- *Emergent collaborative narratives*
- *In-game time*
- *Out-of-game time*
- *Player immersion*.

Most of the defining theme categories identified within the Phase 2 data will be outlined below in the following subsections. However, since many of these concepts have been

explained in the previous thesis chapters, having manifested during earlier data coding, they will not be detailed again here, they will instead be explained more effectively later in *Chapter 7*.

6.2.1 – Identified Themes of LARPer Motivations

In addition to the survey questions aiming to determine the defining aspects of LARP in WA, these surveys and focus group questions were designed to discover the motivating themes of greatest relevance to WA LARPers. The study participant responses were coded and evaluated to identify the various recurring themes, as well as organising those themes into larger categories. These themes and categories of LARPer motivation are outlined below and summarised in *Section 6.2.4* through the table presented in *Figure 6.3*, while a full description of the data coding hierarchy is attached in *Appendix 3.1*.

The first category of motivation was a broad category, covering motivation themes that are basic, and relate to very broad or abstract ideas about player types. This category includes minor themes of 'Fun', 'Happiness', and 'Enjoyment' in both a personal sense and to provide such feelings to others involved. The themes of *Freedom of Expression* and 'wanting to be remembered' were additionally added to this category. For clarification, *Freedom of Expression* refers to the freedom of LARPers to openly express themselves, in terms of creativity, opinion, physically, emotionally, and their identity (including sexuality, gender, and ethnic identity). This refers to both at game events and as part of the community in general. This aspect can additionally refer to the communal creation and sharing strong positive memories with the other LARPers, which includes the likes of in-game historical moments, role-play antics, combat encounters, or various out-of-game community interactions.

The next category covered the players interests in the game's *Mechanics*, in terms of developing those mechanics, exploring their functionality, and testing the effectiveness of the rules in game. These rules and *Mechanics* do not just dictate how the game's 'magic system' operates, but also how characters are designed, how players can interact with the objects in the game world. In addition to the hierarchy of player and NPC factions, where the rules dictate the outcomes of political manoeuvring, resource management, and empire-building focused game-play elements within any given LARP.

Another category collected the themes related to the *Physicality* of LARP, particularly themes associated with the combat aspects. Participants described how they are motivated to take part in LARP because of their enjoyment of the feelings of strength and control obtained from being an effective or 'powerful' combat LARPer. Although a few suggested this as a primary motivation, improvement of physical abilities and fitness through the markedly increased exercise and training needed to prepare for a LARP was a common theme expressed by the participants. Meanwhile, the camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities that are associated with some LARPs were also mentioned repeatedly as other aspects that motivated LARP participants.

A major category established for this data was for the collection of themes related to *Role-Playing* and *Embodiment.* The opportunity for individuals to explore personality traits other than their own, often through creation and embodiment of a character, was a highly referenced motivating aspect among the participants. Many LARPers use this opportunity to try out different character traits or attitudes, experimenting with how they feel being someone else, often someone they are not able to be in real-life. This works in conjunction with the players' desires to become immersed in their characters and to fully experience the game world through their interactions with the other LARP participants. Whether it be fleshing out their experiences with discussions of past adventures by the fire, planning their latest schemes over a pint at the tavern, brokering a trade deal in the library, or even being captured by orcs on the way back to camp. The major aim of many LARPers is to be a part of and help create truly memorable moments in game, even if those moments have no real bearing on the game's main narrative plot threads.

The concept of *Community* also proved to be a major category of motivating themes. This sense of community refers to the out-of-game social connections, friendships, and belonging that LARPers gain from mid to long term interaction with their local LARP community. Covering themes of camaraderie, charity, mutual emotional, and occasional real-world financial support that comes from membership of a like-minded, welcoming, and accepting community. A community that not only comes together for games, but for training, volunteering, promotional work, and other social gatherings.

The next category that arose through this investigation of themes is focused on the

concepts of *Immersion* and *Escapism*. This category included themes of "imagination brought to life" (Phase 2, Online Survey), and an individual's *immersion* in the game's collaborative narrative, as well as *immersion* into their character which allows for further self-exploration, along with the development of personal confidence via their in-character interactions. The *Escapism* that is possible through LARP, was said to enable a shift in the participant's perspective and provide relief of real-world stress through immersion into the game's fantasy world, was repeatedly identified as an additional motivating factor.

Player Creativity was a category that collected interesting themes and suggested areas for future research. There was a considerable percentage of study participants who felt the creative opportunities of LARP was their major motivator for pursuing LARP as one of their main hobbies. Thus, the category is represented here as a motivating factor, even though *player creativity* is considered more of a behavioural aspect than a motivation concept at first glance. Many participants discussed how LARP was an ideal creative outlet for them, being motivated to take part in LARP because it provided them with opportunities to learn and utilize crafting skills, they have always wanted but would have not otherwise pursued. These includes sewing, costume design, painting, visual design, creative writing, poetry, music, game design, creature creation, prop making, construction, blacksmithing, and carpentry (Dutton, 2009; Vartiainen, 2015). This category also includes the themes of enjoying the aesthetic design of the game's world, as well as an interest in medieval history or design, and the development of a unified aesthetic for a player faction.

A lesser but still present motivation theme category was that of the various forms of the *Exploration* theme. This included the exploration of the game's narrative lore, the real-world area set-up for the game, and exploration of their own or other characters. To quote some of the participants, one stated that "I enjoy discovering all I can about the game I am playing. That is both with, and without other players" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). In addition, another participant stated:

> I am primarily an explorer. I like to explore the game world, creating and role-playing a character that fits it. I often read and reread rules and lore, particularly character creation. (*Phase 2*, Online Survey).

Another less prevalent but still important category was centred on the theme of

Achievement, also referred to as the 'sense of accomplishment' by many of the participants. Only a few participants noted that they were personally motivated or felt others are motivated to take part in LARP by the desire to complete all the 'mission objectives' or 'questlines' that they received. During the focus group discussions, the participants expanded on this notion, suggesting that achievement or 'winning' was normally a secondary thought as victory is often a more abstract and personalized concept in LARP. Since many LARPs do not have a clearly recognizable 'win/lose' dichotomy (*Phase 2*, Online Survey) that is found in other games or sports. However, healthy competitiveness and friendly competition themes are still motivations for several of the study's participants, including a noticeable crossover with those participants who are motivated by LARP's combat components.

Thus, the main categories of identified LARPer motivational themes derived from the *Phase 2* data are as follows:

- *Freedom of Expression*
- *Mechanics*
- *Physicality (combat)*
- *Role-play*
- *Embodiment*
- *Community*
- *Immersion*
- *Escapism*
- *Exploration*
- *Creativity*
- *Achievement*

However, the aspects that motivate LARPers is just part of the information needed to develop an accurate typology. The behaviours of the LARP players, both on and off the field, must also be considered.

6.2.2 – Identified Themes of LARPer Behaviours

The survey participants were asked several questions that enabled them to effectively

express what they believed were important defining features of LARP player behaviour. As with the motivation theme responses these results were broken down into their core concepts and similar repeating concepts were grouped together, to form useable categories for further refinement. These major LARPer behaviour theme categories will be outlined below and summarised in the table featured in *Figure 6.3* in *Section 6.2.4*.

One of the most prominent behavioural aspects identified from the coding was referred to as *Positive Social Behaviours*. This behaviour category encompassed those experiences or behaviours expressed by the participants that exemplify the welcoming and supportive nature of the WA LARP community. This included the act described by the participants as "Stepping up" (*Phase 2*, Online Survey), in which more experienced members of the community will make an additional effort, either in or out-of-character, to engage with and encourage participants, when they need extra support. Throughout the results data the participants have demonstrated the capacity of LARPers for generosity, charity, and kindness. Explaining how they work together to foster a safety conscious, good spirited, respectful, inclusive, and accepting community. Even if they don't always succeed in these goals, because they are let down by the actions of a few, the majority of LARPers appear to do their best to make sure those they personally interact with are treated with respect and appreciation. This category also includes the participant responses that discussed WA LARP's attempts to make an inclusive community that is LGBTQI friendly, and although outside the scope of this project, could be the genesis of further research into WA LARP in the fields of gender studies.

The theme of *Leadership* both in terms of an in or out-of-game concept, also has some correlation to this category, as participants were motivated by game mechanics. In addition to indicating that they possessed some level of authority in the community, either as in-character leaders, Game Marshals, or potentially even LARP Orgs.

An additional common behavioural aspect that presented itself was the concept of *Good Sportsmanship*. This included responses that discussed the benefits of skill and effective combat players, with the notion of healthy, directed, competitiveness being elements of behaviour that could define a certain type of player (Pearce, 2009; Looy et al, 2012; Peterson, 2012). Several responses also touched on the notion of "Willing to play to lose" (*Phase 2,* Online Survey) as another beneficial player trait, to have players willing to still

play out a plot line or battle to the end when it will not end well for their character.

Another heavily referenced aspect of LARPer behaviour identified in the study responses outlining various aspects of *Positive Role-play Practices*, which was an explanation of concepts such as effective teamwork, interpersonal discussion, and player commitment to properly embodying their characters while immersed within the game. Additionally, this referred to examples of fair, measured role-playing practices, improvisation methods, appropriate accepting, and challenging of in-game political leadership, charismatic or otherwise (Lampo, 2016; Meriläinen, 2011; Bowman, 2018). All this aims to progress the LARPers' personal and LARP's overarching collaborative narratives. For example, a member of the sailor themed Warband in *Shattered World LARP* asking other players about the sails missing from their ship. The other players could have simply responded 'I don't know what you are talking about'. However, the majority of LARPers demonstrated positive role-play practices, and thus built on the narrative prompt. They responded with the likes of 'I've not seen them, but I'll be sure to keep an eye out for them' or 'where did you see them last? How did you lose them?'. Thus, extending the role-play for longer and adding to the positive experience of all involved.

The last major category of LARPer behaviours that several participants mentioned in their responses was the concept of *Creative Expression*. The study participants referred to important LARPer behaviours including prop crafting, costuming, character creation, narrative development, as well as the development and testing of the game mechanics. They additionally referenced how a player's ingenuity and creative problem solving have enabled said players to overcome all manner of challenging adversities they have encountered both outside and within the world of the game. One participant describes a specific instance, where players organised a LARP mini game for themselves and another player faction between official games. This was so that they could play out narrative beats specific to their player faction in greater detail than would be possible for the LARP Orgs to be able to organise in the next official game.

Therefore, the identified primary LARPer behavioural theme categories developed from the evaluation of the Phase 2 data includes the following:

- *Positive Social Behaviours*

- *Leadership*
- *Good Sportsmanship*
- *Positive Role-play Practices*
- *Creative Expression*

Through combining these categories of LARPer behaviour with the categories of LARPer motivation, it is possible to develop the themes that can define the various aspects of the refined LARPer motivation types.

6.2.3 – Negative Behavioural Aspects

The categories discussed in the above paragraphs are, for the most part, the results of the analysis of positive LARPer behaviour responses given by the study participants. However, the participants were additionally asked to list examples of negative LARPer behaviour (Bowman, 2012; Aytemiz and Smith, 2020; Bartle, 2016).

These responses were similarly coded and analysed but following the transcribing of the focus group discussions it was decided that the use of negative aspects, referring to elements that could define a 'bad player', as a part of the LARPer Typology would be more problematic than helpful. As the focus group participants explained, "it would be extremely problematic" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). The participants going on to explain "what is consider bad behaviour in one LARP, could be perfectly acceptable in another…" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Furthermore stating:

> Such a type could risk branding players needlessly with titles they may never be able to shift…while not perfect the community and the Orgs already have better ways of dealing with and correcting 'bad' behaviour that are far more effective. (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion).

Thus, the researcher decided that those results will not be discussed in detail in this thesis. This decision to not discuss this aspect of the results is further supported by the results themselves, as many of the arising response categories have limited specific relevance to LARP participation. As these themes were referring more to the common faults in wider 'geek/nerd' culture and western society in general.

These aspects of the verification study data will not be explored further in this thesis or inform the development of the *LARPer Motivation Typology*. Although these concepts will not be fully explored at this time the identified aspects of negative player behaviour can be summarised as follows:

- *Community Gatekeeping*
- *General rudeness and disrespect*
- *Interpersonal community 'Drama'*
- *Poor Social skills*
- *Poor Community management*
- *Selfish role-play practices*
- *Active / Passive cheating*
- *Rule manipulation*
- *Bad sportsmanship*
- *Unhealthy competitiveness* (i.e. *"must win at all costs, winning is the only reason to play"* (Phase 2, Screening Survey),
- *unsafe practices*
- *pseudocriminal activity*
- *Oppressive obligation*
- *High monetary / time investment*

Although they will play no further role in this thesis project, these concepts would be a valid avenue of investigation for future research projects (Bowman, 2012; Aytemiz and Smith, 2020).

6.2.4 – Summary of 'Defining Themes' Identified in *Phase 2* Data

Through the analysis of the coded verification study results data, the following categories of LARPer behavioural themes have been identified and include the following:

- *Achievement*
- *Character embodiment*
- *Community*

- *Creativity*

- *Creative expression*

- *Emergent collaborative narratives*

- *Escapism*

- *Exploration*

- *Freedom of Expression*

- *Game-like mechanics*

- *Good Sportsmanship*

- *Immersion*

- *In-game time*

- *Leadership*

- *Mechanics*

- *Out-of-game time*

- *Physicality (combat)*

- *Player immersion.*

- *Player physicality*

- *Positive Role-play Practices*

- *Positive Social Behaviours*

- *Role-playing*

- *Embodiment*

- *Role-play mechanics*

Defining aspects of LARP	Theme categories of LARPer Motivation	Theme categories of LARPer Behaviour
- *Player physicality* - *Role-play mechanics* - *Game-like mechanics* - *Character embodiment* - *Emergent collaborative narratives* - *In-game time* - *Out-of-game time* - *Player immersion*	- *Freedom of Expression* - *Mechanics* - *Physicality (combat)* - *Role-playing* - *Embodiment* - *Community* - *Immersion* - *Escapism* - *Exploration* - *Creativity* - *Achievement*	- *Positive Social Behaviours* - *Good Sportsmanship* - *Leadership* - *Positive Role-play Practices* - *Creative Expression*

Figure 6.3 – Identified *Phase 2* Data Theme Category Summary Table

The primary thematic categories of themes identified from the collected *Phase 2* verification study data are summarised in the table presented above in *Figure 6.3*. In addition, a complete outline of the *Phase 2* data coding hierarchy, developed from the data analysis procedures utilised in this research, has been included as *Appendix 3.1*. These categories will be compared with the Phase 1 data and remaining verification study results to be further refined into the 'Defining themes' of the *LARPer Motivation Typology,* which will be outlined in *Chapter 7* along with the project's other research outcomes.

6.3 – Participant Feedback on Existing Typologies

This section will outline the study participant's responses to the effectiveness of Bartle's (1996) MUD Player taxonomy at defining LARPers, and the useability of the initial LARPer typology modifications (Cameron, 2010; Cope, 2010). Furthermore, this section will detail the participants' suggestions on how to possibly adapt Bartle's work more effectively, developing a motivation typology for LARP and LARPers. Along with exploring some of the identified issues with the existing typologies and touching on possible methods for addressing these difficulties.

6.3.1 – Responses to Bartle's Typology

In comparing the study participant responses, it becomes clear that the LARPers who participated in the study had mixed opinions toward Bartle's (1996) typology and its effectiveness when applied to LARP. Most participants commented that the basic concept could be applied to LARP, many recognising fellow LARPers, as well as themselves, in the player types that Bartle described. Thus, they could understand how such a typology could be useful for LARP Orgs. However, when it came down to specific aspects of the theory, disagreements on the limitations and possible solutions to those restrictions started to become more apparent. For example, some participants considered the types to be too broad, while others stated that they were not broad enough. Although, most participants did agree, that as close as it might be, the typology is not accurate enough to be applied to LARP effectively without some sort of modification. Thus, independently confirming the main discovery of the literature, such as the work of Henry (2015), as well as the *Phase 1* results of this project.

The points of criticism made by the participants were the same or similar to those discovered in the earlier stages of the research. These included the main problems occurring because MUDs and LARPs are different genres of RPG, and that the "change in interface" (Phase 2, Focus Group Discussion) will have a major impact on the potential behaviours and actions available to players. Furthermore, there can be a difference between what the players may say they want to do and what the players end up doing in game. Players will often only find their niche' once they start playing the game, thus observed behaviour is often a better indicator of player motivation than their word.

Additionally, the LARP player community, like many alternative communities, can be considered a spectrum with various extremes at either end with a wide variety of combinations of player traits in between. For example, "some players like combat, some like roleplay, some like both" (Phase 2, Focus Group Discussion), thus any typology would need to be designed with a certain amount of flexibility in mind. Further consideration the participants brought up is that different types of LARP games will produce different opportunities and experiences for players. Therefore, different player types or ratios of the player types will be fostered and developed across the varying events.

Some of the participant's criticisms were different from those predicted by the project's earlier research, either being contradictory to initial assumptions or presenting new angles that had yet to be considered. For instance, several participants suggested that "Most LARP Orgs want to make something that can appeal to all players" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Thus, such a theory would be beneficial to them, but only up to a certain point, as once the game gets started things can change in unexpected ways, without any prior indication. In other words, "it would be counterproductive to hold onto a concept at that point" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). An additional consideration the participants brought up is that players will change their minds and play styles on a regular basis, either out of necessity, boredom, or any number of other whims, as well as adapting over extended periods of time, this means that the data used to determine an individual's player type could quickly become outdated, invalid, and useless, unless new data is regularly collected to counteract this.

The focus group participants discussed some specific weaknesses in Bartle's player types

and how they would struggle to be applied to LARP. The analysis of the participants' responses resulted in the identification of six main limitations Bartle's theory in application to LARP.

First, as it currently stands the *Achiever* type will require alteration before it can be effective in defining LARPers. The participants discussed the fact that many LARPs lack clearly defined, or conventional 'win-conditions' and that many WA LARPs use tightly controlled, or regularly reset approaches to player progression over multiple games (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Therefore, it would be very difficult for a player of the *Achiever* type, as Bartle defines it, to ever be satisfied with LARP. However, it is not impossible, and would take a change in perspective about what can be considered victory and when that sort of competitive behaviour would be appropriate in any given LARP. Although it would very likely only be a low number of players of this type in any given player population. It would be efficient to combine this competitive behaviour with other related player behaviours, such as *'*effectiveness in combat', to develop a new player type that would better define that variety of LARPer.

Second, through their examination of the *Explorer* type the participants came to the same conclusion as the *Phase 1* research. The participants determining that this type had an ample variety of ways that it could be modified to be more accurately applied to LARP. As predicted, they concluded that the concepts of exploring the game space would not be a particularly prevalent aspect in LARP. This being that the real-world nature of the LARP game sites would limit this behaviour, as previously discussed in *Chapter 4*. They went on to discuss a behaviour they named 'Lore Hunting', described as an activity in which players explore the various aspects of the game world to discover additional hidden information. They suggested that while this sort of behaviour would be prevalent in the participants of other types of RPGs, it would be particularly difficult in most LARPs. They continued on to explain that in much of the narrative 'Easter Eggs', the practise of creators leaving additional content hidden in their work for the audience to find, was actually created by the players themselves as they played. This being achieved either by adding their own flare or additions to content as they role-played, or by putting more importance upon LARP Org provided story information than intended by the creators. Thus, it would be difficult to attempt to discover such 'Easter Eggs' as they are not pre-programed into the game world as they would be for a video game, but it is still a behaviour they have

observed in fellow LARPers (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion).

Third, the behaviour of sorting through the available written lore of a game to possess information that other players would not know, like a 'Completionist', has been observed in LARP, but it is not common. A 'Completionist', is a type of digital video game player who does not stop playing a video game until they have done absolutely everything that can be done or collected. However, this is more of a behaviour of a player in the *Achiever* or *Killer* type than an *Explorer* type player. Additionally, the participants all agreed that a common behaviour of LARPers is to examine a game's mechanical rules to test different character ability combinations. The aim of this being to find exploitable loopholes in the rules, in the same spirit as that seen in video games. The participants explain that this sort of behaviour is normally played out at training sessions, where the mechanics are thoroughly reviewed by the LARP Orgs. So that as few of these unfair rules or mechanics that negatively impact participant enjoyment, make it into the game events as possible. Even at game events, if any 'exploits' or 'loopholes' are there, they are normally addressed, or in video game terms 'Patched', within hours of LARP Orgs becoming aware of them. In summary they stated that a player type defined by a focus on rules and mechanics could be viable for LARP typology. However, it would likely have only a low number of LARPers who would identify as such a player, many of whom would probably be LARP Orgs rather than Players. They suggested that perhaps it would be better to group those traits with one of the less populated player types, such as the competitiveness of the *Achiever* type.

Fourth, they agreed that the *Socialiser* player type would need the least amount of modification to be applied to LARP. Only needing to be altered to include the appropriate genre language, and a slight modification to match up with the newly adapted versions of the other types. However, they also discussed how the type could be further divided into a range of subtypes to become even more accurate and specialized to LARP.

Fifth, the participants suggested that a player could still be a *Killer* type in a non-combat *parlour* LARP. Achieving this by the player hording any important narrative clues, plot hooks, or story points to themselves. This means that only they would be able to progress the collaborative narrative rather than working with the others to progress the story. The *Killer* player is still exerting their will over the other players and disrupting the other LARPer's ability to play the game, however this behaviour, while not as overtly 'toxic' as

other examples, was still considered to be a less than appropriate way to participate.

Sixth, and finally, some participant responses suggested that the LARPer types would be more effective if they were not strict rigid boxes but were broader and with the flow between the types being more effectively demonstrated. Although, the broadness of Bartle's types was seen by some scholars as a weakness in the design, the participant responses appear to indicate that this is a possible strength to retain in the refined LARPer motivation typology. Admittedly, it is difficult to articulate this broadness and flow briefly, even using visual graphs, as evidenced by a few participants misunderstanding Bartle's types to be more rigid than they truly were. This could have been due to these participants only having a small amount of information on Bartle's types or from their own personal biases against this type of player classification system. Despite being the result of a misunderstanding, it is still a valid point to consider in the continued development of the taxonomy. In addition to further discussions on how to reduce the possibility of future misunderstanding of the refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory.

6.3.2 – Responses to Initial 'LARPer Motivation Typology' Theory

Although Bartle's (1996) theory was presented to the study participants via the information document, the proposed typology modification was presented via the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* films. The version presented in the films consisted of the four main types, *Warriors* (competitive), *Diplomats* (community), *Adventurers* (mechanics), and *Fighters* (combat). In addition, the sample reel contained a separate sequence for discussing the evidence related to the *Creativity* aspects of LARP. The aim of this was to enable a later discussion within the verification study of where this aspect would truly fit within a proposed LARPer typology. Although the sample reels were designed to present the proposed modified player types, the modified versions would have still been recognisable by the terms set out by Bartle. This was to reduce the possibility of confusion for the study participants, only the language used by Bartle was referred to in the survey questionnaires. Rather than attempting to have the participants learn and understand the subtle differences between two similar sets of player types in such a short time frame.

In general, the participants stated that this initial version of the typology was a more accurate depiction of the player types present within WA LARP than Bartle's theory was

alone. However, the participants also generally agreed that further refinement was still required. For example, they agreed on combining the LARP type spectrum graph and the LARPer typology interest graph together into a single quick reference method, that could help individuals to determine which games they might enjoy and help them meet up with other like-minded LARPers.

They additionally agreed that such a typology had the potential to be a useful additional method for LARP Orgs to have at their disposal. Some participants commented that the completed motivation typology would be like some of the methods already utilised by LARP Orgs in the development of new game content. This theory would allow them an effective way to determine if their game ideas would be enjoyed by players in the community, as well as identifying any player types that are dissatisfied by the existing content. Furthermore, it would help LARP Orgs and players gain a greater understanding of a variety of player types. Thus, enabling LARP Orgs to have greater options for the customisation of content to better encourage the types of players they want in their games.

Although much of the participants feedback agreed with the modifications set out in the initial LARPer typology, they also made further suggestions that were not anticipated. Some minor suggestions the participants put forward were, finding a way to use the combined chart to display "hot spots of motivation" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Meanwhile, other suggestions included that perhaps certain psychology-based personality tests would be an effective alternative approach to the typology, and that negative player behaviours could assist in defining the LARPer types. These suggestions will be explored to a certain extent in the final stages of the project but will be better investigated in possible future research.

As a brief non sequitur, the study participants also suggested perhaps the works of other academics and research fields may provide design theories that could assist in the development of a LARPer typology. The "Myers-Briggs" (1962) psychology-based personality profiling tool for instance was suggested by several participants, both in their survey responses and two of the three focus group discussion sessions (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Other participants similarly suggested the "Big Five" personality type theory as an additional alternative approach to the creation of LARPer classification taxonomy (De Raad, 2000; Higgins et al, 2007). Although these suggestions offer scope

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for further research, these topics are outside this researcher's primary field of expertise and due to this project's tight schedule, it was determined that an exploration of the usefulness of these approaches will better addressed in future research endeavours.

The participants agreed that a player type defined by negative player aspects would not be helpful, but just problematic. They explained in the focus group discussion, that it would be more harmful to define players by 'bad behaviour', as it may stop them from being able to improve over time. Going on to say that apart from obviously policing the overt violations, the best way to deal with problematic behaviour, is to have a community that regularly self-monitors. This is another interesting point that could be an opportunity for future research, in relation to motivation and behavioural analysis (Bowman 2012).

Another suggestion the participants made was for a different type of player, called the *NPC Player type* (non-player character), named after the pre-programmed character populations in digital RPGs. The participants described this player as being an off shoot of the *Socialiser* or *Diplomat* player types, as well as involving aspects of *Explorer* type behaviours. This possible player type is defined as those players who desire to simply exist within the world of the game, not seeking to be the hero, villain, or any other sort of active 'main' character archetype. Rather they take on roles such as, librarians, Inn keepers, Tavern owners, Bankers, or Blacksmiths. These LARPers create characters that simply exist within the games world and interact with the players as they go about adventuring. They are there to enjoy being a part of the social community of the game and to help the LARP Orgs better flesh-out the game world. For example, while in-game, as characters in the world providing tangible services (food, drink, costume repair) or narrative guidance (information, plot hooks, magic items, 'healing') to the players. They can also provide out-of-game, volunteering to help organize aspects of the game events, such as making costumes, set construction, and creating props.

The concept of player creativity was also discussed as a part of the *Focus Group Discussions,* leading to the development of some interesting ideas for further investigation. However, no clear answer was devised for where the concept would best fit within an improved *LARPer Motivation Typology*. Some participants suggested that creative player behaviours could be used to define a new player type separate from the others already discussed. Whereas others felt that the different creative behaviours could be used to

define aspects of each improved version of the LARPer Types. Furthermore, some participants thought that player creativity would fit best as part of only one of the improved player types, while others said it should not be considered as a defining aspect of any one player type. Despite these conflicting viewpoints, the participants did agree that all players no matter what their type will be involved in, or motivated by, some form of creative behaviour or crafting activity when participating in LARP. It is this fact that led many participants to state that creativity should be considered as a defining aspect of LARPers. However, the equally relevant fact is that majority of creative activities related to LARP are meant to be completed in the preparation of a game event. Thus, it would have minimal bearing on the actual playstyle of any given individual, which is why others believe it would not be viable to use creativity as a defining aspect of LARPers.

It is important to clarify, exactly what can be considered acts of creativity during the game, these acts include creative problem solving, cooperative narrative creation, and creation of in-game pieces of art (drawings, contracts, songs, etc). However, in this specific context they are not currently included in this definition of Creative behaviour. These forms of in-game creativity are filed under other behaviours, namely role-playing, emergent narratives, teamwork, leadership, immersion. This confusion is understandable, at this point, based on the verification study participant responses, creativity refers to acts of physical creation (crafting, costumes, song writing, etc) as it applies to LARP rather than in the broader sense that is commonly applied to it. This is an issue of the identified theme categories that will be addressed in *Chapter 7* (King, 2011), in the further development of the improved LARPer typology the validity of both definitions will be assessed. Thus, developing a solution that will best fit in with the rest of the emerging improved typology and will most accurately represent the role of creativity for LARP participants.

6.3.3 – Suggested Alternative LARPer Typology Models

From this data, several alternative possible ways of defining the LARP player types and. organising the LARPer Motivation Typology have presented themselves. These proposed designs were evaluated as part of the process for developing the fully realised and refined LARPer motivation typology. These alternative versions of the proposed hypothetical modifications to the player taxonomy methods, as suggested by the verification study participants, will be briefly outlined below.

As a result of the combining of the two surveys and focus group discussions, two sets of alternative proposed hypothetical player type modifications were produced. These alternative typology prototypes are of a similar state as the proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's (1996) player taxonomy developed from the *Phase 1* results data. The study participant suggestions were formulated through the focus groups discussions and were then further developed using content from the survey responses. These designs condense many of the *Phase 2* participants thoughts, opinions, and suggestions for how they would build such a player classification system, written up in a concise format, enabling them to be easily presented and assessed.

This condensed and streamlined information was then used in the process to develop the refined LARPer motivation typology. Through the typology redevelopment process the most compatible and useful elements identified within these alternative taxonomy proposals will be integrated into the refined LARPer typology, to further enhance the design of the final product. In addition to addressing the practical useability issues that must be considered, as outlined by the LARP Org participants, in reference to the event development and player assessment tools they already use (Bøckman, 2002; Bienia, 2013; Edwards, 2001).

The first of these alternate proposed typology modification designs is an improvement on the design demonstrated in the primary research material sample reel. This includes establishing the creative aspects of LARPing as a distinct player type and brings the number of player types up to five. This alternated typology design is briefly described as follows:

- *Creatives* – These Players are focused on the creative aspects of LARP, from developing characters and narrative to the production of props and costumes.
- *Competitive* – These players are focused on achieving the various win conditions of the game, as established by the rules of the game or by their own personal ambitions. They aim to lead their fellow players through the game, ensuring that everyone gets as much enjoyment out of the game as they want.
- *Mechanics* – These Players are focused on exploring the rules and mechanics of the game, helping to develop, and run LARPs more than simply playing them.

- *Community* – These Players are focused on the social and community aspects of LARP. Gaining their enjoyment from forming friendships and interacting with the other players, whether inside or outside the context of the game world.
- *Combatants* – These players are motivated to participate in LARP as a way of improving their fitness and gaining new physical skills they would never have otherwise acquired, along with escaping the real-world for a time through an exciting activity.

Although this design has the potential to be a more precise method for classification, it does have the downside of not being able to be plotted on a quadrant interest graph. This means that the proposed modifications cannot be visually represented easily in this way and thus cannot be combined with the *LARP Type Spectrum Graph*. An aspect of the design which, in addition to being incomplete, could limit the overall usefulness of a tool based only on this proposed alternate method.

The second of the alternative proposed hypothetical typology modification design considers a more extensive rearranging of the defining aspects of the proposed player type modifications. This design additional variation of the modified player typology consists of four player types and is briefly outlined as follows:

- *Artisans* – For these players LARP is an excuse to flex their creative muscles, producing not only physical artifacts (props, costumes, buildings, etc) but also poetry, songs, characters, narrative elements, and game mechanics. These players can weave their own brand of fun both in and out of the LARP's *Magic circle*.
- *Bards* – These players embrace the escapism, gaining their joy from embodying their character and being someone else for the day, along with their immersive interactions with the narrative lore and other characters that inhabit the game environment as well as the game world itself.
- *Scribes* (NPC) – These are players who are more interested in just being a part of the immersive world of the LARP, helping the out-of-game community continue to function and grow, In-game they take on roles like that of NPCs, while out of game they regularly volunteer to assist the LARP Orgs and community in any way they can.

- *Gladiator* – This player type combines the competitive, mechanics testing, and physical combat aspects of player behaviour to define a type that desires to be a powerful force within the game. They have a clear understanding of the rules and their own objectives, along with the necessary skills, most often in combat but also in roleplay, needed to complete those objectives, with little or no real regard for the narrative aspects of the game.

Although this alternative proposal seemed promising, these modifications still do not fully integrate with other aspects of the research, proving to be ineffective at covering all the identified issues with the current taxonomy design. Based on the available primary research data, the focus of these versions of the proposed modified player types were too narrow and struggled to interact with one another in a useful manner. Resulting in the proposed types being ineffective for categorising the majority of LARPers, as according to the available data, many LARPers demonstrated they have more than a single core motivating aspect influencing their play style. Thus, the need for player types that can flow into each other in such a way that it can accommodate these various degrees and combinations of interests is necessary to effectively position LARPers within the typology.

Therefore, neither of these alternate proposed modifications to the player typology ended up being the sole basis of the refined LARPer typology theory. However, while each of these proposals provided some increased effectiveness or improved insight into LARPer Classification, their overall design was incomplete and lacking in several areas. This was to be expected, considering how these modification proposals were produced, that being through the reformatting and condensing of transcribed focus group discussions and digital survey responses. Despite this, these hypothetical modification proposals still have some uses in the overall development process of the refined LARPer motivation typology theory (McDiarmid, 2011; Kim, 1998; Bowman and Vanek, 2013).

Although the discussion of these alternate typology modification proposals seems to be without purpose when viewed in isolation from the other aspects of the study, when considered along with the rest of the research project's results data they provide important additional insight as part of the final stage of the research project. As reported in *Chapter 7*, this insight proved vital in the development of the overall structure and organisation of the refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory

6.4 – The Effectiveness of Applying an Existing Empirical Method to LARP

The following section of this chapter discusses the results of the attempts to use the Yee (2006c) MMORPG player empirical classification survey to categorise LARPers into possible player types. To be clear, this thesis does not intend to produce an 'empirical classification survey tool', like the one developed by Yee (2006c). Although such a method could provide a possible alternate means for LARP Orgs and Scholars to employ the LARPer motivation typology theory. The work necessary to develop an effective version of such a tool is beyond the scope of this study and should be attempted as the primary goal of a future research project. Nonetheless, the evaluation of the results collected from this attempt to use an empirical player classification method in the context of WA LARPers still produced some interesting outcomes.

The aim here was to evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of an existing empirical player-type classification method, specifically the one developed by Nick Yee, for the classification of LARPers. The Yee (2006) classification tool consisted of forty 5-point-Likert scale questions and represented the nine defining themes of his MMORPG player typology. These themes being *Relationships, Manipulation, Immersion, Escapism, Solo, Achievement, Lead, Learn,* and *Discovery*. The only alterations made to Yee's survey tool was to modify the wording of some of the questions to fit the relevant terminology into the context of LARP. The raw Likert-scale survey response data was coded using the analysis protocols Yee utilised in his work (Yee, 2006b; Fabriger et al, 1999). These results were then compared to those gleaned from the 'Thematic analyses' of the participant's player type self-determination question responses, to determine the accuracy of Yee's method. Despite Yee, Bartle, and the initial LARPer typologies being distinct from one another, it was theorized that some cross-compatibility would still be possible, even if it was not likely to succeed. The analysis procedure was carried out on 17 of the 26 online survey participant responses, this was deemed to be sufficient to determine the effectiveness of the process, with the overall results being as underwhelming as predicted.

The online survey participant responses to the 40-item modified Yee questionnaire were coded using 'parallel analysis' and 'qualitative comparative analysis' (QCA) methods, to

determine the main motivating factors of each participant. Each of Yee's themes had its own group of questions and an eigenvalue to determine if a participant's motivation was influenced by a particular theme. If the participant score matched the predicted eigenvalue of a motivating theme, then they could be influenced by that motivating factor. The combination of motivating themes that the individual participants did or did not display was then compared to the eigenvalues established for the Bartle (1996) player types. These values were developed by pairing the values of Yee's motivation themes with the aspects of Bartle's player types that best match each other. The player types defined by the empirical tool were then compared to the one defined by the participant themselves via the self-determination focused questions, as well as through the thematic analysis of the individual responses to other questions in the online survey. If the tool was effective there would be a degree of correlation between the player types assigned by these three methods to the individual survey participants (Meriläinen, 2011; Looy et al, 2012; King, 2011).

In other words, the procedure involved the following steps. Each group of Likert questions represented one of the defining aspects of Yee's Player typology. The participant's responses to the questions were recorded on a table, replacing the worded response with a number (Strongly Disagree = 1, Strongly Agree = 5, etc.). The responses from participants were used to determine if the participant displayed the aspect of Yee's player taxonomy the questions represented. For example, if they responded with mostly 4 or 5, they do demonstrate that aspect of Yee's (2006) player taxonomy. Whereas if they responded with mostly 1, 2 or 3 to those questions then they do not demonstrate that aspect. Each participant's combination of demonstrated Yee motivation aspects is then compared to the pre-established combinations that define Bartle's player types. The Bartle type aspect combination which most closely resembled the participant's Yee aspect combination was stated to be the participants empirically determined player type. These were then compared to the participant's response to the player type self-determination questions (*Appendix 2.1*, Q3.16 – Q3.17), where the participants decided for themselves what player-type they belong to. Furthermore, the participant's responses to additional questions (*Appendix 2.1*, Q3.1 – Q3.4) were thematically analysed to determine the survey participant's probable player type, based on which aspects of LARP they discussed in their short-answer survey responses.

Following the completion of each of these steps, the resulting player types determined by each method are compared. If the three assigned player types agreed with each other it was a good indication that the empirical method was working effectively. However, no consistent patterns or correlations were produced or observed in any of the 17 evaluated participant survey responses resulting from the study's coding procedure. This overall lack of consistency in the data analysis could be a result of several possible limitations or flaws in the design or conducting of the analysis. For instance, one or more of the three methods used to determine the LARPers' player type did provide an accurate result, while the other methods did not produce accurate results, thus leading to the lack of correlation. Alternatively, the previously stated weaknesses in Yee's earlier survey tool may have been more significant than anticipated, rendering the predicted benefits of using the less specialised survey tool mute (Yee, 2006b; Yee et al, 2012). The limited effectiveness of the tool could also be down to human error in the analysis process, or even a combination of any number of these limiting factors. Although these results did not provide any useful conclusion for the aims of this current research project, the collected data and recorded limitations of these methods could be used as the foundation for future research.

In summary, it was determined that while at a basic level this method could be used to classify LARPers, this specific tool is not effective at doing so. Even with the minor modifications to the questions, the method was still not effectively calibrated to deal with the specifics of LARP and LARPers. Although some disparity between these results was expected, it was hypothesised that sufficient correlation amongst these results would still be demonstrated. However, after the coding of 17 survey responses no consistent patterns of correlation were detected. The decoding of the empirical classification method survey results was inconsistent with providing a clear determination on an individual participant's player type. Furthermore, the few times it was able to clearly determine the participant's player type, it did not match up with those player types determined for that participant by the self-determination and thematic analysis methods. Additionally, the overall coding process proved to be more difficult than predicted, causing coding errors, which meant that data often needed to be re-coded and double checked. Although this thesis did not intend to produce an empirical player type classification survey, as Yee (2006, 2012) did, it has nonetheless still produced some valuable information. This included providing insights into how to produce the framework from which a possible operational LARPer classification survey tool can be designed, as outlined in *Chapter 8*.

6.5 – Assessment of Panoramic Video as Research Presentation Method

The final research goal of the verification study was to investigate the effectiveness of panoramic film screening methods for the presentation of collected academic audio-visual research data. Assessing the medium's viability in the context of both its practical usability of the medium and in comparison, with existing flat-panel screening methods. This section will outline the *Phase 2* results in terms of the accuracy of LARP's representation in the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel.* In addition to the participant's engagement, sense of immersion, and how the two versions of the film compared to each other.

To reiterate and clarify, the two *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* films were not produced as examples of the calibre of film that would be suitable for stand-alone scholarly assessment. Nor are they examples of a film suitable for public or commercial screenings for the purpose of entertainment or education. They are instead designed to be tools of participant stimulus, being specifically produced to present data to the participants as part of this verification study. Despite this, many of the study participants did hold the sample reels to the higher professional filmmaking standards for educational and entertainment media that they are accustomed. However, this did not have any major impact on the collected results, as the study participants opinions on the overall quality of the films was only of tertiary interest to the research.

In fact, all that was being verified at this point of *Phase 2* was whether the attending participants agreed that the sample reels did accurately represent LARP in WA or not, and to what extent. The usefulness of this determination being that if the participants found the panoramic version to be more accurate than the 2D version, then it would confirm panoramic video is a valid method of data collection. A method that can be confidently used by future scholarly researchers for capturing in-field data for any number of previously difficult to record cultural groups, events, or phenomenon.

6.5.1 – LARP Representation Accuracy

A brief note on the accuracy of the film's representation of LARP, the accuracy will be considered in the context of being an accurate representation of the WA LARP community.

This is because the differences in region, culture & community make up a wide range of what LARP can be, and there can be considerable differences between the various versions of LARP. As one focus group participant said "(the film) is an accurate representation of our active LARP community, but other LARPers from other locations may not find it accurate" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Thus, accurate representations of LARP should be considered as a case-by-case concept, as what may be considered an accurate representation of one LARP, may be an unrecognisable representation of another.

In this established context, the table provided in *Figure 6.4* below, summarises the perceived level of accuracy by percentage of the participant audience. This table demonstrates that approximately 96% of the 2D viewers found the sample reel to be accurate to some degree in its depiction of what LARP in WA is truly like. Meanwhile, 100% of the panoramic film viewers felt the panoramic version of the film to be accurate to some degree in its representation of WA LARP and LARPers. Only 4% of the 2D viewers found the sample reel to be an inaccurate depiction of what LARP in WA is truly like, while 0% of the panoramic film watchers felt this about the panoramic version. Thus, just from this data it can be argued the panoramic version of the sample reel presented a better and more accurate representation of the WA LARP community.

Response Choice	Very Accurate	Accurate	Somewhat Accurate	Inaccurate
Flat Panel Film	8%	65%	23%	4%
Panoramic Film	29%	42%	29%	0%

Figure 6.4 – "How accurate was the film? (% of Audience)?" Results Summary

Therefore, although the content and editing of the two films was identical, the table shows that the panoramic film was perceived to be more accurate. This is probably due to the increased feeling of immersive presence reportedly felt by the participants of the dome screening system. In addition to the relevant directorial editing techniques used to optimise the sense of immersion in the audience (Daniel, 2016; Bender, 2019; Bowman, 2018). However, as additionally stated by the study participants, in this case the potential of panoramic video was not fully realised, even so the potential of the medium is still clear.

The focus group participants additionally discussed how the panoramic film provided an increase in the perception of the scale of the objects and events presented on screen. Indicating that this further enhanced the immersive feeling and the accuracy of the representation of LARP. The participants stating that activity going on around the primary focus point created more things to draw in the viewer's attention, maintaining the audiences focus and immersion within the film. This could be considered unusual, as the more distracting elements on screen the more it seemed to hold the participants attention. To clarify, in this case by 'attention' the participants were referring to the fact that they were more interested in what they were seeing and better enjoyed that footage.

This is in line with the theories of Bender (2013, 2014) in their work discussing the increase in detail saturation in the realistic presentation of film and digital video game texts. Therefore, the increase in peripheral content draws the viewers gaze back to the panoramic film as their attention wavers and they shift their gaze from the focus point of the screen. Thus, the participants commented that they would have liked to have seen more footage of the LARP battles, and for that footage to be closer to the action, if not in amongst it. In addition, they also wanted to see more moments of in-game role-play between players, suggesting that these smaller moments were what really increased their sense of immersion. In both versions of the Sample Reel film, the participants provided a degree of positive feedback on the film presentations. The participants stated that the face-to-face interviews where the participants had props around them, and interesting backdrops were more interesting and enjoyable, particularly in the panoramic version. For example, the scenes positioned the viewer within a Warband's in-game discussion huddle and the perfectly framed face-to-face interviews recorded at game events were particularly engaging. The participants preferred examples of this style of footage, such as the Roman centurion themed LARPer interview, over that of the face-to-face interviews recorded outside of game events.

The participant's feedback also included several additional suggestions on how to improve the accuracy of the film's representation of LARP, along with the film's overall quality and entertainment value. Some participants suggested that each sequence of the films could have been expanded and the order of the sequences changed to give the film a structure more like that of a video essay. Meanwhile, others suggested continuing to use the player

typology as the film's main structural framework, but then for each player type add in the most specific relevant footage examples, including various scenes from a variety of different types of LARP events. Before looping the content back around to the player types to move on to the next player type, to demonstrate the LARPer motivation types and variety of LARP event types more efficiently. A further suggestion was the inclusion of an additional sequence at the beginning of the films. This sequence would be focused on providing an actual definition of what LARP is, explaining what the different types are, and how it works, allowing the film's content to be understood more easily by a non-LARP audience.

The primary complaint of the accuracy of the film's representation of LARP was that there was only footage from two of the many LARP events running in the WA LARP scene. These two LARPs effectively only representing one style of LARP, while providing only minimal representation of the other styles, such as *Parlour* LARP. Therefore, although it did indeed provide an accurate representation of the WA LARP community, this representation was accurate but incomplete. As the films lacked proper representations of WA Parlour LARPs, such as *Boot Hill LARP* and *Arecibo Circle LARP*.

Several of the participants also stated that the films overuse the standard face-to-face interview set-up, stating that many of these interviews felt 'awkward' or 'dull' to watch. Further stating that it was particularly evident in the panoramic version of the sample reel and was not the best use of the medium's potential. They suggested that increasing the use of interview audio as voice-over played over more LARP event footage demonstrating the topics being discussed in the audio would have been more effective and enjoyable.

A few participants also noted that one section of the panoramic sample reel caused some minor motion sickness when viewed, particularly for those who had only minimal previous experience with panoramic video. Some study participants suggested the film could have been more effective if formatted for use in a VR headset, or HMD system rather than the specialised dome screen projection system. The participants reasoned that while the dome created an interesting fishbowl effect, the use of an HMD could be more user friendly and widely available. In addition to possibly enhancing the feeling of immersion and engagement via a greater perceived illusion of choice to explore the recorded footage more freely (Bender and Broderick, 2021; Dhalmahapatra et al, 2020).

In addition to these described primary discoveries, several further minor points of discussion were also addressed through this procedure, with the participants providing constructive criticism on the film presentations. This included the general discussion of the overall audio, visual and projection quality of the sample reels, in which the participants agreed that all these were acceptable but could have been improved upon. However, this constructive feedback was noted but not included in the primary discussion, as the researcher had chosen to sacrifice the overall quality of the sample reels for the sake of efficiency. This was done to best address the limitations of the sample reel production process and to ensure the films would effectively serve their intended purpose, as stimuli for the study participants.

The study participants also agreed with the suggestion that Panoramic filming could also be useful for the recording of events, such as pop-culture conventions, live music concerts, festivals, historic tours, tourist attractions and nature walks, in addition to the recording of LARP events. The participants referencing the use of panoramic recording methods for future scholarly research purposes for the collection and presentation of in-field observational data, as done in this study. Further stating that these methods are also suitable for other educational, entertainment, public or commercial purposes, to be produced by either professional or amateur content developers.

6.5.2 – Panoramic Verses Flat-Panel Comparison

This sub-section will present the results of the direct comparison between the panoramic and flat-panel version of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel.* As a brief reminder, both films contained the same audio-visual content, edited in the same order, with the only difference being the method of video capture and presentation. The flat-panel version being presented on the study participant's personal laptops or similar device, via YouTube, while the panoramic version was viewed on the specialised dome projection screen.

It is important to note that, as discussed in *Section 2.3.3*, there have been several previous scholarly research projects that have attempted to compare flat-panel and panoramic video display formats. However, for these comparisons, previous studies have always used either, a flat-panel film converted for display in a VR video set up, or

'extracted' a flat-panel video from the existing panoramic video text. To the knowledge of the researcher, the use of different footage capture methods from the conception of the video components of a study have never been attempted. Because of this these earlier studies were severely limited in what they could discover as they are not able to properly compare how the events would truly look like in either video format. Since they were only changing the display system of existing films, rather than producing new material in each of the formats from scratch. Most of these studies came to similar conclusions that the 360-degree VR display format innately created a greater sense of audience immersion, which provides the audience with increased control over which parts of the narrative they viewed. These studies determined that it would require the development of new filmmaking languages to control the viewer's gaze and maintain the clarity of the creator's message (Rizzo et al, 2004; Höllerer et al, 1999; Ryan, 2008).

However, more recent studies have discovered this earlier research to be incorrect, with the results of these early projects to be considered victims of what this researcher has called the 'assumption of immersion'. Through the comparison of existing eye-tracking research for 2D films and newly gathered eye-tracking data of purpose made CVR videos, more recent studies have found this increase in immersion is not guaranteed. Rather the greater sense of immersion can be controlled by and is reliant upon the skills of the film creator in using traditional filmmaking techniques to influence the audience's gaze (Bender, 2019; Bender and Broderick, 2021; Dooley et al, 2020).

Therefore, the novelty of this research project is that from the start it aimed to capture footage data of the observed cultural events using both a traditional flat-panel camera and a panoramic CVR camera. This enabled the two mediums to be compared and evaluated during every stage of production, with this extended analysis providing the results presented here in this thesis. This novelty remains even though for the sake of efficiency the 2D sample reel used in the study was extracted from the panoramic sample reel edit. As this edited sample reel was compared with the corresponding raw 2D footage data and found to be similar enough to be used in place of an edit produced from only the 2D audio-visual data.

The table below, *Figure 6.5*, outlines and compares the approximate recognition percentages of Bartle's (1996) player types within the different versions of the film.

Player Type		Achiever	Socialiser	Explorer	Killer
Flat version	**Yes**	77%	92%	69%	69%
	Maybe	23%	8%	23%	31%
	No	0%	0%	8%	0%
Panoramic version	Yes	**29%**	**86%**	**57%**	**72%**
	Maybe	**71%**	**0%**	**29%**	**14%**
	No	**0%**	**14%**	**14%**	**14%**

Figure 6.5 – Participant recognition of Bartle's types in the films Results Summary

Although the sample reels showed a modified version of the Bartle typology, his types were still recognisable. Therefore, these names were used in this exercise as the participants would have just learnt the names and be able to recognise them. These results seem to suggest that the flat panel was more effective at presenting the Bartle's player types. However, this could also be due to the online survey participants having the details of the Bartle's theory fresh in their minds as they had only just watched the information video. This could also be down to the drastic difference in sample sizes for the two components of the study.

In an initial comparison of the participants enjoyment of the two screenings, 76% of the online survey participants stated that they enjoyed the flat-panel version of the film. Meanwhile, 85% of the personal dome screening session participants stated that they enjoyed the panoramic version of the film. During the focus group discussions, most participants stated that they experienced a greater sense of immersion and engaged better with the panoramic version of the film, they expressed that this was particularly noticeable during certain parts of the film. Specifically, during the footage featuring smaller role-playing moments, such as the Warband discussion circles, and the hectic combat footage. Where in the feeling of "actually being there" was achieved in the film were best captured in the presented in-game moments (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion).

Due to the wider field of view the panoramic version of the film also provided a greater amount of visual information, than was possible in the flat-panel footage. The participants stating, they were easily able to recognise individual LARPers, events, props, and costumes in the dome screen than in the flat version of the film. The screening room and focus of the exercise might have also added to and improved the feeling of engagement,

as opposed to watching the flat version in their own home.

The surround sound of the dome screening system, referring to having the audio bouncing around to the front, sides and behind the viewer, also increased the feeling of immersion according to the participant responses. The panoramic footage was particularly effective during the outdoor in-game scenes, as well as when those in the film appeared on the dome life-sized. The study participants stated that it felt as if they were on the adventure with them, as the encompassing projection within the dome effectively held the attention of the audience. So much so that several participants stated that they were paying attention to the film so closely that they lost awareness of their real-world surroundings. However, several participants stated that they felt that some of the traditional cinema techniques utilised in the film, such as the formal interview framing style, were ineffective when adapted and used in the panoramic format.

In summary, the results of the direct comparison of the flat-panel and panoramic versions of the *Primary Research Material Sample Reel* is inconclusive and open to interpretation. This still supports the notion that panoramic film has at least the same potential viability as flat panel in acting as an effective means of presenting scholarly research data footage. Although it also strongly indicated that more and deeper future research into the concept is necessary before a truly definitive answer can be achieved, and such research goals would be a valid use of future research resources. These coded results state that the panoramic version of the film was as effective if not more effective in presenting the evidence data to the audience as the flat panel version, due mostly to the specific features of the dome projection system. Although with some alterations and better utilisation of the medium's capabilities it could have been more effective. Therefore, the films representation of the WA LARP community is relatively accurate, but the inclusion of footage from a wider variety of LARP events would have provided even greater accuracy.

6.6 – Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to set out the results of the collected verification study data coding process. This chapter was focused on achieving the following five primary objectives. First, to briefly reiterate the purpose and methods of the *Phase 2* verification

study. Second, to detail the identified important theme categories and outline the hierarchy used to organise those themes. Third, to discuss the direct assessment of the presented player typologies by the verification study participants, including their suggestions for further improvements. Fourth, to investigate the effectiveness of attempting to use an existing empirical MMORPG player categorising survey method for classifying LARPers. Fifth, to analyse the usability and practicalities of panoramic film screening methods, in the context of presenting collected academic audio-visual data to an audience in comparison to other methods.

Chapter 7: "LARPer Motivation Typology" Theory Outline

7.0 – Chapter Overview

This chapter aims to outline the full refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory, along with presenting a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of panoramic film as a method for academic research, thus it has five primary objectives to accomplish. First, this chapter aims to outline the refined defining themes of LARP and LARPer motivating behaviour. Explaining how it was produced through the combined and coding analysis of the literature review, *Phase 1,* and *Phase 2* data collection research process. Second, these themes will be used to develop the *LARPer motivation* typology, including setting out an outline of the theory's basic aspects and design. Third, the defining features of the four new LARPer motivation types – *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants* – will be outlined. Fourth, the various ways these new LARP player types interact with each other will be detailed, including the visual representation of these interactions via a series of interest graphs. In addition to the listing and explanation of the related complex elements of the refined LARPer taxonomy. Fifth, the chapter will provide a consolidated assessment of the feasibility of panoramic filmmaking technology as a method of academic research, for both the collection and presentation of field work data.

Section 7.1 – 'Defining Themes' Refinement Process

This section outlines the methods used to develop the *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory. This includes comprehensively listing the motivational and behavioural themes utilised to define the LARPers of the Western Australian community. The typology and its themes produced through this process are based on the data collected from the participating LARPers and the LARP events observed over the course of this study. Thus, the final product will be refined within the context of the Western Australian LARP community, as of the time of this research.

7.1.1 – Refinement Method

The refined LARPer motivation type theory was developed using the primary research material collected from both *Phase 1* and *Phase 2* of the research process. This data was

analysed together to produce a series of themes defining motivations and behaviours that accurately described the members of the WA LARP community.

These *Defining Themes* were examined and then cross referenced with the recorded observational evidence, with the aim of uncovering which themes were of greater importance. This included determining how the different themes related, connected, or reacted to one another. Specifically examining whether the connections were limited to one major motivating theme, those that crossed between major motivators, and those that applied across all participant motivations. In addition to taking into consideration the relative levels of importance expressed for each of the themes and motivations (King, 2011). This process aimed to determine how these defining themes most effectively fit together to define and differentiate the motivational behaviours of LARPers to develop the outlines of the initial distinguishable player types (Beinia, 2013; Söderberg et al, 2004; Torner, 2018).

Through this process of theme analysis, and observational evidence cross comparisons, plus some trial and error, four primary motivation themes where discovered. It was determined that each of these distinct motivators was linked to its own list of connected, supporting behavioural themes. These four groups of themes, once contextualised with behavioural examples from the primary research material, were developed into four LARPer types – *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants*. These new player types represent a more accurate reflection of the actual types of LARPers present in the WA LARPs, as observed during this project (Henry, 2015; Edwards, 2001; Przybylski et al, 2012; Kim, 2003).

Furthermore, an additional four of the themes were identified as strongly defining core aspects of the LARP experience. These four aspects being *emergent narrative*, *game-like elements*, *in-game time,* and *out-of-game* time. They were determined to have a role in defining how these LARPer types logically relate with each other, with these interactions occurring in a manner consistent with the rest of the research data (Yee, 2006; Stark, 2012; Koljonen, 2016).

Finally, the evaluation process also identified several themes that proved crucial for the effective description of LARPer motivations in a generalised context. However, these

themes were far too universally descriptive of the LARP experience, to be useful for separating individual LARPers into various identifiable and categorizable player types. These overarching themes will instead be used to further contextualise the proposed theory into the context of the WA LARP community (Stark, 2012; Bowman, 2018; Torner, 2018).

7.1.2 – Refining the Defining Themes

The following sub-section lists and provides definitions for the motivational and behavioural themes being used to define LARPers in the improved typology theory. How these themes relate and interact with one another will be explained in detail over the course of the chapter, with these behavioural motivation themes including the following:

- *Role-play*
- *Good role-play practices*
- *Embodiment*
- *Escapism*
- *Immersion*
- *Competitiveness*
- *Accomplishment*
- *Good sportsmanship*
- *Physicality (Combat)*
- *Mechanics*
- *Lore-Hunting*
- *Meta-Gaming (rules lawyers)*
- *Investigation (exploration)*
- *Community*
- *Leadership*
- *Social Interactions*
- *Skill Acquisition and Refinement*
- *Creativity*

The theme of *Role-play* is a major gameplay aspect of LARP being both a motivation and behaviour demonstrated by LARPers, referring to the act of taking on the role of a

character in the game's world.

Good Role-play Practice is the counterpart to the theme of *good sportsmanship*, for the narrative and role-playing aspects of player behaviours (Meriläinen, 2011; Daniau, 2016). This also covers all the positive participant role-playing behaviours, including various improvisational acting techniques such as those used in theatre games (Barkely, 2018).

The theme of *Embodiment* refers to the act of committing to and fully inhabiting a character's role within the world of the LARP. Referring to how that in LARP the player's every word, action and reaction can be felt as if it is emanating from their character, rather than from the player. This theme is strongly connected to *role-playing* themes and the *immersion* theme of LARP, but is also distinct from them (Meriläinen, 2011; Hall, 2015; Daniau 2016).

The theme of *Escapism* refers to its common definition of the practice of escaping one's ordinary life for a short time. Referring to how LARPers while playing the game pretend to be someone else in a different time and place. This concept is a major motivating aspect and one of the biggest attractions for LARP participation. Practically all players take part in the games to experience escapism to some degree. Thus, it is more of an overarching theme for defining LARPers, rather than a theme that can be used to differentiate between the various player types (Cox, 2019; Looy et al, 2012; Gade et al, 2003).

Immersion refers to the player behaviour of being fully committed to the imagined aspects of the LARP experience (Bowman, 2018; Gade et al, 2003; Montola, 2012). This theme is related to but distinct from *Embodiment*, as *Immersion* can be used to refer to several LARPer behaviours or aspects of the LARP experience, whereas *Embodiment* has a far narrower focus. An important defining aspect of LARP itself, it is also an important player behaviour, and can be broken down into several sub-themes. First, there is *Character immersion*, becoming immersed in one's own player-character or those of the other participants. Second, there is *Narrative immersion,* becoming captivated by the narrative, lore, plot, and story elements of the LARP event. Third, and last, there is *Game World immersion*, becoming captivated by the setting of the game, the elements that outline the event's game-world, and its collaborative narratives unfolding in real time.

A further major theme is the concept of *Competitiveness*, as in the drive to do one's best, and claim victory over others in some form of competition (Hellstrom, 2011; Bøckman, 2002; Bowman, 2012). This is often connected to the *Accomplishment* LARPers experience, from successfully completing a task or knowing even in failure they did the best that was possible.

The behavioural theme of *Good Sportsmanship* covers many examples of good player behaviours related to the 'game-like' aspects of LARP, such as the combat and competitive elements (Pearce, 2009; Peterson, 2012; Mochocki, 2021). Some examples include good winners/good losers, 'willing to play to lose', and finding other ways to achieve goals, while avoiding the temptation to overly exploit advantageous situations to maintain fair and balanced battle scenarios. As one participant stated, "it's not about winning every fight … it's about having, good fights, fun fights, good memories we can all share" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3).

The *Physicality (Combat)* aspects of LARP are a massive part of their appeal and presented in the research as both motivation and behavioural themes (Bøckman, 2002; Mochocki, 2021; Gade et al, 2003). However, this theme proved to be more useful when broken down into several sub-themes, starting with *Combat motivation focus*, referring to LARPers who are there to fight and test their skills. They are not worried too much by the game-like or narrative aspects, gaining satisfaction from being a powerful force on the battlefield. Next is *Combat effectiveness*, which refers to the player behaviour of enjoying and demonstrating great skill at the various styles of simulated LARP-safe combat. There is then *Fitness improvement*, which refers to a player's focus on developing new or improving existing physical skills, general fitness, and mental well-being through LARP. These players tend to treat LARP as if it were like any other sport, participating in the LARP as an excuse to 'blow off steam', exercise, and socialise (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3). Lastly, there is the concept of *Physicality,* which covers all the behaviours involving physical activity outside those related directly to combat and characterisation. These activities include hiking, camping, setting up for game, packing away after the game, the loading/unloading of equipment, training sessions, crafting, and building.

The concept of *Mechanics* refers to what extent, and how, the aspects of the game are dictated by a set of written rules, which adjudicate how in-game events play out. This

theme also encompasses the desire of LARPers to engage with these game-like aspects of the LARP experience. This proved to still be a motivating theme, although it was not as common as other motivating themes.

The extreme player behaviour known as *Lore-hunting,* which relates to the obsessive seeking out of the narrative lore and plot information related to the game, was still present in LARPer behaviours (Steele, 2016; Edwards, 2001; Gade et al, 2003). Although, this is not as common for LARPs because unlike other types of RPGs, there is often little documented lore for those exhibiting this behaviour to comb through. This is mainly because much of the content is created by the LARPers themselves as they play, rather than created beforehand as in other forms of RPGs, making this form of narrative exploration difficult.

Meta-Gaming is an extreme player behaviour that goes by several names, including 'rules-lawyering', and 'power-gaming'. This concept being described as players who learn as much as possible about the rules and mechanics of the game. The aim of this being either to manipulate the technicality of the rules for their benefit, or to be able to inform other players when they are not following the rules properly (Beinia, 2013; Bowman, 2018; Przybylski et al, 2012). Although it is still present in LARPs the viability and difficulty to conduct the behaviour can vary greatly between the various LARP events.

Investigation (Exploration) refers to the player behaviour of investigating and interacting with the various aspects of the LARP experience. It can be broken down into several sub themes, some of which would be enticing enough to be considered a motivation (Looy et al, 2012; Bøckman, 2002; Przybylski et al, 2006). *Lore/Narrative Exploration* refers to exploring the story of the LARP's game world and the available lore and mythology of the setting, with the extreme version of this being known as 'lore-hunting'. *Character Exploration* refers to the exploration of one's own character and the other characters inhabiting the world, through role-play conversations and interactions. *Mechanics Exploration* refers to testing the games rules to find better or innovative ways to use the rules in game, with the extreme version of this referred to as 'power-gaming' or 'rules-lawyering' (Gade et al, 2003). This subtheme is unique enough and expressed by enough participants as a core drive of why they play, that I would consider it not just a behaviour but a motivating theme. *Self-exploration* refers to an exploration of personal identity,

personality, and worldview, observed through the lenses of their chosen characters. Lastly, *Physical Exploration* refers to the exploration of the physical location the game is set up and played in. This is the least common of the sub-types due to the nature of LARP and is only a valid behaviour in certain LARPs, even though it is possible to some extent in all LARPs.

Community is another major motivation theme referring to both in-game and out-of-game player communities. It encompasses a sense of belonging to a welcoming, supportive group of like-minded people as well as fostering team working skills (Hellstrom, 2011; Pearce, 2009; Oldenberg, 1997). Additionally, this theme is strongly connected to aspects of identity development, co-operation and organisation, as well as the defining theme of *Social interaction.*

The theme of *Leadership* is a strong behaviour for certain individuals who, consciously or subconsciously, take on various positions of authority within LARP. This can be at various levels, in different roles within the in-game and out-of-game LARP community, they are often described as charismatic, confident, or skilful individuals (Yee, 2006; Torner, 2018, Bøckman, 2002).

The *Social Interaction* theme covers the community, social interactions, social activities, and behaviours engaged in by LARPers, and is separated into two main sub-themes (Söderberg et al, 2004; Lampo, 2016; Edwards, 2001). The first being the subtheme of *'In-game' social interactions,* which covers those social activities and behaviours that occur within the game events *Magic circle.* These include, but are not limited to, sharing stories by the fire, boasting over the castle walls, sharing drinks at the tavern, and discussing trade deals at the tea house. Other examples include playing cards behind the inn, teamwork related to completing quests, and performing rituals. The second being *'out-of-game' social interactions,* which cover those social activities and behaviours that occur outside the *Magic circle* of the game. These can include, socialising on the sidelines of a battle or at the training sessions, organisation meetings, and teamwork to prepare for game events. In addition to online socialising, and post-game event barbeques, and markets for the sale of artisan wares or second-hand LARP equipment.

Another important theme, both for describing player behaviours and motivations is the

concept of *Skill Acquisition/Refinement* (Vartiainen, 2015; Mochocki, 2021; Beinia, 2013). This theme covers the desire and effort of players to obtain, practice, and master various practical skills – such as sewing, metal working, archery, and music related skills. All of which is for the purpose of using those skills either in the preparation for, or during game events. In many cases these players would not have obtained these skills if they were not taking part in LARP, even if they already had the desire to do so.

Creativity can be considered a motivation theme, but it is more effective to consider it a series of behaviours demonstrated by LARPers (Vartiainen, 2015; Söderberg et al, 2004; Hellstrom, 2015). It refers to the various behaviours where participants use their imaginative skills to create artifacts related to various parts of the LARP experience. This is a very important overarching element of the LARP experience, and this theme can be further broken down into several sub-themes. *Physical Creativity* refers to the crafting of physical artifacts for the game, such as props, costumes, siege weapons, set dressing, buildings, and currency. *Narrative Creativity r*efers to the development of various types of stories, lore, and plot aspects for the LARP, including game world history, context for quest lines, plot points, and in-game legends. *Mechanical Creativity* refers to the development of the game mechanics that dictate how the game can be played and how the results of player actions are resolved. *Character Creativity* refers to the player's development of their own player character, including personal history, personality, voice, movement, costume, motivations, and goals. *Organisational Creativity* refers to the teamwork and problem-solving skills used to deal with the logistical issues related to the execution of LARP events. The concept dubbed here as *Meta-Creativity* (Gade et al, 2003) refers to creative and crafting activity performed by the player character at the game event. For example, sketches of fellow characters, poems, songs, ballads about the deeds of other players or mythical heroes of the game-world, and 'legal documents' signifying agreements between player factions.

7.2 – Theory Outline Part 1: Basic Theory Design Elements

The results of this research work have produced a generalised typology that can place LARPers effectively into categories that accurately reflect the variety of players present within the WA LARP Community. This improved *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory is

based around the interactions between its four new LARP Player Types. These LARPer types have been labelled – *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants*. These types have been built through a bottom-up approach, using the defining themes of LARPer motivation and behaviour that emerged through the combined analysis of all the project's primary research material.

The research assumes that the collected convenient sample of study participants were representative of the average variety of LARPers commonly present in the WA LARP community. Similarly, the LARP events observed or discussed by the participants during the data collection process were assumed to be an accurate representation of the most common event types held in WA. Furthermore, this work aims to ensure that this theory is reliable enough for it to be effectively applied to the player bases of any WA LARP event type. This includes games such as *Parlour LARPs* which were described by project participants, but for various reasons were not directly observed over the course of the research project. The following is accurate for the participants who took part, and the WA LARP community events observed during this study, within the time in which this research was conducted.

Before discussing how the four LARP Player types are distinguishable from each other, it is important to explain the overarching Defining Themes that link them all together. All LARPers experience some level of *Escapism* while taking part in the LARP, and it is one of the major motivating factors for them getting involved. However, it was determined that this is far too universal to use as a way of distinguishing between the various types. The *Skill Acquisition/Refinement* theme that covers the player behaviour of learning and improving practical skills is also a theme common among the four types. Although, the specific skills in question are different for each of the types, the differences will be explained in the definition of each LARPer type. All player types have the potential to contain LARPers who demonstrate *Leadership* qualities or will take on various roles of authority of some description within their LARP community. The style of leadership, along with level of responsibility held in any given role, will differ between the event type, individual player, and the LARPer type in question. Detailed descriptions of the various ways that each LARPer type interacts with these overarching themes will be discussed further in the description of each of the LARP Player Types.

Another overarching behavioural theme is that of *Physical Creativity*, almost all the LARPer types, engage in the act of physical creation to some degree, both in preparation for, and during the in-game LARP experience. Most commonly, this manifests in the creation of props, costumes, or other artifacts for their player characters to wear or other wise use in-game. Even those with minimal creative skills or are unable to make anything themselves take part in this behaviour. For example, the organisation of their character's costume can be considered an act of physical creativity. As they mix and match various clothing items and props at their disposal, they are physically creating their in-game outfit. Until they eventually settle on the combination of elements that reflects the overall look they want, while also satisfying any event rules relevant to their planned playstyle. Each of the LARPer types will have their own motivational themes that dictates the reasoning behind their engagement in the behavioural sub-theme of *Physical Creativity*. This can vary widely, ranging from creating to assist in the development of the physical game environment, to constructing a specific type of prop to utilise a unique in-game mechanic.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the general enjoyment of LARP and fun that can be experienced through participating is a primary motivator that is nearly universal amongst LARPers. Even though it has not been listed as a defining theme, or can it be used to differentiate one LARPer type from another, nor does it hold any sway on the typology's overall design, it is still an important aspect. This is because the primary purpose of a LARP event, or any other form of RPG for that matter, is still to create a fun, exciting and memorable experience for those participating in the activity.

Section 7.3 – Theory Outline Part 2: The Four LARPer Motivation Types

As with Bartle's (1996) taxonomy, and the previously proposed hypothetical modifications to his types, this refined and improved LARPer motivation typology theory involves four primary LARPer types. The outline for each of these LARPer types are described by the defining themes of LARP itself, as well as the primary themes of LARPer motivations and behaviours. As detailed earlier in the chapter, these four types are entitled – *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants.* These names were inspired by the language used by LARPers and found in various TTRPGs and the high-fantasy narrative media genre in general. These terms were chosen to best reflect and represent the descriptions of the

ideal stereotypical versions of each of these LARPer motivation types.

7.3.1 – The Wanderer LARPer Motivation Type

The *Wanderer* LARPer motivation type is based on the following defining themes:

- *Role-playing*
- *Good Role-play Practices*
- *Embodiment*
- *Meta-Creativity*
- *Character Immersion*
- *Self-Exploration*
- *Character Exploration*
- *In-Game Socialisation*

These types of players are motivated to take part in LARP by their desire to role-play and fully embody a player character (PC) of their own design. They enjoy pretending to be another person in another place and time for a while, experiencing the game world along with its inhabitants as their character would. These players also use healthy, supportive role-play practices, and improvisational techniques, to promote a productive and supportive in-game space to encourage the flow of the game's collaborative narrative. As one participant described it:

> I love the role-play aspect of it, I love becoming someone else, and part of that, the biggest part of that I love is making other people be drawn into the story, talking to them, making them laugh... (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3).

The themes of *Self-Exploration, Embodiment*, *Character Immersion,* and *Character Exploration* are important aspects of this player type's enjoyment of LARP. They use in-character role-playing as an opportunity to try out different personality traits and explore themselves through their character. They are often focused on improving themselves, building their confidence by practicing in a realm in which the consequences have a limited scope. These players attempt to teach themselves and others social skills, that they can employ in their everyday lives, along with providing an abstract way for them to work

through their real-world issues in the safe environment of the game. The LARPers of this type who take up leadership roles within the community are often skilled and charismatic story tellers, speech givers, or negotiators.

These players often feel that having too great of a focus on the game's mechanical rules can limit the opportunities for good role-play and disrupt player immersion. Thus, many of this player type have little to no interest in the game-like or combat aspects of LARP. They prefer to progress through the game's collaborative narrative through the outcomes of role-play encounters and social interactions. These players will often have little interest in what they call 'the big set pieces', such as large-scale battles or castle sieges, instead preferring smaller more personal interactions, as one participant stated:

> It's not the big fights or the huge show pieces, it's the moments around the fire where characters share their stories with each other, and they share tender moments together and learn a bit about each other and become actual people not just these caricatures of personality traits (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 5).

Wanderers are highly creative players, as they enjoy creating their characters, their personal props, costumes, and narratives, along with developing lore through interactions with other players. This additionally provides them with the opportunity to either learn new creative skills or improve one of their existing skills to better portray their character, such as playing a musical instrument. This can often lead to players expressing themselves, or more accurately their character, through acts of *Meta-creativity*, through which they can craft creative artefacts and other forms of artwork. These creative artifacts can include ballads, stories, sketches, dolls, and scrolls containing the details of in-game contracts or agreements.

The theme of *Game-World Immersion* could also be applied to the *Wanderer* type, as they do engage with the LARP's game world, particularly the collaborative narrative aspect. Often the actions of the *Wanderer* type influence how the world evolves as the game progresses, adding to the lore through their personal interactions and approach to the obstacles in their path. However, this theme more effectively defines the behaviour of the *Merchant* LARPer type, thus the theme will be used to describe how these two types will interact in relation to one another.

The images below, in *Figure 7.1*, present visual examples of *Wanderer* type players from the primary research material.

i)

ii)

Figure 7.1 – Visual examples of the *Wanderer* LARPer Motivation Type

The first image on the left (i) depicts a LARPer playing a mouse-folk, apprentice healer for the knight-themed Warband. They wanted to play a character who had only recently joined this knightly order, who constantly got distracted from their studies by the music, food, and cultures of the peoples the order protected. To achieve this, they added extra belt pouches to their costume and created a cuter, more child-like interpretation of the Warband's basic costume design, replacing the heavy armour for a flowy skirt. Their intention being to fill these pouches with snacks that they could share with other characters, providing them with an excuse to start up role-play interactions with others. Additionally, they learnt to play the ukulele, along with improving their pre-existing talent for singing, to express their character's love of music with the others, as shown in the image.

The second image on the right (ii) depicts a LARPer playing a humble fisherman conscripted into the defence of their coastal homeland. In this image they are reading out the next set of quest instructions to the rest of their Warband, including a silly song containing an encoded message that the Warband needed to decode to get their next clue. Although LARPers of other types would simply read out the instructions out-of-character for the sake of efficiency, this LARPer made the extra effort to deliver these instructions completely in-character. Fully committing and even altering the text slightly to put the out-of-game parts of the instructions into the in-game context of their performance,

doing so because they found it to be more enjoyable. These behaviours, amongst others observed in the review of the available research data exemplified these LARPers as examples of the *Wanderer* motivation type.

7.3.2 – The *Champion* LARPer Motivation Type

The *Champion* LARPer motivation type is based on the following defining themes:

- *Accomplishment*
- *Competitiveness*
- *Good sportsmanship*
- *Combat effectiveness*
- *Combat focused*
- *Fitness Improvement*
- *Physicality*

Champions are motivated by their *competitive* nature, enjoying LARPs with more of a combat focus and clear 'win/lose' conditions, but are by no means limited to those sorts of games. They can obtain a sense of accomplishment in whatever way the LARP can provide, not just from scoring points or winning battles, but also by completing quests, solving mysteries, and progressing their personal plot elements. These players are highly goal orientated in the way they approach the game and much of their enjoyment is derived from the sense of accomplishment they experience from completing these goals.

In general, these players go about learning new skills, putting in the effort to practice and improve existing or newly acquired skills for the purpose of increasing their effectiveness within the game. These skills can often include the likes of camping and set up, cooking, sewing, and other similar skills. The learning of new combat skills and gear maintenance are also another behaviour that is exhibited by this type of LARPer.

The *Physicality* theme is an important feature of the player type, such as the desire to improve general fitness, along with both physical and mental health through participating in the game. They often treat LARP in a similar way to an athlete's approach to participation in team sports, as an interesting and fun way to escape real-life for a time. In

addition to being a good excuse to socialise with others, improve physical fitness, health, mental wellbeing and learn new skills that they would not otherwise have obtained.

Good sportsmanship is a collective term for the bulk of the positive cornerstone behaviours that these LARPers demonstrate and are recognised through. These behaviours include being gracious victors, a willingness to 'play to lose', healthy competition, and the generally supportive nature of the players to newcomers. They also make good battlefield leaders, being able to organise and inspire their team effectively to win the battle or at least lose in a way that is fun. However, they will normally step back and let others take the lead when the situation calls for diplomacy.

Players of this *Champion* type often desire to simply take part in the combat aspects of the game. Only caring enough about the game's mechanics to determine the best or most effective way to prepare their character for achieving the game's objectives. Furthermore, they feel that an over reliance on complex rule systems can slow down combat encounters and reduce the overall enjoyment factor of the combat. Similarly, some *Champion* players only briefly interact with a LARP's narrative aspects, just enough for them to contextualise the basics of the game's world. They delve deep enough to understand how to participate in combat, without disrupting the role-play of others, but not enough to have an interest in the narrative stakes of the battle.

Alternatively, some in the *Champion* type LARPers will engage in behaviours covered by the themes of *Meta-Gaming* and *Lore-Hunting*, although these are not truly defining themes of this LARPer type. This is because when *Champions* do engage in such behaviours, they are doing so to satisfy their *competitive* motivation themes, rather than for the *Investigative* motivation theme (Edwards, 2001; Przybylski, 2006; Gade et al, 2003). For instance, engaging in *Meta-gaming* behaviours enables *Champion* players to build stronger, more effective combat focused characters, instead of a desire to simply know the rules better. Meanwhile, *Lore-hunting* is displayed by those who have similar behaviours to the 'Completionist' player seen in video games. This is because they desire the satisfaction of completing a collection, to achieve goals more efficiently, or to simply to show off that they know information that others do not. As opposed to doing so to have a better understanding of, or to better integrate themselves and their character in the game environment. For those *Champion* type LARPers, it is more about having the knowledge

for the sake of having all the knowledge, rather than using it for any real purpose. However, these themes are not strictly defining aspects of the *Champion* type, thus they are instead examples of 'borrowed' behaviours, that are better suited for defining the Scholar LARPer type.

The images below, in *Figure 7.2*, present visual examples of *Champion* type players from the primary research material.

Figure 7.2 – Visual examples of the *Champion* LARPer Motivation Type

The first image on the left (i) is an example of a player who built their character around what their team needed to have a better chance of succeeding in battles and quests, in this case a versatile front-line fighter. They designed their character costume and gear layout around the simulated combat style that the event's rules were currently favouring and that they enjoyed. That being fighters in medium armour with a large shield, along with a one-handed melee weapon and rubber band pistol. They then developed a basic personality for their character, based on the existing design themes of their team, to justify a character with such a fighting style in the context of the existing lore of the team and game-world. Eventually coming up with the concept of a former academic turned hardened drill sergeant, who was sent with this group of mostly untrained fishermen to train and protect them, however he rarely engages with the games role-play aspects, leaving that to his teammates. In this image he is explaining the egg timers he has attached to the back of his shield, which he added to keep better track of certain spell mechanic affects, which often last around 60 seconds. For this LARPer, using this out-of-game technology makes

the game easier and more enjoyable, he is not bothered by the break in immersion it can cause, while such a break would bother a *Wanderer* type player.

The second image on the right (ii) demonstrates several *Champion* type LARPers engaged in some type defining LARPer behaviours. In this image the various LARPers from currently allied Warbands are engaging in 'friendly' combat duels while they stand guard and await orders to march over to the next big battle. Their excitement for the battle, their desire to test their skill against each other and the opposing Warbands further express their enjoyment of these physical aspects of LARPing. These behaviours, amongst others observed in the review of the available research data exemplified these LARPers as examples of the *Champion* motivation type.

7.3.3 – The Scholar LARPer Motivation Type

The *Scholar* LARPer motivation type is based on the following defining themes:

- *Mechanical Creativity*
- *Mechanical Exploration*
- *Meta-Gaming*
- *Lore-Hunting*
- *Lore/Narrative Exploration*
- *Organisational creativity*

The *Scholar* LARPer type is primarily defined by several aspects of the motivational theme of *Investigation*, particularly those of *Mechanical Exploration.* The *Scholar* player type is often more interested in the out-of-game aspects of the LARP experience. Particularly the game-like rules and mechanics aspects, rather than other elements of the pastime. They are drawn to LARPs as the potential of the genre interests them greatly, inspiring them to learn all they can about the nuance of the rule sets of all the various available game systems. They desire to test the limits of these rules in both theory and practice, as well as to develop their own game mechanics and rule sets. Thus, they prefer combat focused games over role-play games as combat focused LARPs often have more mechanics and rules involved in their overall design. Whereas role-play focus games often use broader rule systems that rely on 'immersive common-sense' to decide the outcome of the player's

actions.

LARPers of the Scholar type act upon the game-world as they use their knowledge of the rules to dictate how in-game events could resolve, affecting the operation of the game-world. They often only interact with the narrative aspects of the game enough for them to understand the context in which mechanics and rules pertain to the narrative elements. This includes such behaviours as examining how the combat magic or magical items work within the game-world. This behaviour is often referred to by players using the negative in-culture terms of 'rules lawyers', or 'power-gaming' (Edwards, 2001; Gade et al, 2003; Przybylski, 2006). These sorts of LARPer behaviours, such as stopping play in order to point out rules, can make the game less enjoyable for other players as it needlessly breaks their immersion. Although most often viewed in a negative light, it is a valid, important way of participating in and enjoying LARPs. As without mechanics focused players, many LARPs would not exist in the form that they currently do and would not be as accessible, safe, or as enjoyable as they currently are.

On the game field these players are also effective at organising and coordinating their fellow team mates to best achieve the team's goals and provide tactical direction during the larger fights. These sorts of players often become LARP Orgs for their own games, or serve as Game marshals (GMs), who fulfil the role of umpires at LARP events, for the games that they take part in as players.

These types of players can also often engage in forms of creative behaviour, for instance they can use aspects of *Physical Creativity*. In the form of engineering specialised props for the purpose of utilising them in-game according to a specific set of mechanics. This includes the 'rules for siege equipment' present in *Shattered World LARP,* which outlines the guidelines for the construction of ballista, battering rams, golems, or catapults for use against the various player faction camps.

The subtheme of *Organisational creativity* can also apply to this player type, through the likes of logistical problem solving and book-keeping. *Organisational Creativity* is a theme which effectively defines the behaviours of the *Scholar* type, as their interest in the game's rules can expand out to the real-world logistics of a LARP event. Such as the operational planning that is required for running LARP events and for organising events. Their interest

in this sort of logistical work makes these types of players useful for LARP player teams, as they can get their teams better prepared and organised for the game. For example, they can manage the hiring of a moving truck, enabling the team to get all their gear to the regional event site more efficiently and cheaper, spreading the cost between the team members. Additionally, they can be invaluable members of LARP Org teams, both during and in preparation for LARP events. As not only can they work on the development of rules and mechanics, but they can also work on the organising of the budget, ticket sales, websites, location hire, supply runs, and the like.

Although *Lore-Hunting* and *Lore/Narrative Exploration* seems like behaviours that would better suit a different LARPer type, it is one of the main defining themes of the *Scholar* type. This is because the theme acts as a better reflection of the observed behaviours of this type than any of the other newly proposed types. *Scholar* type players inspect the LARP's narrative lore to not only contextualise the game, but as if they were rules in their own right. They use the story elements to better understand the world's political structures, and economic aspects of the gameplay. They find creative ways to use existing lore, customs, and less commonly known, or remembered, elements of the lore to achieve in game objectives. This can include the efficient solving of mysteries, tricking magical creatures, winning political debates, manipulating other player factions, and brokering trade agreements, amongst other things.

The images below, in *Figure 7.3*, present visual examples of *Scholar* type players from the primary research material.

The first image on the left (i) presents an example of a LARPer who was both a Warband leader and mechanics focused Game Marshal (GM). A role that is signified during game events by the strip of orange and black fabric attached to the back of their utility belt. In addition, this LARPer is also the head organiser of another LARP event, as well as at one point being a member of the LARP West organisation's management committee.

The second image on the right (ii) portrays one of the LARP Orgs and game marshals of *Warhearts LARP*, pictured here managing one of the LARPer training sessions for that event. They are in part responsible for the development and testing of that event's game mechanics, as well as acting as an umpire during the event, along with teaching players

the rules at training sessions. These behaviours, amongst others observed in the review of the available research data exemplified both LARPers as examples of the *Scholar* motivation type.

i) ii)

Figure 7.3 – Visual examples of the *Scholar* LARPer Motivation Type

7.3.4 – The Merchant LARPer Motivation Type

The *Merchant* LARPer motivation type is based on the following defining themes:

- *Out-of-Character Social Interactions*
- *Community Aspects*
- *World Immersion*
- *Narrative Immersion*
- *Narrative Creativity*

The *Merchant* type players focus more on immersing themselves within the community related aspects of the LARP experience, rather than the gameplay related elements. They enjoy the sense of belonging and purpose that participating in LARP can grant them, and when taking part in game, unlike other LARPers, they do not take on the role of a 'main character'. Instead, they normally take on the roles carried out by NPCs, such as merchants, inn keepers, bankers, and librarians. They provide services or products to the other players for in game currency, to further flesh out and populate the world of the game. They enjoy simply existing within the game space and being a part of the in-game community as much as they enjoy participating in the out-of-game community.

These players also often take on the responsibilities involved with the LARP Org groups, often volunteering to assist with physical crafting (set dressing, plot relevant props, etc), and other auxiliary logistical roles. This includes acting as 'plot relevant NPCs' during game events, providing the pre-prepared elements of the challenges, information, items and rewards set out for the other participants. These sorts of LARPers focus on the game's rules rather than the purely immersive aspects of the game, although at first this would not seem to be the case. When *Merchant* type players are operating as LARP Orgs or NPCs, they have a plot relevant connection to the event's narrative and thus possess more knowledge than other players. Therefore, they must be mindful of how and when they divulge this knowledge to the players over the course of the event. However, it is also equally common for players of this type to have zero connection to the game-world's narrative or the LARP Orgs, they are simply content with just being part of the event's immersive world. This can position them closer to the *Wanderer* player type, but other factors will still have them classified as the *Merchant* type.

These players also help in the creation of many aspects of the LARP's *game-world* and are highly focused on *Narrative Immersion*. Although, this behavioural theme can relate to the *Wanderer* type, it is accurate to use it to define the *Merchant* type, as it more accurately reflects the behaviours observed of *Merchant* players. This is because while those of the *Wanderer* type want to have an impact of the LARP's emerging narrative through their character's actions, the *Merchant* players are driven to fully immerse themselves in the narrative world, becoming an extension of the game-environment. In other words, it is the desire of many in the *Merchant* type to play those roles that merely exist within the narrative world. Through these roles they add to the ambience and flesh out the narrative, but their actions have no real impact on the progression of the game.

Players of the *Merchant* type who take on NPC like roles in LARPs outside those working directly with the LARP Org teams are surprisingly common. These players prefer participating in games designed in such a way as to provide the opportunity for players to portray these more NPC-like and less 'chosen one' style character archetypes. These are the types of players who, for example, instead of heading out on quests with the rest of their team, will instead watch over the camp. Preferring to socialise amongst the other players, making tea as they return, or drinking mead by the fire while telling stories of past

adventures. These character types, although perhaps appearing less actively involved in-game events, are important for many LARPs, this is because they add to the LARP's world by simply existing, rather than through seeking to change or alter the game-world through their actions as a more active player character. Arguably these types of LARPer are essential for the *Immersion* aspects of LARP, which has been highlighted in this research as a central theme of LARP and LARPer behaviour. Although, those themes, as previously mentioned, are more strongly related to the definition of the *Wanderer* LARPer type. As those of the *Merchant* type will often need to disrupt their own sense of immersion to remember and use out-of-game or fore-knowledge of the events narrative to work effectively as their chosen NPC.

Those of this LARPer type often engage in multiple types of creative behaviours, such as *Narrative Creation* for the development of the world lore and plot milestones. Along with the production, or presentation of 'plot hooks' for the game's PCs or player team backstories. In addition to developing quest outlines, and the narrative context for various other aspects of the game, most often as a part of the story teams of LARP Org committees. Despite it not being a primary defining trait of the *Merchant* type, these players also engage in the behavioural theme of *Physical Creation*. Often doing so to help with the creation of physical artifacts for use in-game, including plot relevant props, quest scrolls, magic items, weapons, buildings, costumes, in-game currency, and other set-dressing. These players will often teach themselves or improve skills they have previously obtained to both help assist the LARP Orgs with game preparations, and to provide services to players during LARP events. These skills can include but are not limited to sewing, metalworking, blacksmithing, carpentry, cooking, and first-aid.

The behaviours of this type of player can also include the desire to experience the sense of belonging, which they experience when interacting with the usually tolerant, welcoming LARP community. These players also often enjoy and organise social gatherings outside the usual aspects of LARP events. This can include socialising around the fire-pit in the player camp, drinking at the tavern, or hosting a post-game barbeque. As one of this type's few similarities with the *Champion* type, they are also observed to enjoy some of the physical aspects of the LARP experience, such as camping or hiking. As these are activities that can also provide further opportunity for social, team-building interactions, both between and during LARP events.

The images below, in *Figure 7.4*, presents two visual examples of *Merchant* type players from the primary research material, in this case being the townsfolk NPCs from *Shattered World LARP*.

i)

ii)

Figure 7.4 – Visual examples of the *Merchant* LARPer Motivation Type

The first image (i) depicts the town's witch librarian NPC, although they were not a member of the LARP Org committee but wanted to play as the town's librarian. Thus, with the LARP Org's consent, they built a building to act as the library, and filled it with artefacts from the various player factions and beyond. During the events the LARP Orgs gave her some side-quests she could issue to interested players, as well as items and clues for the various Warband quests for that event.

The second image (ii) depicts the town's banker in their booth, they are a member of the event's LARP Org committee. They help to manage the accounts in which Warbands and individual LARPers can choose to store the in-game currency they collect, to protect it from theft, amongst other duties. In the image they are deciding on whether a 'dragon egg' can be considered currency, while also developing a suitable in-game reason to refuse, to keep the side-quest related item in play rather than safe in the bank. These behaviours, amongst others observed in the review of the available research data exemplified both

LARPers as examples of the *Merchant* motivation type.

7.4 – Theory Part 3: The Advanced Points

Having established the four LARPer Types, this section will detail the more advanced aspects of the refined typology, including the interactions between the types and roles of the other defining LARPer aspects. In addition to explaining the details of each LARPer type's relationship with LARP Orgs and outlining the graphical representations of the theory.

The table below, in *Figure 7.5*, briefly summarises the defining themes of the four LARPer Types. This reference guide will assist in the discussion of how the LARPer types interact with each other.

LARPer Type	*Wanderer*	*Champion*	*Scholar*	*Merchant*
Defining Themes	▪ Role-playing ▪ Embodiment ▪ Good role-play practice ▪ Meta-creativity ▪ Character immersion ▪ Self-exploration ▪ Character exploration ▪ In-Character socialisation	▪ Accomplishment ▪ Competitiveness ▪ Good sportsmanship ▪ Combat effectiveness ▪ Combat focused ▪ Fitness improvement ▪ Physicality	▪ Mechanical Creativity ▪ Mechanics Exploration ▪ Meta-Gaming ▪ Lore-hunting ▪ Lore/Narrative Exploration ▪ Organisational creativity	▪ Out-of-Game socialisation ▪ Community aspects ▪ World immersion ▪ Narrative creativity ▪ Narrative immersion

Figure 7.5 – LARPer Motivation Types Defining Themes Summary Table

7.4.1 – Inter type Flow and Interactions

These four LARPer motivation types are not separated completely into distinct self-contained entities but are instead closely interconnected. There is a certain amount of flow between them, as they are interdependent on one another for the LARP game events to operate effectively, leading to some interesting interactions. The four LARPer types interact with each other, and other aspects of the LARP experience, in the following ways.

The *Wanderer* type's interactions with the *Champion* type are amicable for the most part, there is additionally the potential for cooperation, or behavioural crossover between these two LARPer types. They stay out of each other's way as they often have similar goals, to have an impact on the LARP's progression, but have different methods of achieving those goals. Demonstrating how the old, assumed dichotomy that a LARPer can be either just a combat focused player or a role-play focused player, but rarely ever both, has been proven to be a false assumption through this research.

The *Wanderer* and *Scholar* types have a more reactive relationship, as they are directly opposite one another in both motivation and playstyle, thus there can be some conflict between these player types. For example, when *Scholar* type players insist on breaking the games immersion to point out minor, but relevant, rule breaches it can be highly disruptive for the enjoyment of the *Wanderer* type players. Meanwhile, when *Wanderer* type players actively ignore the game's established rules for the sake of personal or team narrative it can be equally frustrating to the *Scholar* type players. In other words, the *Wanderer* type players would express an attitude along the lines of: "Rules get in the way of a good story" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 1, 3, 5). Whereas the mindset of the *Scholar* type players would be more akin to: "There's no point having a plot element that can only work by breaking the games established rules" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 1, 3, 5).

Merchants and *Wanderers* will regularly crossover and interact with each other, as many from either side of the distinguishing axis will drift to take on the roles of NPCs within the game world. For instance, *Merchants* move closer to the *Wander*er type as they go deeper with their character embodiment and role-play. Meanwhile, *Wanderers* move closer to the *Merchants* when they volunteer to help the LARP Orgs run plot relevant or special encounters, in which they follow the out-of-game instructions of LARP Orgs and put aside their own player characters to take on the role of NPC enemies or monsters to challenge the other players.

There are some interactions in which *Champion* players and *Scholar* players crossover, but it is often limited and situationally specific. For example, the *Champion* players will often engage in the behaviours of *Meta-gaming* to build more effective characters and be more powerful in combat. Meanwhile, *Scholar* players can be more combat focused LARPers as they gain a greater interest in a game's combat mechanics, leading them to

become fighters to better understand the rules. However, at times there can also be conflict with some *Champion* players, in a similar way to *Wanderers*, who hold the mindset that "an overabundance of mechanics in combat can slow down and over complicate the experience, making it less enjoyable" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 1, 3, 5). Meanwhile, *Scholars* express an attitude along the lines of "mechanics can make combat encounters more diverse, interesting, and balanced, ensuring satisfying fights for a variety of skill levels" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 1, 3, 5).

There is only minimal direct interaction, or flow between *Champion* and *Merchant* types, with each being the other's opposite in terms of motivating playstyle. *Champions* actively seek to change the world of the game, while *Merchants* simply aim to exist within the game-world's current status quo. However, they both share an enjoyment of the *physicality* theme aspects of the LARP experience, although for slightly different reasons. For instance, *Champion* type players enjoy the self-improvement elements of LARP's physical aspects, while *Merchant* type players enjoy the extra socialisation opportunities it can provide. There is considerable potential for cooperation and teamwork to exist between *Merchant* and *Scholar* types, most often when these player types have taken on the responsibilities of LARP Orgs. These two LARPer types working together as LARP Orgs can make an effective team as they possess all the necessary motivations and skills needed to develop, operate, and maintain a LARP game event.

Through the observation of LARPer behaviours, individual players can appear to flow between the LARPer motivation types or can be identified as members of multiple player types at once. This is similar to issues previously observed in other RPG player typology theories, such as those of Bartle (1996), Kim (1998) and Edwards (2001). However, these individuals are more likely to be simply demonstrating or utilising the behaviours of the other player types to best satisfy their primary motivational goals. Furthermore, it is these primary motivations that determine where the individual LARPer will fit within this typology. Through understanding how these types relate to each other, it becomes possible to effectively identify the primary motivators of the LARPers and thus they can be classified. After establishing these relationships between the types, these refined interactions can be portrayed by utilising a form of visual representation, such as in a series of 'Interest Graphs'
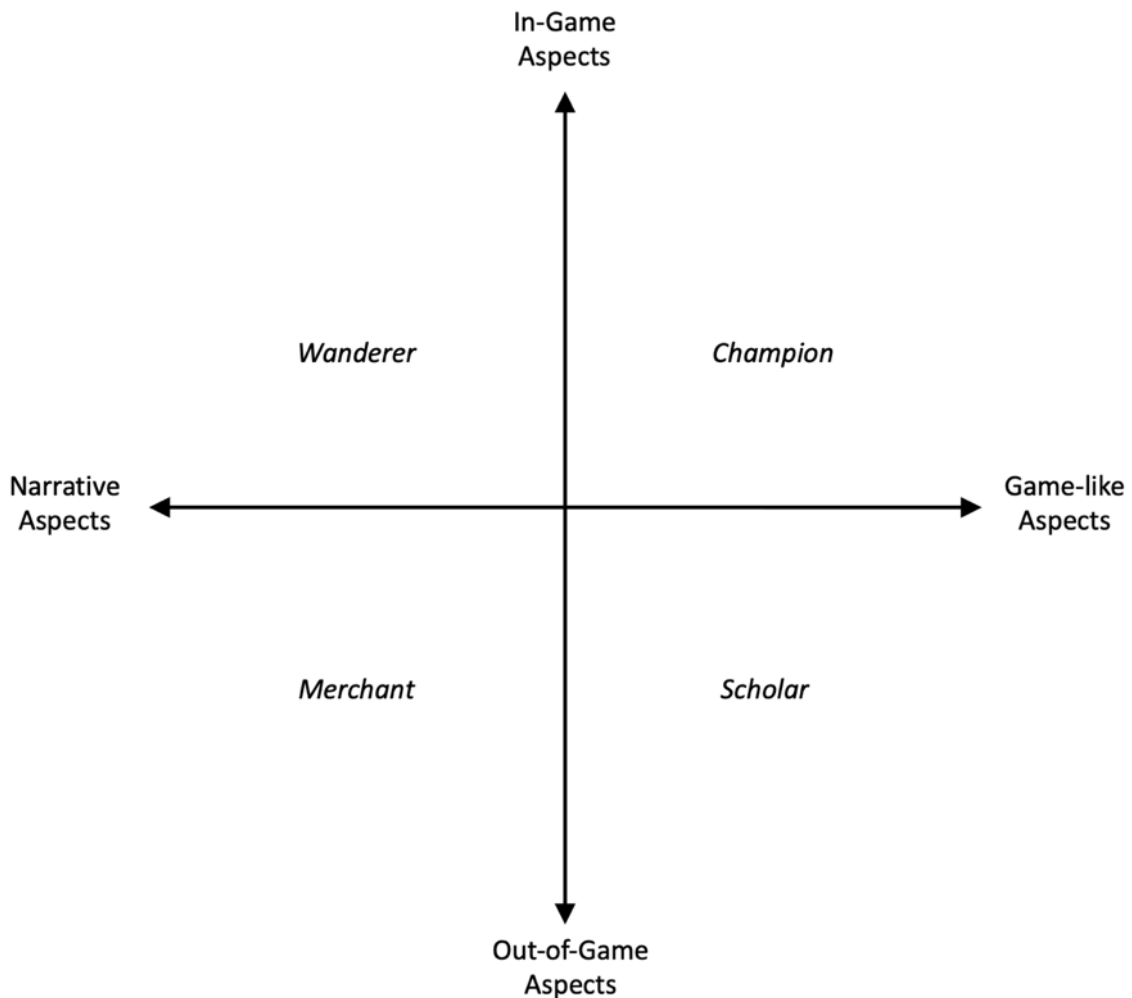
7.4.2 – Interest Graph Discussion

Visual graphical representations will assist in the presentation and understanding of the typology, in particular the interconnected flow between these types. The following 'Interest Graphs' use abstract scales to represent the ratios between the various aspects of the theory, thus dictating the arrangement of the four LARPer types. The first three graphs each explain one set of related element ratios on their axis. The fourth Interest Graph will represent the combination of the previous three graphs, demonstrating the full array of ways in which the player types can interact. The fifth graph presents a hypothetical practical demonstration of how the graph could be used to display the spread of LARPer types present in a LARP event's player population.

The first interest graph, as shown in *Figure 7.6*, uses the ratios between the LARPer experience aspects that were identified in the analysis of the project's primary research data. In this graph the Y-axis represents the shifting ratio between the *In-Game* aspects and the *Out-of-Game* aspects of the LARP experience. The X-axis represents the ratio between LARP's *Narrative* aspects and the *Game-like* aspects. The emergent narrative, or simply the *Narrative* aspects of LARP in this ratio refers to the individual's personal desire to engage with the story elements of the LARP experience. Whereas the *Game-like* aspects in this ratio refers to the individual's personal desire to engage with the more *Game-like* elements of the LARP experience. The *In-Game* aspects of the other ratio of this graph refers to how the individual player's desire to engage in the many activities that take place within the special time-space of a LARP's *Magic circle*. Meanwhile, at the other end, *Out-of-Game* refers to how the individuals desired LARP related activities mostly occur outside the event's *Magic circle*, including both during and between LARP events (Montola, 2012; Vorobyeva, 2014).

If we considered using the ratios expressed on this graph's axis, we can see how these aspects can be used to begin construction of a stereotypical definition of each LARPer type. For example, The *Wanderer* type is most often focused on the *In-Game* aspects and *Narrative* aspects of the LARP event. The *Champion* type LARPers can be pictured as being most active during the *In-Game* time of LARP events, they are focused on the physical *Game-like* aspects of the experience. The *Scholar* type LARPer can be thought of as being most active during the LARP event's *Out-of-Game* time, busily understanding and

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testing the *Game-like* mechanical rules of the LARP. The *Merchant* type player is active mostly during the *Out-of-Game* time leading up to and during the LARP event, preparing to execute the various *Narrative* aspects of the LARP event. Through an understanding of these aspects and the other motivational behaviour themes of the typology it is possible to plot where a sample of individual LARPers will fit within the typology.

```
                          In-Game
                          Aspects
                             ↑
                             |
                             |
        Wanderer             |           Champion
                             |
                             |
Narrative                    |                          Game-like
Aspects   ←─────────────────┼─────────────────→        Aspects
                             |
                             |
        Merchant             |           Scholar
                             |
                             |
                             ↓
                        Out-of-Game
                          Aspects
```

Figure 7.6 – LARPer Motivation Typology Theory Interest Graph

The second interest graph, as shown in *Figure 7.7,* uses the ratios between the elements of game design the LARP Orgs focused on in the development of LARP event game play. This graph integrates aspects from the *LARP Game Type Spectrum Graph*, as developed and outlined in *Chapter 4* of this thesis. In this case, *Immersion focused design*, as it appears on the Y-axis, refers to the focus on gameplay designed so that the outcomes of in-game events are decided through the LARP world's version of 'common sense'.
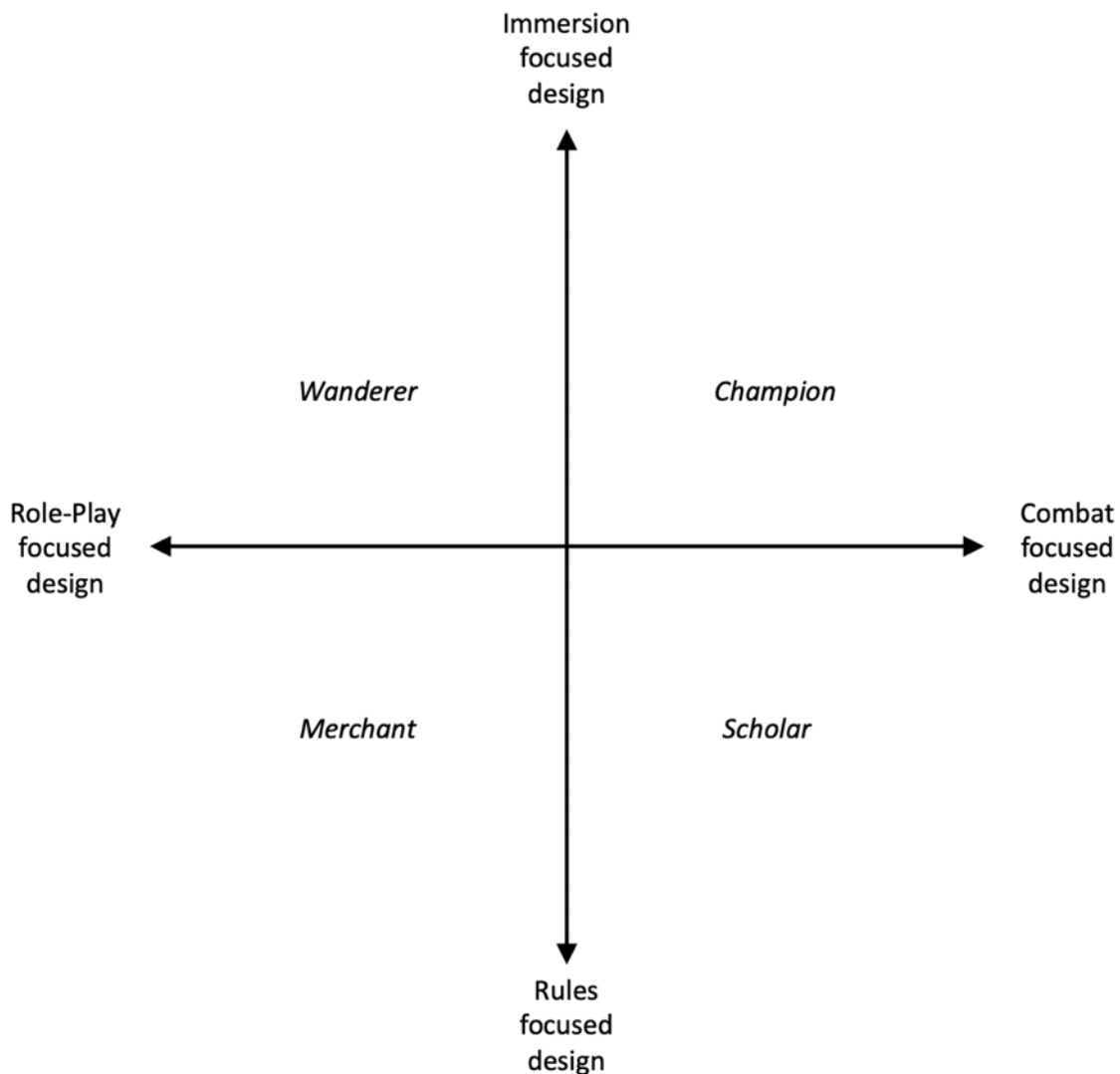
Figure 7.7 – LARP Game Type Spectrum Graph, with LARPer Motivation Types

In other words, the outcome of events is decided by logical consequences internally consistent with the established environment of the game world as if it were 'real-life'. For example, in a high immersion game, getting hit in the arm by a great sword would result in losing a limb, causing the character to start passing out from the pain, as would happen in the real-world. At the other end of that axis, *Rules focused design* refers to the focus on gameplay where the results of in-game encounters are decided by rules and mechanics that exist outside the game's immersive world. Using the same example, in a rule focused game, a great sword attack would play out as follows, the successful hit would deduct several 'Health Points' (HP) from their total. Thus, reducing the struck player's total

amount of HP, so instead of the player going down instantly, they can continue fighting until their HP drops to zero, after which they become 'knocked-out'. In this context, *Role-play focused design*, as it appears on the X-axis, refers to the use of role-playing and social interaction in the LARP event's gameplay design. For instance, in a high role-play focused LARP, such as a *Parlour* LARP, most of the games encounters can be accomplished through various character interactions (Zagal and Deterding, 2018). At the other end of the spectrum, *Combat focused design* refers to the game design's utilisation of simulated LARP-Safe, combat focused gameplay mechanics. For example, in a high-combat focused LARP, such as a *Boffer* LARP (Gade et al, 2003), almost all the game's encounters are resolved in some way using physical combat mechanics.

Through the consideration of the LARPer types using these ratios, another layer of definition can be added to the stereotypical version of each type that was stated with the previous graph. Those of the *Wanderer* type will most enjoy games that have a high *Role-play* and high *Immersion* focus to their gameplay as this variety of LARP is excellent for character embodiment or role-play interactions. Meanwhile, *Champion* type players prefer LARPs with a high *Combat* and high *Immersion* gameplay design focus, as these games would have clearly defined goals and more opportunity for combat. Whereas the *Scholar* type LARPer would most likely prefer those games with a high *Combat* and high *Rules* focused gameplay design. As these styles of game are often reliant on in depth rule systems with complex mechanics which provide these sorts of players with a great deal of content to investigate. On the other hand, the *Merchant* type LARPers would be most comfortable with LARPs designed with a high *Role-play* and with a high *Rules* focused gameplay. As this style of LARP will provide the necessary structure and opportunities for internal role-play interactions for the *Merchants* to take on NPC roles within the game's environment.

The third interest graph, as shown in *Figure 7.8*, uses the ratio between the relationships of the fundamental aspects of player behaviour, as identified by Bartle (1996). Bartle's MUD Player typology interest graph axis are not necessary for the LARPer typology's interest graph to effectively operate within the new theory. However, it is interesting to note that the original axis points can still be applied to the new graph to explain the behaviours of each of the LARPer types, requiring only minor reinterpretation of the aspects to function.
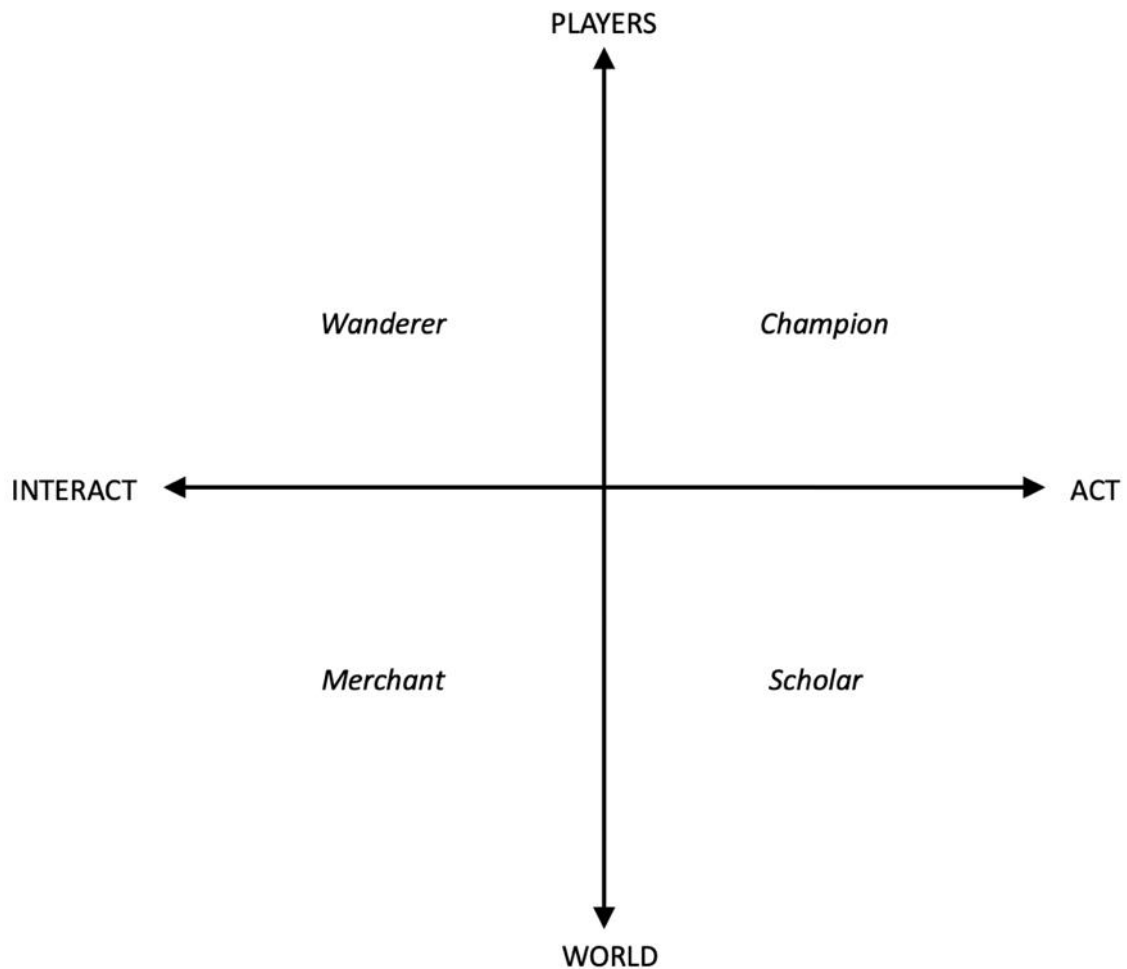
Figure 7.8 – Original Bartle Taxonomy Interest Graph, with New LARPer Types

In the context of the X-axis of this graph, *Act,* or to act on, refers to the players desire to impose their personal will on to an aspect of the game. Whereas *Interact*, or to interact with, refers to the desire of the player to work toward a common goal within aspects of the game. whereas on the Y-axis, *Players*, in this context refers to the other players that are inhabiting the environment of the game, while on the other end, *Game-World*, refers to the actual physical environment representing the world of the game the players inhabit and where the action takes place (Bartle, 1996).

Through the consideration of the LARPer types in the context of these ratios, another layer of definition can be added to the ideal, stereotypical version of these LARPer motivation types. The *Wanderer* type LARPers can be considered to *Interact* with other *Players*

through role-play and in-character socialising. The *Champion* type LARPers *Act* upon the other *Players*, referring more to the use of skill in simulated combat to achieve victory over the other players, instead of being manipulative or cruel like the original *Killer* player type. The *Scholar* LARPer type is considered to *Act* on the *Game-World*, through their understanding of game-mechanics that dictates the event's function, imposing their will upon that functionality, thus "Rewarding the type of gameplay they want to see" (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3). The *Merchant* Type LARPers, can be said to *Interact* with the Game-World, by guiding the game's collaborative narrative, both externally and through NPC roles, thus becoming a contextualising extension of the game's environment.
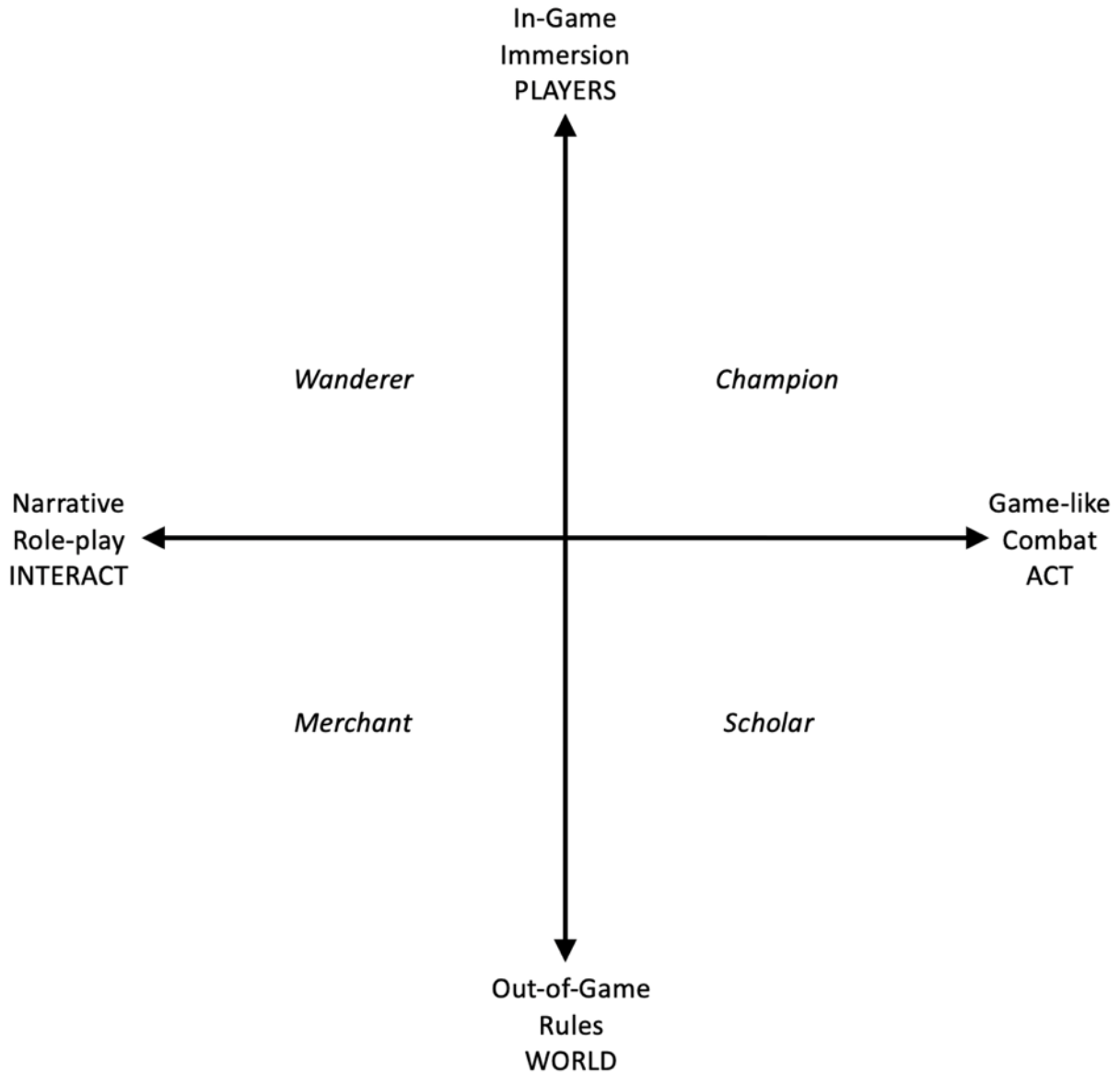
These various layers of interaction, as demonstrated in these three graphs and as summarised in the table presented in *Figure 7.9*, can be merged. Through the combination of these points, it is possible to form a clearer picture of the stereotypical representations of the four LARPer types.

Graph Axis Type	LARPer Type			
	Wanderer	*Champion*	*Scholar*	*Merchant*
Bartle	INTERACT PLAYERS	ACT PLAYERS	ACT WORLD	INTERACT WORLD
LARP type spectrum	High Role-play High Immersion	High Combat High Immersion	High Combat High Rules	High Role-play High Rules
LARPer Motivation	In-Game Narrative	In-Game Game-like	Out-of-Game Game-like	Out-of-Game Narrative

Figure 7.9 – LARPer Motivation Types Interest Graph Axis Relation Summary Table

The graph presented in *Figure 7.10* demonstrates the combined information of the previous three graphs of LARPer interests. The left of the X-axis represents the hypothetical individual player's desire to *Interact* with the *Role-Play* gameplay and *Narrative* aspects of LARP. This flows to the other end of the axis representing their desire to *Act* upon the *Combat* gameplay and the *Game-Like* aspects of LARP. The bottom of the Y-axis demonstrates the hypothetical players interest in the environment of the *Game-World*, *Rules* focused gameplay and the *Out-of-Game* aspects of LARP. Meanwhile, the

top end of the axis represents their interest in the other *Players* inhabiting the game world, *Immersion* focused gameplay, and the *In-Game* aspects of LARP, or a specific LARP experience.

In-Game
Immersion
PLAYERS

↑

Wanderer   *Champion*

Narrative   Game-like
Role-play ←————————————————→ Combat
INTERACT   ACT

Merchant   *Scholar*

↓

Out-of-Game
Rules
WORLD

Figure 7.10 – Combined LARPer Motivation Typology Interest Graph

Through the combination of these three layers of ratio-informing definitions, a clear picture of the stereotypical idealised versions of the four LARPer types can be developed. The ideal stereotypical *Wanderer* type LARPers are those who enjoy games with a heavy immersive and role-play focus because they are motivated to participate by their desire to embody a character and interact with the other players as they collaborate to explore the

in-game narrative aspects of the game. The ideal stereotypical *Champion* type LARPers most enjoy LARPs heavily focused on providing an immersive goal-orientated combat experience. As they most desire to act against the other players in-game to challenge, and be challenged by, the game-like aspects of the LARP. The ideal stereotypical *Scholar* type LARPers are focused on the rules and mechanics aspect of LARP, enjoying games that have a focus on complex game-like rule sets. As these games contain interesting combat mechanics and an in-depth lore system for them to explore between games. This satisfies their desires, as they use these aspects to act upon the game world, to either enforce or manipulate the system to the benefit of other players and themselves. The ideal stereotypical *Merchant* type LARPer in contrast desires to interact with the world of the game, becoming immersed within its narrative structure and its defining mechanics. These players focus on making great efforts between events to prepare, with the aim of having their role-playing characterisation act as 'imaginative set dressing', thus satisfying their desire to further add to and flesh-out the atmosphere of the LARP event's game environment. Through an understanding of these idealised stereotypes, along with the other themes that define this LARPer typology, it is possible to accurately plot where real-world LARPers fit within the theory.

This combined interest graph can provide an effective visual representation of an individual LARPer's place within the LARPer Motivation Typology theory. As determined through an accurate assessment of their personal motivations, playstyle, and observed behaviours. The outer most corner of each of the graph's four quadrants represent the highly stereotypical, idealised versions of the four LARPer types, as described in the previous paragraph. The majority of LARPers can be plotted somewhere within these four quadrants, although it is unlikely any LARPer will be plotted into one of the idealised corner positions.

Initially, individual players will often not fit neatly into a single LARPer type, with some players instead appearing to fit within two, or even three of these described LARPer motivation types. However, this can be rectified through a further evaluation of the available observational or interview data of the LARPer's behaviours, in order to identify their true core motivation theme. This is achieved by more closely assessing the LARPer's relative levels of interest in each of the specific motivational behaviour themes, particularly focusing in on those themes shared between the four LARPer types. Through the

evaluation of the LARPers interest in these themes that determine the positions the LARPer types upon the interest graph, it is possible to determine the LARPer position within the graph and thus the typology.

In other words, from this investigation of the available evidence, the LARPers primary motivating theme can be clearly identified, which determines within which quadrant they will be placed. By then assessing the LARPer's behaviours, compared to their core motivation, along with the themes of the neighbouring LARPer type quadrants, the LARPer can then be more precisely positioned in the graph. This being in terms of how close they should be from the X-axis, the Y-axis, centre, or outer edges of the graph, thus identifying their position within the quadrant. Therefore, by determining the LARPer's position within the interest graph, it is possible for their position within the LARPers motivation typology to be determined and described more effectively.

For example, a player who enjoys the role-play, and embodiment aspects of LARP, but also regularly acts as a GM or NPC for the LARP Orgs would be initially hard to place in the typology. As they often take on NPC roles to satisfy their desire for role-playing, they could fit in the *Merchant* type. However, due to their interest in the rules and combat aspects of LARP, they could also fit in the quadrant of the *Scholar* type. Thus, through further examination of their other behaviours, it becomes clear that their primary focus and motivation is on the embodiment and world immersion aspects of the LARP experience. Therefore, they would be plotted in the *Merchant* type quadrant of the graph, but they will be specifically positioned close to the Y-axis.

It is through a deeper examination of their playstyle and the flow of themes between the LARPer motivation types, as demonstrated on the interest graph, that enables the reliable positioning of the LARPer. In the case of players that appear to fit into three of the LARPer Types they will simply be positioned closer to the centre of the graph where the axis lines intersect. Meanwhile, in the unlikely case that a specific individual appears to fit in with all four types, the evidence for that individual will require reassessment. Following a similar process as before but paying even closer attention to the LARPers behaviours and playstyle than before, aiming to more effectively single out and identify their core motivating theme. Additionally, determining which of their player behaviours are core to their motivation and which are 'borrowed' from other a LARPer type motivations.

For instance, through the informal review of the *Phase 1* footage data, aimed to test the validity the improvements to this refined taxonomy, one study participant assessed through the typology initially appeared to fit well into all four LARPer types. They role-played extensively, maintaining character consistently throughout the game, becoming immersed in the event's narrative world, this indicated that this individual could fit the *Wanderer* type. In addition, they also demonstrated great skill in combat and had a commanding leading presence on the battlefield, which indicated that they could fit the *Champion* type. They were also shown to have an intense interest in the game-mechanics aspects of LARP, which would indicate they might be of the *Scholar* type. However, on further inspection of the evidence, it was clear that their true motivations were to the understanding of the mechanics of the LARP, with their other behaviours streamed forth from that core motivation. This means they had such good tactics and skills in battle because of their understandings of the rules, additionally they were able to role-play and become so immersed because they had learnt all the game's lore to better understand the context of the rules. Therefore, this LARPer when plotted on to the interest graph would be positioned very close to the centre of the graph but would clearly fall into the *Scholar* LARPer type quadrant.

This method of determining the LARPer motivation types of individual LARPers relies on the careful evaluation of available observational, interview and survey data. It requires a closer inspection and cross examination of that available evidence to clearly identify the LARPers core motivations and to alleviate any confusion in the plotting of individuals within the typology. The graph below, in *Figure 7.11*, demonstrates an example of plotting out LARPers, in addition to several LARP events, onto the LARPer motivation typology interest graph.

The data utilised to produce this example graph was derived from the thematically coded primary research material, as applied to an interpretive scale of relative value conceived of by the researcher. Each of the WA LARP events are represented by a number, organised through the key provided in the graph, while the individual LARPers are represented by the square icons. To clarify, the presented positions of the individual LARPers on this graph were generated by informally reviewing the *Phase 1* primary research material, using the refined LARPer typology outlined in this chapter. The play styles of individuals

who frequently appeared in the footage data were tracked and reviewed, along with their available interview data, using the refined motivation typology to determine their LARPer motivation type. This both provided the data for this example as well as verified the usability of the developed and refined LARPer motivation typology theory.
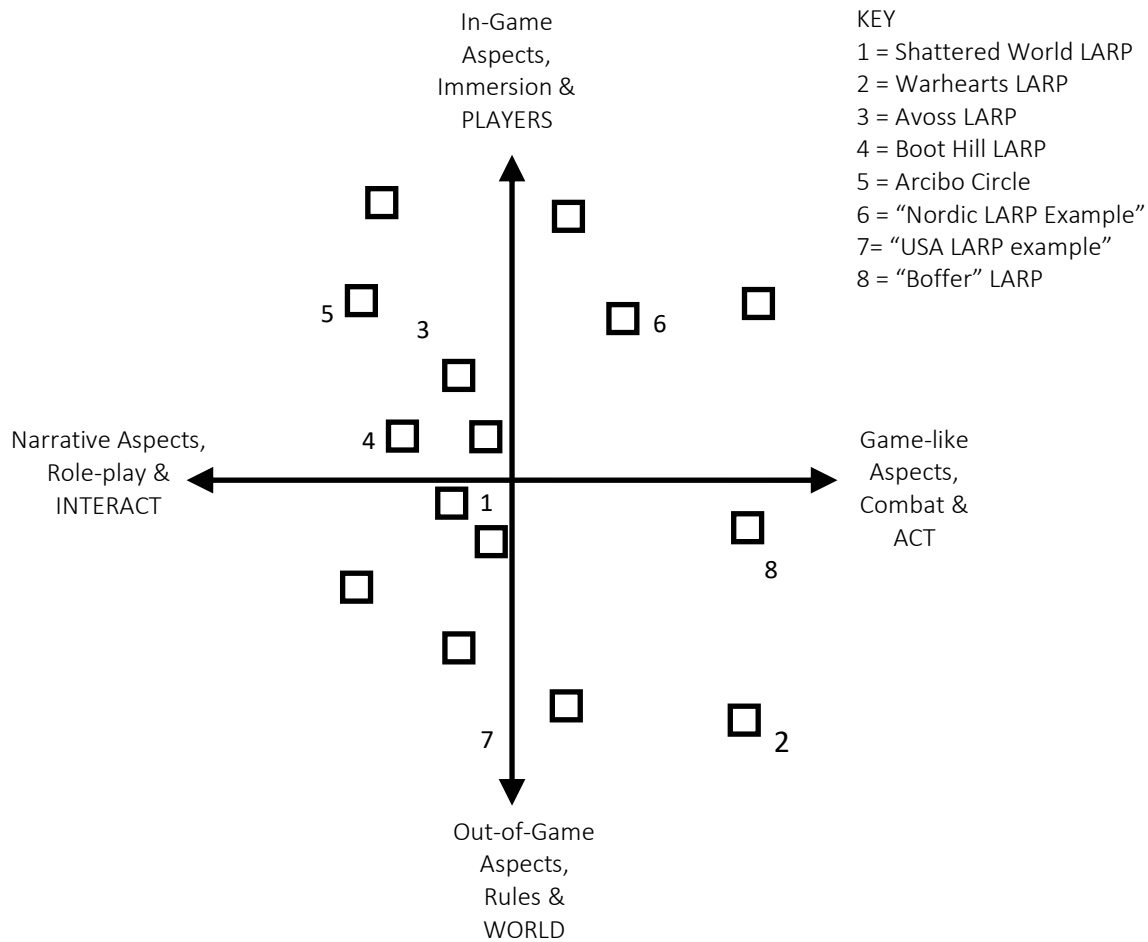
Figure 7.11 – LARPer Motivation Typology Interest Graph, with example data plotted

Through the evaluation of the positioning and clustering of the LARPers on the graph, it becomes easy to tell what types or LARPers are in a community. In addition to discovering whether the currently available game events are meeting this demand, as well as revealing potential gaps in the market. However, the effectiveness of the graph to be able to achieve these goals is dependent on the amount of data available to be plotted upon it, the more data available the more effective its predictions will be. Although, this is only a basic example of what a plotted version of this interest graph could resemble, improving the graphs accuracy should be explored in future research to realise its full potential. The

graph could be improved using alternative marking elements that cover wider areas of the graph to represent the LARP events, making it easier to convey the design aspects present in each LARP event. Alternatively, this future research could aim to combine this graph with some form of empirical classification method, integrating a reliable scale to enable the accurate plotting of LARPs and LARPers.

Observing from another perspective, this series of interest graphs not only represented the interactions between the four LARPer types, but also reflects the research process used to develop the LARPer motivation typology. The first graph (*Figure 7.6*) resembles the early stages of the project, examining existing RPG player typologies, using Bartle's (1996) MUD player taxonomy as a starting point. The second interest graph (*Figure 7.7*) resembles the initial proposed hypothetical modifications to Bartle's types, based on the results of the analysis of the data collected during *Phase 1*. The third graph (*Figure 7.8*) represents the elements identified through the coding of the collected *Phase 2* data. The fourth graph (*Figure 7.10*) represents the results of the refinement process used to produce the fully developed LARPer motivation typology theory. The fifth graph (*Figure 7.11*) conveys the potential uses of the LARPer motivation typology and the opportunities it presents for future research. Therefore, these graphs are an interesting, abridged presentation of the work carried out in this research project.

In summary, the 'Interest Graphs' outlined here can work either for describing LARPers and WA LARP in a general sense, or to plot the position of specific individuals or a specific LARP event's player base. This information will give the LARP Orgs a greater insight and understanding of the interests, desires, and expectations of their player population. Knowledge that they can then use to guide the development of the content of their upcoming game events, to either meet or subvert their players expectations. Furthermore, operational LARP events can be plotted on the same graph, allowing LARPers to better understand which available games would most satisfy their primary motivations. In addition to challenging them to move beyond their comfort zone or enabling them to decide which events they will commit to participating in with increased confidence.

7.4.3 – Additional Theory Elements

The *LARPer Motivation Typology* outlined here can also address the limitations Henry

(2015) and Yee (2006) identified in Bartle's (1996) Typology. These limitations included that the defining elements of his types were incorrectly arranged, that his types lacked clear distinction, and that Bartle offered no empirical method by which to utilise his theory. In addition, as stated previously, Henry (2015) identified that it was LARPs unique real-world player interface system that results in the ineffectiveness of the direct application of digital RPG player typologies being applied to LARP. The methods used to develop this theory addresses these points, by starting from a clean slate, and using the primary research data on the WA LARP community and its members to define its themes. Along with using that same evidence to confirm the proper arrangement of those themes into the player types as presented here. Although the production of an 'Empirical LARPer Classification Survey Tool' will not be developed in this thesis, a blueprint for the development of such a method is provided in *Chapter 8*, which can be expanded on and refined in future research projects. Thus, the theory produced and presented in this thesis has effectively addressed each of these complaints through its design and structure.

This typology additionally provides insight into the relationship between the LARPers, those who play the games, and the LARP Orgs, those who organise and run the games. In the WA LARP community, it is common for the members of one game's LARP Org team to be players in other games. Thus, the typology needs to be able to specifically address the likelihood of LARPers from each player type taking on some, or all, the responsibilities of a LARP Org at some point. In this research, only a few LARPers of the *Wanderer* type were observed to have taken on the full role of LARP Org, and it would be unlikely for those of this type to attempt to develop and run their own events. Although some did volunteer to take on some lighter duties, such as assisting in the production of props and set dressing, as well as more often playing as various plot relevant or enemy combatant NPCs during games. Similarly, most *Champion* type LARPers did not play an active role on any of the observed LARP Org committees and were not observed attempting to run their own game events. However, of the few that did, most took on the responsibility of organising some of the regular LARP training sessions and assisting in the LARP event related construction projects. For the most part, however, they were more likely to be found in leadership roles within the structure of various observed player teams and factions. It is common for players of the *Scholar* and *Merchant* types to become members of various LARP Org teams. Often working numerous roles or holding a variety of positions in several organising groups, including leading their own event development teams. This is because of their skill

with the mechanical rules of the various styles of LARP, or their understanding of the narrative elements of LARP, such as narrative world-building frameworks. In addition to the knowledge of any number of other components or skills necessary for developing, preparing for, and running a LARP event. Taking it from a vague concept to a fully realised game event with an ongoing collaborative narrative and regular game schedule.

Even though this theory is designed to be a generalised typology, based on the WA LARP community, it can be used in more specific, focused applications. This can be achieved by using the information of the typology partly in reverse, with the aim of predicting the unique ratio of the four LARPer types that will be present within a specific LARP game. For instance, a *Parlour* LARP, such as *Boot Hill LARP*, will be likely to have more *Wanderer* and *Merchant* type players than *Champions* and *Scholars*. Whereas a combat focused game such as *Warhearts LARP*, is more likely to have a higher ratio of *Champion* and *Scholar* type LARPers in its player population, than it would have *Wanderer* or *Merchant* type players. Alternatively, a middle of the road game like *Shattered World LARP* can be expected to have a relatively even spread of all four types. However, this concept and the predictions themselves is something that would be better explored as an aspect of future research into LARP and LARPers.

Although it may seem contradictory at times, it is important to understand that for most LARPers, many of these LARP aspects cannot be preferred to the point of total exclusion. This is because, even in the most extreme of cases, all LARP elements, to varying degrees, are necessary for the proper operation of LARP events. A fact that justifies how it is possible for *Scholar* type LARPers to still operate in games with fewer game-like rules. As there will be some system that is dictating the progression of the event's action for them to become immersed in, such as the narrative lore, economic system, or political hierarchy of the LARP's game-world. Furthermore, it explains how *Champions* can still exist in LARPs without combat components or clear 'win/lose' conditions. As these styles of LARPs will still possess some form of narrative mechanism that will ensure the continuation of the LARP's overarching collaborative story. This will either provide narrative focused objectives for *Champion* type LARPers to work towards, or alternatively provide ample opportunities for those players to develop their own goals. The behaviours of the Champion type can be expressed very differently in different LARP types, such as physical movements of in-character square dancing, or the competitiveness of in-character

card games during a 'Wild West' themed LARP. In addition to the players attempting to manipulate or hide information from other players in a LARP event where the gameplay is focused on mystery solving and investigation. Those of the *Wanderer* and *Merchant* LARPer types have the least amount of difficulty adapting to games outside their preferred play style. This is because even in games with minimal role-play and narrative elements there is still enough narrative structure or other opportunities to satisfy their desire for character immersion. Even if it is as simple as 'trash-talking' during combat encounters using phrasing relevant to the narrative setting or by adding additional dramatic flair to the casting of combat spells.

Unfortunately, because *Parlour* LARPs were not directly observed during the data collection process and were only briefly discussed in participants responses, it was not possible to investigate these specific instances in greater detail as a part of this thesis. Therefore, attempting to apply this new LARPer motivations typology directly to these styles of LARP event in the WA community would be a strong opportunity for future research. Further limitations of the *LARPer Motivation Typology* are outlined in *Chapter 8*.

7.4.4 – LARPer Motivation Typology Theory Summary

In summary, the produced *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory consists of four LARP player types, with these four refined LARPer motivation types being defined as follows:

- *Wanderer* type – Primarily motivated by themes of embodiment, and the desire for meaningful in-character interactions.
- *Champion* type – Primarily motivated by themes of competitiveness, being driven to challenge themselves or others to further improve and achieve in-game.
- *Scholar* type – Primarily motivated by themes of investigation and the desire to understand or develop the mechanical, game-like aspects of LARP.
- *Merchant* type – Primarily motivated by themes of community and immersion, driven by the desire to create deep experiences for players through imaginatively detailed game-worlds.

These LARPer types each fit into a quadrant of an interest graph, through which individual players can be accurately plotted, using observations of their playstyle and behaviours. In

doing so revealing their place within this typology, information that can influence how LARP Orgs develop new event content, as well as providing important insights for future scholarly research. On a personal note, the researcher of this study, having conducted this research process, would identify themselves, if they were a LARPer, as being a *Merchant* type player.

7.5 – '*Panoramic Film as Academic Research Method*' Evaluation Results

Panoramic film refers to the process of producing audio-visual texts that present a field of view that is far beyond what is possible in standard flat-panel filmmaking. This is achieved by using omni-directional cameras, which can film the same events in multiple directions at once which can comprise a near 360-degree view of the captured environment around the camera's position. Then using editing software, this large amount of footage can be stitch together into a comprehensible format, that is viewable via specialised projection systems such as head mounted display units (HMD) and large cylinder or dome shaped projection screens (Bender, 2019; Jaunt, 2016; Daniel, 2016).

This new media format grants the viewer some degree of control over what aspect of the footage they view at any point in time, although the viewer will still instinctively adhere to traditional directorial techniques used to guide a viewer's focus throughout a visual presentation. These unique features of panoramic filmmaking could potentially enable researchers to overcome the limitations and inherent difficulties in the in-field collection and presentation of audio-visual data from cultural events such as LARP. Scholarly researchers could then effectively capture and convey the immersive aspects of LARP, often described by the phrase of 'having to be there' to fully understand the experience (Höllerer et al, 1999; Fauiter, 2016; Ryan, 2008).

The primary objective of the panoramic film related component of this research project is to evaluate the viability, and practicality of utilising panoramic filmmaking as a method for fieldwork data collection and presentation in academic research. In terms of collecting data as an aspect of field work, as well as for presenting data to an audience for review. The purpose of this is to determine if these panoramic filmmaking technologies can provide scholarly researchers with additional effective methods with which to approach the study of

those cultural phenomena that have proven difficult to efficiently record in the past, such as LARP (Lampo, 2016; Gade et al, 2003; Steele, 2016).

7.5.1 – Review of Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation and assessment process for the viability of panoramic video as a research tool were conducted alongside the rest of this research project's primary research design, as a secondary research objective. The details of this evaluation process have been fully outlined previously in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 5* of this thesis but will be briefly summarised again here.

During *Phase 1* of the data collection process, panoramic video equipment, in conjunction with standard 2D recording equipment and manual note taking, were used to collect the fieldwork data. The attending researcher's manually recorded observations and experiences with the equipment, in addition to the comparative analysis of the coded recorded footage data, were the core resources used for developing the conclusions of this part of the assessment procedure.

Phase 2 of the data collection procedure contained the methods by which the presentation potential of panoramic video was evaluated. This being one of the main goals of the in-person dome screening component of *Phase 2's* experimental design, which included digital survey and focus group discussion data collection methods. The participant responses to these questions being the data points used in the assessment process.

7.5.2 – Review of The Assessment Results

In *Phase 1*, the potential data collection capabilities of panoramic film, as previously described in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4*, were investigated. As a result of this evaluation the theorised advantages of panoramic film, including the wider field-of-view and the inconspicuous design of the recording devices, were evident throughout the fieldwork shoots. It was additionally evident in the data coding process, repeatedly appearing during each post-shoot coding session. The panoramic filmmaking technology was particularly effective when used to record chaotic and fast paced in-game activities during the LARP events, such as the intense role-play moments and the large-scale combat encounters.

In *Phase 2*, the potential data presentation capabilities of panoramic film, as previously described in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6*, were evaluated. The results of this investigation strongly indicated that the panoramic screening method was able to effectively convey to the participants the sensation of 'really being there' and 'being part of the action' of the LARP. This was also shown to improve the attention and enjoyment of the viewer, with the wider field of view found to provide the participants with more visual information, in comparison to the 2D version. Additionally, the analysis of the collected Phase 2 data yielded an arguably positive assessment of the medium's potential. The study participants stating the panoramic version of the sample reel to be equal to, or even superior to, the flat-panel version. In terms of maintaining audience attention, perceived sense of viewer immersion, and most importantly in the accuracy of the film's representation of LARP.

The potential of panoramic film as a research data collection and presentation tool has been confirmed within the context of this research. The panoramic film was found to be more effective at presenting an accurate representation of WA LARP to the study participants, which confirms that panoramic video can be a viable method of data collection and presentation. Although it may be less effective as a data presentation tool than as a field work data collection and analysis tool, it is still an overall useful method for specific future research situations, such as for the investigation of previously difficult to record cultural events.

7.5.3 – Summary of Evaluation

In summary, this research has confirmed the potential of panoramic film production as a viable method of scholarly research, for in-field data collection, analysis, and presentation. However, it is evident that more research is needed to refine how this new tool can be most effectively utilised. This method can also be used for the investigations of various cultural phenomenon or events that, in a similar way to LARP, are defined by the notion that to be understood they need to be experienced first-hand. Cultural phenomenon or events such as live concerts, music festivals, wilderness hikes and fan conventions for instance.

Therefore, the use of panoramic video techniques in scholarly research could provide numerous additional benefits to the researcher depending on the objectives of their

research. Although, researchers must take the necessary additional data storage and analysis time requirements into consideration to determine whether the inclusion of the method will benefit their work or not. Future research projects using panoramic film as a method for exploring cultural phenomena will further expand and refine the scholarly uses of panoramic film. This will eventually result in the development of a truly viable, academically valid method of in-field cultural research.

7.6 – Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to accomplish five main objectives. First, to list the refined defining themes of LARP and LARPer motivational behaviours as identified from the analysis of the collected results data. Second, to outline the basic structure of the improved LARPer motivation typology theory design. Third, to describe the four new LARPer motivation types – *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants.* Fourth, to provide a detailed discussion of how these four types interact with one another, as well as the more advanced elements of the refined typology's design. Fifth, the results of the evaluation of the viability of utilising panoramic filmmaking methods as a tool for scholarly research was assessed and reviewed.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.0 – Chapter Summary

The primary focus of this research project was to investigate the effectiveness of Bartle's (1996) MUD player taxonomy when applied to the classification of WA LARP community members. It was through this investigation that it was determined that modifications to this player taxonomy were necessary to enable the proper categorisation of LARPers. This discovery led to the development of a set of proposed hypothetical modifications to the theory that were then tested through a verification study. The results of which were used to guide the development of the proposed modifications into the refined theory of *LARPer Motivation Typology*. The project additionally aimed to address a secondary research objective, the investigation of the potential viability of panoramic filmmaking as a scholarly field work method for the collection and presentation of audio-visual research data. The LARPer motivation typology theory and the assessment of panoramic video's potential provides benefits to several groups. This project's research work will enable individual LARPers to better understand their own play style and expectations of LARP, which they can use to better decide which events to commit to. It will also provide LARP Orgs with the ability to better understand the expectations and desires of their players, which will help guide the development of future LARP event content. Furthermore, these results will provide scholars with additional fieldwork research methods, as well as several avenues of research to pursue in future investigations of LARP and other cultural phenomena.

This chapter aims to summarise the entirety of the research project, including the goals, methods and results of the work discussed during this thesis. In addition to outlining the difficulties the project encountered, the limitations of its results, as well as the major implications for future research design and applications generated by the project. This chapter is focused on accomplishing four primary goals. Firstly, to provide a concluding summary of the entirety of the research project, including an outline of the final research outcomes produced from the study's results data. Secondly, to explain the contributions to scholarly knowledge of LARP, player motivations and panoramic video. Thirdly, to discuss the various restrictions and difficulties encountered during the conducting of the research project, as well as the limitations of its results. Fourthly, to explain the additional lines of

inquiry and the implications for future research design generated through the critical evaluation of this project's results.

8.1 – Research Conclusions

> The types of players are all about where people rank their personal story, rank discovering the story of the settings and the world, how they discover other players and how they want to achieve those goals how competitive they are a whole pile of different tracks in that space as to how they interact, and what they want to do, for example you might have a plate armoured person who's all about their character's personal journey, story, and really wants to share their background with everyone and, talk it up to everyone and doesn't really care about the competitiveness or winning all the fights but is all about the journey of their knight, and you might have a wizard character that has the briefest back story in the world, and is really just there because they like the mechanics of how spells work in fights, and they want to be a cool wizard that has impacts in fights (*Phase 1*, Field Shoot 3).

The primary aim of this Research Project was to determine to what extent Bartle's (1996) Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) player motivation typology can be applied to classifying the motivations and play styles of LARP participants of the WA LARP community. The research question can be broken down into several research objectives, as follows:

1. To test the effectiveness of Bartle's Theory when applied to the examination of LARP players and games.
2. To develop hypothetical modifications to Bartle's typology, specifically designed for the classification of LARP Players.
3. To devise a method for testing the effectiveness of the proposed theory and to then test the theory.
4. To use the data to further develop these initial modifications into refined 'LARPer Motivation Typology' theory, that can provide a better understanding of WA LARPers.

In addition, one final objective, and the secondary aim of the project, is to investigate the

practical useability of panoramic film techniques in the context of an academic research method. This investigation focused on determining the potential research benefits of the increased field of view provided by this new media genre.

Live Action Role-Play (LARP) refers to a form of role-playing game where the emergent narrative is played out through the participants' physical embodiment of their characters within a real-world play location (Roush, 2009). This immersive embodiment is achieved by the players using their words, body movements, and improvisation skills to become their characters, this is often additionally enhanced with the use of props, costuming and occasionally simulated combat. The actions and interactions of the players with the game-world, other players, and the game masters will impact on how the collaborative narrative progresses over the course of the game (Tychsen et al, 2006; Zagal and Deterding, 2018; Mochocki, 2021).

Bartle's (1996) taxonomy refers to the system of categorising the players of MUDs based on their motivations and behaviours, through an examination of their playstyle. The theory presented four player types – *Achievers, Socializers, Explorers,* and *Killers* – each defined by a core motivating factor and a selection of associated player behaviours. *Achievers* are those players focused on accomplishing the goals of the game and obtaining rewards. *Socializers* are those players who are more interested in interacting with the other players and making friends. *Explorers* are those players more interested in investigating the game's environment and unlocking its secrets than playing the game as intended. *Killers* are those players who gain satisfaction from making the game difficult for other players, demonstrating their skill and power by attacking other players for no valid in-game reason (Torner, 2018; Przyblyski et al, 2006).

This research has demonstrated that, Bartle's theory, along with most other theories developed for digital RPG's, had only minimal effectiveness when applied directly to the study of LARP and LARPers. This is due to LARP's unique player interface, where players fully embody their character's physical, verbal, and mental aspects within the collaborative, imagination-altered real-world environment of the game. Therefore, for the theory to be more effective for the investigation of LARPers, it must be modified to account for the unique attributes of LARP. These modifications enable the theory to be specifically designed to investigate this unique social phenomenon and those who participate in it,

such as members of the WA LARP community. The results of the process developed to attain these outcomes and complete these objectives is the production of an accurate generalised *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory. The LARPer motivation typology theory developed from the results of this research is the central contribution to scholarship in this field. It identifies four LARP player types, called *Wanderers, Champions, Scholars,* and *Merchants.*

The *Wanderer* type players are motivated by the character embodiment aspects of LARP, as they enjoy how they can play a part in the emergent narrative and influence the game's progression. They enjoy the feeling of using their voice and bodies to take on the role of someone else to then interact with other players within the LARP's in-game environment. These players also enjoy LARPs that have a focus on immersive gameplay that provide plenty of opportunities for role-playing.
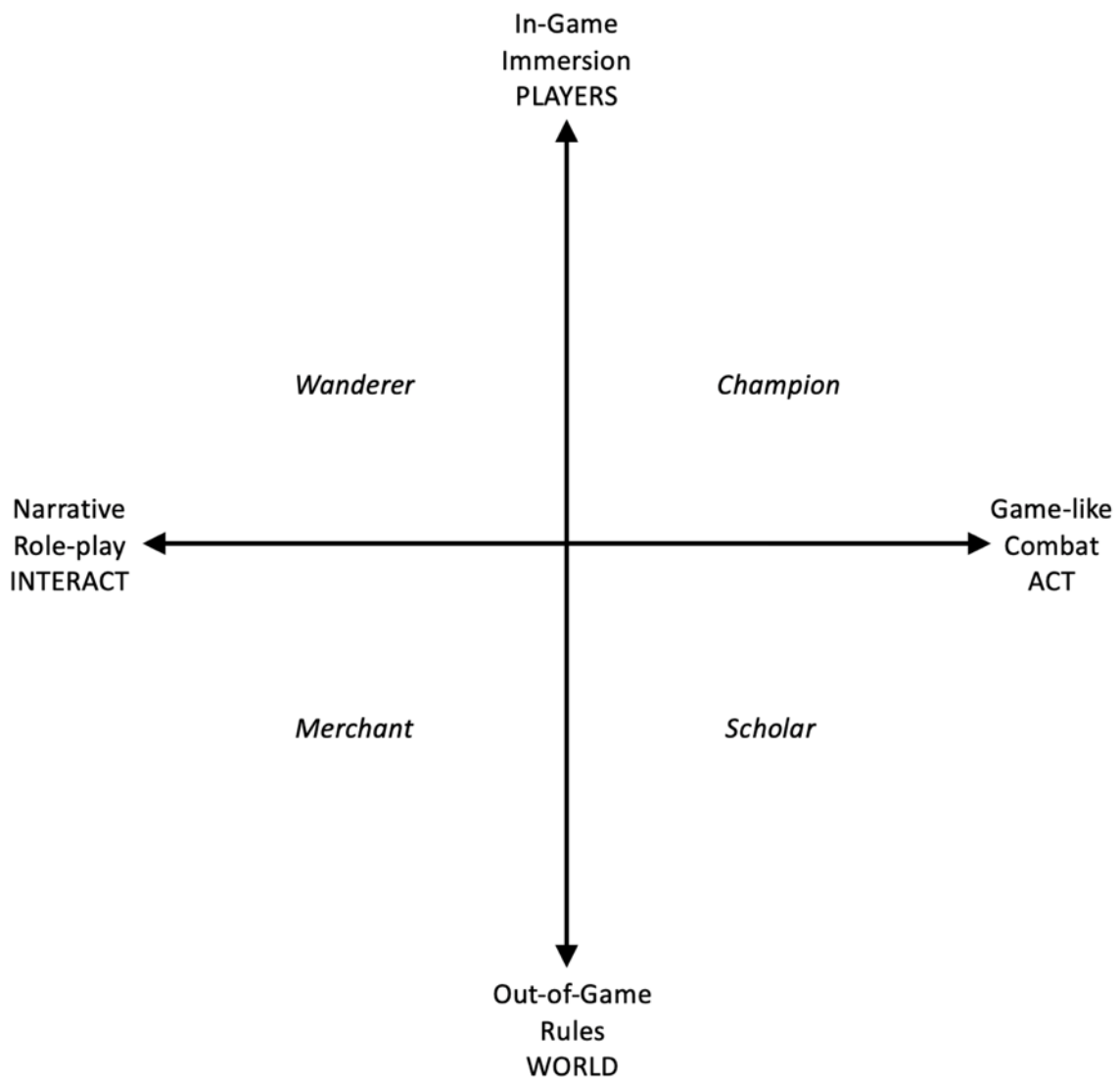
The *Champion* player type are those LARPers motivated by the challenging and competitive aspects of LARP, including the simulated combat elements and various forms of physicality. They enjoy the feeling of accomplishing the quest objectives of the event, as well as improving their skills, in both combat and problem solving. These players act on the other players in the game environment, most often by either leading their team mates to victory or fighting to defeat their foes. These players enjoy immersion focused LARP games that include game-like design elements, which provide combat opportunities and the accumulation of in-game rewards.

The *Scholar* type players are most interested in the gameplay design and the out-of-game mechanical aspects of LARP. This type of LARPer acts on the world of the LARP, through their in depth understanding of the rules and lore of the game-world. These players often take on the role of LARP Orgs to run their own events, in addition to being players, often volunteering to be Game Marshals (GMs) to fill both roles during a game. This sort of player most often prefers LARP games that are heavily reliant on a set of extensive game-like rules, as well as those events with interesting examples of combat focused gameplay.

The *Merchant* type LARPer most often is interested in interacting with and exploring the world being a part of the emergent narrative, but not having their actions directly influence or affect the story. These players will often contribute planning and preparation work that

takes place outside of game time, while in-game they take on the roles of non-player characters (NPC). These NPC roles within the LARP environment, including the likes of bakers, librarians, or inn keepers, enable the game-world to feel more realised and furthers the sense of player immersion. These players prefer LARPs focused on aspects of role-play and story progression but also use sets of highly detailed mechanical rules, as these games most often allow them to play most effectively as NPCs.

Each of these player types can be expressed within a quadrant of an interest graph, as seen in *Figure 8.1*, upon which individual LARPers can be plotted to accurately represent where they fit within the typology.

In-Game
Immersion
PLAYERS

Wanderer   Champion

Narrative   Game-like
Role-play   Combat
INTERACT   ACT

Merchant   Scholar

Out-of-Game
Rules
WORLD

Figure 8.1 – LARPer Motivation Typology Interest Graph

Through this graph, it is possible to express the flow or pull of the multiple motivating factors that can influence an individual, demonstrating how their desires affect the player's behaviours and play style.

This typology can be used by individual LARPers to better understand themselves and to help them make more informed choices about which LARP events they should commit to participating in. The theory can additionally be used by LARP Orgs to discover the ratio of player types in their games, learning what their desires are, using this to guide their development of future LARP content. The typology will furthermore provide scholarly researchers with a method by which they can obtain a deeper understanding of LARPs and their associated communities. On a personal note, if the reader is interested, after having conducted this in-field research and then gone through the analysis process, if the researcher of this study did participate in LARP outside of this research, they would identify themselves as being of the *Merchant* LARPer type.

The fifth objective was to assess the effectiveness of panoramic film technology acting in the role of scholarly research method. Panoramic film refers to the production of videos with a field of view beyond that of standard flat-screen video using technologies that records scenes from multiple angles simultaneously. A feat accomplished by using specialised omni-directional cameras, editing programs, and screening systems, such as VR HMD, and large cylinder or domed screens (McGinity et al, 2007; Jaunt, 2016; Bender 2019).

In terms of its effectiveness as an audio-visual field work data gathering tool, panoramic film was found to provide several benefits, as predicted in the hypothesis of this research project. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the project's collected panoramic footage data did provide more observational evidence on WA LARP, that was drawn upon during the development of the LARPer motivation typology. The camera's wider field of view proved to be useful during the coding and analysis period of the research, as it provided more footage of the events to be examined and reviewed. It was far easier with the panoramic footage to follow individuals as they moved through the scene, identify who was speaking when and to whom than it was with the 2D footage, particularly during the LARP event's more chaotic moments. In the review of the panoramic footage data from

the various LARP events, including large scale combat, narrative role-play, and group interviews, the wider field of view enabled the researcher to gain greater understanding of the recorded events.

This data also proved to be more effective at collecting candid and natural behaviour in the footage, in comparison to standard 2D recording methods. This was because the recorded participants were unfamiliar with the panoramic cameras, they remained focused on their own activities as they did not immediately recognise the cameras. Although, it did provide an advantage over much of the fixed frame 2D camera's footage data, it was determined that the panoramic video was less useful in some situations than in other instances. For example, it was only able to provide limited additional data from the formal interview recordings but did provide considerably more data in recordings of in-game player behaviours during events.

In terms of presenting the collected footage data, the wider field of view and passive nature of panoramic film was found to be able to convey additional audio-visual data to the audience. The dome-screen method of presentation used for the panoramic film was more effective at providing an accurate representation of LARP to the audience. In addition to providing the audience with the sensation of being a part of the action shown on screen, which further enhanced the audience's attention to the content and enjoyment of the experience. Thus, it can be argued that the potential of panoramic film as a method of scholarly research has been confirmed in the context of the investigation of the WA LARP community.

Therefore, depending on the research goals of a project, the use of panoramic cameras for the collection of data in the form of panoramic footage to be reviewed later would provide additional benefits in the collection of the data, such as during focus group discussions. For example, using a panoramic camera while walking through a fan convention or even standing still as the throngs of patrons go about their day at the event, would provide more data for later review than if the researcher only used a fixed frame 2D camera to record the event. However, it would not provide much in the way of additional information from formal static interviews in controlled settings. It is also important for researchers considering this method to be aware of the extra time and data storage that is necessary to properly handle and benefit from the examination of panoramic data.

8.2 – Contribution to Knowledge

This section will outline the new knowledge this research can contribute to the wealth of scholarly knowledge of LARP, player motivation and panoramic film. These contributions include additions to the schools of game studies and new media studies, as well as scholarly LARP research. The section also aims to clarify the project's important findings, how they will contribute to bridging the gaps in academic knowledge and why these results are of academic importance.

As stated earlier, much of the LARP focused scholarly research has been undertaken in just the last few decades, with much of it only including LARP as a smaller aspect of a larger whole. As such, this research project was one of the first investigative works that was primarily focused on the exploration of LARPers in the context of the Western Australian LARP community. The results of this work provide an important and useful baseline of scholarly data, which can inform and be expanded upon in future investigative research into the WA LARP community. Furthermore, this research developed the *LARP Game Type Spectrum* method, through which it is possible to more effectively classify the various types of LARP games and events. This spectrum is defined by the comparative degrees of design focus on, and interactions between, the four primary aspects of LARP gameplay design, with these being *Role-play*, *Combat*, *Immersion* and *Rules.*

As previously argued, theories developed to understand one RPG type could be applied to investigation of another, requiring only minor specific adaptation to the new RPGs design specifics. As a result of this research, it was determined in the case of directly applying Bartle's (1996) theories to LARP, that the digital RPG typology was only slightly effective for classifying LARP Participants. The reason for this was found to be because of the fundamental difference between player interfaces utilised by the players of digital RPGs and LARPs, as Henry (2015) had hypothesised. This difference being that digital RPG players control a representation of their character within the digital RPG's virtual game environment via some electronic device such as a computer. Whereas the LARPer physically embodies their character within the LARP's real-world game environment using their own body and voice to become that character within the event. The thesis data

confirms this hypothesis, making it clear that for Bartle's typology, or any other digital RPG theory, to be applied effectively to the study of LARP, considerable modifications are needed in order to address the challenges that LARP's specific player interface presents.

The work of this thesis aimed to develop a *LARPer Motivation Typology*, a theory that can provide an increased understanding of the motivations, desires, and expectations of the WA LARP community. This can be utilised by LARP players (LARPers) to understand what it is about LARP they most enjoy, using that knowledge to decide which games they will commit their time and energy to participating in. This theory can also be utilised by LARP Organisers (LARP Orgs) to comprehend the motivations, expectations, and desires of their game's player population. LARP Orgs can then use these new insights to guide the production of new game content, mechanics, and narrative elements, to either meet or subvert these player expectations. The LARPer motivation theory can additionally be utilised by scholarly researchers as a method through which to further expand academic knowledge of LARP, LARPers and LARP communities.

This project also investigated the potential viability of panoramic video as a means of fieldwork data collection and presentation yielded considerable, positive results. Demonstrated by the additional observational footage data provided by the panoramic recording methods used in this research, which proved instrumental in the creation of the LARPer motivation typology. Although the overall usefulness of panoramic video was dependent on the technology used, the skill of the researcher, as well as the nature and aims of the scholarly research project being undertaken. For instance, the method would not provide a researcher with much additional data if used to record a formal one-on-one interview but would provide more data if used to record a focus group discussion.

Panoramic video would be particularly useful for the examination of cultural phenomena that can be described by the phrase 'you had to be there', such as concerts, conventions, and street performances. A researcher using panoramic recording methods at such cultural events, could collect and benefit from a greater volume of observational data, than they could from using a fixed frame camera system. By reviewing the data provided by the panoramic video's wider field of view, the researcher can obtain a clearer, more complete, and accurate impression of the recorded event as it really occurred. The only drawbacks of this method being the increase in the amount of digital storage space needed for the

recordings, along with the increase in time needed to code and analyse the footage data.

In summary, these results provided a baseline understanding of the WA LARP community, and a method for understanding the motivations of its participants. Outlining a *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory that can benefit either LARPers or LARP Orgs and can be further built upon by future researchers. This project's results also provided an assessment of the viability of using panoramic video in data gathering and presentation, in comparison to flat-panel video methods. Demonstrating the possible benefits that using this technology could provide to various avenues of research field work.

8.3 – Limitations and Restrictions of The Study

This thesis aimed to investigate to what extent Bartle's (1996) MUD player typology is applicable to the classification of LARPers, in addition to assessing panoramic video's viability as a research method. The process used to accomplish these objectives involved an examination of the motivations, behaviours, and play styles of LARP participants within the Western Australian LARP community. However, the results of the research are not without their limitations and this project's experimental procedure did not progress entirely without encountering some restricting difficulties. This section will outline the limitations of applying the results of this research to further academic study and the events that restricted the work carried out during this research.

Even the most careful of plans and best of efforts can only do so much in the face of overwhelming odds. These difficulties resulted in necessary compromise, ingenuity, determination, and care to minimise their impact on the project as much as possible. However, before the results of this research can be utilised in future scholarly research, there are three primary limitations to these applications that should be considered.

Firstly, as this research was focused on the WA LARP community it is therefore a generalised reflection of that specific type of LARP community. Even though the study participants have also discussed their experiences of LARP from other regions, the project's overall results are still deeply entrenched in the Western Australian context. Therefore, because of this it is possible that these generalisations of the WA LARP

community may not be entirely comparable to other LARP communities in the eastern states, or overseas. However, there are numerous similarities in game design and community structure found in the various varieties of LARP in Australia and across the globe. Therefore, it should be reasonable to assume there are sufficient similarities between them to enable this player classification theory to be applicable, even if minor regionalisation modifications are necessary.

Secondly, as previously discussed in this thesis, the effects of Covid-19 required the experimental procedure of *Phase 2* to be both delayed and then heavily redesigned. The original plan for *Phase 2* involved an equal number of participants viewing both the 2D and panoramic versions of the film during a series of in-person screening sessions. This was to provide two equal sized data pools, one for each version of the film, that could then be easily compared during later coding, along with a larger number of focus group discussion responses. However, government regulations that led to the shutting down or heavy reduction of the audience capacity of possible screening locations rendered this plan to be impossible within the available time.

Thirdly, although the distribution of the initial *Phase 2* survey and flat-panel version of the sample reel was easily modified into a completely online procedure, this was not so easily achieved for the panoramic video related aspects of the design. This was primarily because of two major issues that were encountered during the process of re-designing the *Phase 2* experimental procedure. One of these issues being the lack of high-quality VR HMD units personally accessible to WA LARP Community members. Whereas the other issue was the unacceptable reduction in video quality that occurred when the film was uploaded to the most widely available CVR home-viewing method. It was determined that the use of the dome projection systems was the most viable method for the continuation of the experimental procedure. Hence, the sample size for the panoramic screening and focus group discussion components was reduced to enable the use of these screening facilities within the restrictions in place at the time. As a result of this, the 2D screening and survey component of *Phase 2* had nearly three times the participants as the panoramic screening, survey and focus group component. This disparity needed to be, and was, considered and compensated for during the data analysis, but this could still have an impact on the validity of the produced results. For instance, before it can be applied to future research the generalisations of panoramic screening methods as a viable method of

data presentation may need to be carefully considered.

In addition to these three main limitations to the results, there were also several additional issues and events that restricted the progress of the research that may have a limiting effect on the results that should be addressed in further research.

One of these encountered limiting issues was the features and overall reliability of the panoramic cameras used in the project. The panoramic cameras used had no reliable real-time footage review function, a limited battery life, and were prone to overheating. These limitations resulted in several unwanted breaks in filming, or the need to film without suitable camera support, in favour of powering the camera via an external battery pack, due to the position of the camera's power and tripod sockets. Thus, the assessment of the usability of panoramic film as a method of field work data collection is reliant on subjective researcher experience. Therefore, it can be argued that panoramic video data collection viability is subject to the various specifications of the technology being used, and skill of those operating that technology. As these and other minor issues encountered during the fieldwork could have been eliminated using additional and more advanced cameras, as well as employing a larger field team more experienced in the use of that technology.

Another difficulty that restricted the project's progress was the general scheduling issues and the time needed to prepare for a field shoot. These issues included the infrequent, sporadic scheduling, and short times between the announcement and the conducting of smaller LARP events. These issues were in addition to the time needed to organise risk assessment clearances, hire out equipment, and catalogue the collected audio-visual data from completed field shoots. The combination of these issues resulted in the inability to record observational data at several of the smaller LARP events during the time allocated for *Phase 1* data collection. Since the project lacks data from these specific events, it could be argued that the generalisations of the typology may require further interpretation when applied to these types of LARPs, such as *Parlour* LARPs.

The most obvious and far-reaching limitation on the project was the global Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health lockdowns imposed to combat it. This had a considerable impact on the project's panoramic film related aspects, limiting the availability of participants and specialised screening facilities. Furthermore, the LARP Orgs and

Government imposed Covid-19 safety guidelines resulted in the cancelling of all LARP events that would have been held during the remaining time allocated for the project's field work. These cancellations ruled out the possibility of carrying out any additional data gathering work, including further field shoots, as well as the work required for the examination of any further research goals, such as investigating the viability of an empirical LARPer classification survey tool.

8.3.1 – Empirical LARPer Classification Survey Tool Possibilities

The process of developing an 'Empirical Classification Tool' based on the *LARPer Motivation Typology* would need to be carried out as the main goal of a future research project. However, the following sub-section will further discuss the results of the study's attempt to utilise Yee's (2006) empirical MMORPG player classification tool, as described in *Section 6.4*, including an evaluation of the tools operation and the identified practical useability issues. Along with discussions of possible alterations necessary for the development of a more effective method. A version of the classification tool that is specifically designed for use by the WA LARP Communities to classify the player types of individuals, or the ratio of player types present within an event's player population.

The Yee (2006c) classification tool was used as part of the online survey with only minor alterations to the terminology used in the questions. This was to see if Yee's empirical method, without major alterations or specialisations, could be used effectively to define the player types of the LARPers participating in the study (Yee, 2006c; Fabriger et al, 1999). Although it was anticipated that this approach would likely fail to some degree, due to the differences between the player type theories and the types of RPGs being examined by this process. In addition to the previously discussed limitations encountered in the application of Yee's tool to the classifying LARPers, as described in *Section 6.4*, several further issues were identified. These potential issues will need to be considered and effectively addressed in the development of any new specific empirical LARPer classification method.

The *Focus Group Discussion* participants identified six of these factors that would have an impact on the practical usage of such empirical tools in the field. The first of these identified issues to consider, when developing the typology into an actual tool is th

accuracy of the tool and the reliability of LARPers to consistently respond to the research tool. Second, the focus group participants explained that different types of LARPs lead to individuals taking on different player types. Thirdly, the participants discussed how in their experience players often do not know what they want and "change their minds at the drop of a hat" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion). Furthermore, player behaviours and motivations can change over time, as they play more games, and try out new ideas.

Fourthly, the influence of other social, community, political, and personal factors will have an impact on how players feel and communicate their wants. In addition to influencing how they would classify themselves, all of which will affect the data collected from them by any potential survey tool. Fifth, the participants explained how occasionally a LARPer's true motivations can be hidden by a high level of skill in areas unrelated to their primary motivation. A notion that operates in concert with that of those players feeling an obligation to their team to continue in a role in which they excel yet may not be their real motivation to take part. Lastly, LARP Orgs have long struggled with getting players to communicate how they feel and what they want consistently, where gaining this information en mass would prove even more difficult. Thus, obtaining the data necessary to use an empirical tool would be a main issue that will need to be dealt with if used as part of game construction and planning. These issues mean that the usefulness and accuracy of an empirical classification tool will be limited without its design involving some sort of work around to counteract these issues.

Despite these concerns the study participants stated that, overall, the development of such a tool, from a functional *LARPer Motivation Typology*, would be of great use in the production of LARP events. Furthermore, the participants attempted to provide some possible solutions to the issues they raised concerning the practicality and effectiveness of an empirical classification tool. The participants outlined the methods being devised and currently being used by LARP Org teams already attempting to resolve some of these encountered limitations. These examples include having the leaders of player teams act as representatives of their player groups instead of having every individual reporting back to them. Occasionally, however, these leaders may "push their own agendas" (*Phase 2*, Focus Group Discussion) rather than reporting the collective opinions of those they represent. Another example of a method that has been attempted is the use of minor in-game rewards. For instance, rewarding the players who complete feedback forms with an

additional amount of in-game currency at the start of the next event, however it is unclear how effective this method has been so far.

Although it is outside the scope and capabilities of this research project, the results gathered from this current investigation have provided enough data for the development of a broad template that subsequent research can build upon. A development template such as this would need to include at least three main aspects in its basic design. Firstly, an effective template for a classification tool would draw upon the *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory developed and outlined in this thesis. Utilising the defining themes of the four player types to inform the content of the various questions of the survey tool.

Secondly, the template would involve each player type's defining aspects being represented by an odd number of *Likert*-scale questions. These questions should be written in the positive tense (i.e., *I want, I do, I will*) and the *Likert*-scale will contain either 4 or 6 points. Instead of the usual 5-point or 7-point scale, this choice would maintain the illusion of a wide degree of response choices for the participants to make, but still enable each question to be answered with a variation of 'yes or no'. This is to remove neutral responses that will make the count more difficult, while still retaining the notion of an effective scale of choices.

Thirdly, the tool will need to account for the fact that players will likely not fit neatly into a single type, and thus must have a method for determining which type they most strongly connect with. In addition to providing a way to clearly demonstrate to what degree the individual LARPer fits into that player type. Therefore, to design an empirical survey tool for classifying LARPers into specific player types to be effective, it needs to be developed specifically for that purpose. The tool will need to be based on an accurate LARPer motivation typology with its questions able to reflect the language of the LARP community. It will also need to include the identification of numerous practical issues to be addressed before such a tool can be deployed effectively. In addition, the survey will need to be developed as a broad generalised method, that can then be adapted easily into a more specialised tool, specific to a particular LARP event when needed.

In summary, the modified Yee empirical classification survey method, as conducted in the online survey component of *Phase 2*, determined that on a basic level, such a tool could

be employed to classify LARPers. However, this specific MMORPG player categorising tool is not effective at doing so, as even with the minor modifications to the questions it is still not properly calibrated to specifically classify LARPers. Despite this, the exercise has still been able to produce valuable information, which can guide the development of a framework for a future 'LARPer empirical classification survey tool'.

8.4 – Implications for Future Research Design

This research work, alongside its primary research contributions, has also made several additional discoveries within the scope of the project. This has resulted in the identification of numerous further opportunities for future scholarly research into the topics of LARP, RPG player motivations and panoramic video. These opportunities include those that could be pursued through further analysis of existing data, while others require further field work to be pursued, while some will be the genesis of all new inquiries. This section aims to outline the primary examples of these implications and opportunities for future academic research uncovered through the work of this thesis.

The primary research data collected for this project also includes numerous responses which discuss the WA LARP Community's attempts to be a friendly LGBTQI+ inclusive community. These topics are outside the scope of this thesis. As such, this data could be an excellent starting point for further research into WA LARPers in the academic fields of community management, or gender and sexuality studies (Bowmen, 2012; Daniau, 2014; Pearce, 2019).

Several verification study participants suggested that it could be possible to use psychology theories as an alternate approach to the production of the *LARPer Motivation Typology*. The participants suggested the Myers-Briggs type indicator (1962), a system for the self-assessment of the perception and judgment of individual behaviours, as well as the "Big Five" personality types, being defined as *Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness,* and *Neuroticism*, as viable alternative development approaches (De Raad, 2000; Higgins et al, 2007). The participants stated that this could be a different method that could be used to approach the defining of the *LARPer Motivation Typology*. This is another example of a topic that could be further explored in

future academic research projects.

The project's research methods also identified specific themes of *Negative LARPer behaviour*, concepts which were briefly mentioned, for the purpose of bias reduction, as noted in *Chapter 6*. However, these negative behaviours were not explored in detail as they were not used in the development of the LARPer motivation typology. It was determined that the use of negative defining themes, or the development of a negative player type, would be more problematic than useful as part of the player classification typology. This was because it was understood that 'what is a negative player behaviour in one LARP, could be considered acceptable or even necessary in another LARP' (Phase 2, Focus Group 1-3). Furthermore, classifying LARPers via negative traits, or branding players as a negative player type, could result in making attempts to improve troublesome community behaviour even more difficult. Thus, these identified behaviours, along with the LARP community's efforts at self-regulation are worthy of further investigation, particularly in the context of community management studies (Bowman, 2012; Brookfield, 2009).

Fourthly, there are also several possible future applications in academia for panoramic film techniques. These opportunities include further general investigations of the medium of panoramic film and CVR as a still developing genre. These would also include further assessment of panoramic video as a scholarly method of audio-visual field work data collection, as well as options for data analysis and presentation. Furthermore, panoramic video could be utilised in the academic field research of various cultural phenomena defined by notions of participant immersion or 'needing to be there' to be understood. For example, this would include the likes of music festivals, nature hikes, fan conventions, live concerts, TTRPG sessions, or LARP events in different parts of the world (Bender, 2019; Dooley, 2017).

There are three additional examples of where and how this work can be continued in future academic research. Firstly, these speculations include a comparative investigation of the behaviours of LARPers and the players of the newly forming genre of online, multiplayer, virtual reality motion capture games, such as the game *VRChat* (Gaylor and Joudrey, 2017). Secondly, could the LARPer motivation typology be applied to the classification and study of those taking part in this new game genre. This could be possible because the player interface for LARP and *VRChat* are similar, as they both

translate the player's voice and physical movement into those of their character (Mochocki, 2021; Henry, 2015; Bowman, 2018). However, *VRChat* requires additional technology, including VR-HMD units, motion-capture, and traditional video-game controls, to enable the player to remotely embody their PC avatars within the virtual space (Daniel, 2016; Winters et al, 2013; Jenkins, 2008). This could also include the further exploration of the effect of telepresence on participant role-play, embodiment, and immersion (Tong et al, 2021; Spierling and Szilas, 2008). Thirdly, could the theory developed here be further applied to the study of other LARP player populations around the world to develop a more cohesive standard interpretation of LARP.

Lastly, the production of a quantitative empirical method of identifying the primary motivations of LARPers and to categorise them in to LARPer types is another valid goal for future scholarly research. Such a method would use survey questions, rather than qualitative observational data, to determine the LARPer types of an individual or sample of the player population. The use of such a method would have the benefits of being more effectively applied to larger sample sizes and being more accessible to LARP Orgs without academic backgrounds.

8.4.1 –Empirical LARPer Classification Survey Tool Design Framework

Through the establishment of this refined *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory, it is now possible to produce an effective 'empirical classification survey research tool'. A method that can be used to reliably categorise groups and individual LARPers into their respective motivation types, without relying on extensive in-field observations of their play styles and behaviours. However, the development of any such tool would require considerable useability testing before it can be considered for use in further research, thus the work needed to create such a method is beyond the scope of this PhD project. Despite this, the project's collected coded data has sufficient detail to produce an initial design framework for such a tool, providing an outline of the experimental procedure needed to develop, test, and improve a potential future empirical survey tool.

The development and experimental testing process for the empirical survey tool would require a procedure that involves several stages. In addition to utilising methods from the works of several scholars, and the primary research data collected during this PhD

research (Yee, 2006; Beinia, 2013; Edwards, 2001).

The first stage of this process would be to use the observational and interview data that has already been collected, to provide a selection of baseline data to later compare against the developed empirical tool. This would be achieved by using this data to determine the LARPer motivation types, along with their position on the interest graph, of a number of WA LARPers who had participated in this research study. The next step in the process would be to develop the empirical classification tool based on the LARPer motivation typology theory. This would be accomplished by following the specifications of a development framework design to determine the structure of the survey tool. This would include the language type (academic, general, or LARPer), the Likert-scale, as well as the number, type, structure, and order of the survey questions. Once a draft empirical tool has been produced, the next stage of the process would be to develop a secondary survey questionnaire to be presented along with the tool itself, the purpose of which being two-fold. First, to use thematic analysis methods to determine the participant's LARPer type, providing data with which to compare the results of the draft empirical tool and evaluating its effectiveness. Second, to collect the participant's feedback on the design of the empirical survey tool, along with possible options for improving or refining the design. This gathering of feedback data would also be supplemented with data collected through recorded focus group discussions.

The aim of the next stage of the process would be to recruit participants from the WA LARP community, and then have them complete the empirical survey tool and the accompanying survey. In addition to organising and conducting focus group discussion sessions with the recruited participants to gather further feedback data on the design and usability of the empirical tool. This gathered data would then be coded and compared using both the empirical tool and thematic analysis to determine the participants LARPer motivation type. If the results of the two methods produce roughly the same LARPer motivation type determination for each study participant, it would be a strong indication that the empirical tool works effectively. In addition to the participant feedback data that will provide insight on how to further improve and refine the various aspects of the empirical classification tool's design.

After the empirical survey tool and the thematic analysis component of the survey

questionnaire results have been coded, the next stage of this process would be to compare the positioning of the participants on the two interest graphs. If the two graphs match up with each other it would be a decent indication that the tool is working properly. This would also indicate that the tool would be of sufficient accuracy for use on a larger scale, by the likes of LARPers, LARP Orgs and other academics. However, if they do not match, then improvements are necessary, and with consultation with the collected feedback data the tool will be redrafted and improved. This development process would then be repeated, aiming to retest the now altered empirical classification survey tool, to determine if the alterations have improved its functionality. These latter stages of the procedure would be repeated several times, until a consistent, user-friendly, and adaptable version of the empirical LARPer classification survey tool has been produced.

The 'empirical LARPer classification survey tool' framework produced from this process would outline the overall design and structure of the proposed survey tool as follows. Each LARPer motivation type's defining themes will be represented by a number of Likert scale questions. These questions will be all written in the positive tense, "I will, I do, I want". Some examples of the type of questions that would be included in this design would be something along the lines of the following:

- 'I enjoy having an impact on how the LARP's narrative progresses'
- 'I enjoy taking on the role of another character during LARP'
- 'When in-character I most enjoy socialising with other characters'
- 'When in-character I most enjoy taking part in simulated combat'

The *Likert* scale would contain four or six points, presenting a range of options for the participants to feel comfortable answering honestly and accurately, while still being easily coded down to a "Yes/No" binary. This removes the complications of neutral non-answers, which can cause several difficulties in later coding. These scales could resemble: '1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Somewhat disagree, 4-Somewhat agree, 5-Agree, 6-Strongly agree'. Each of the LARPer typology's defining themes would have an odd number of questions assigned to them. This would allow for a clearer determination of whether a participant demonstrates a particular motivation theme or behavioural aspect, while also making the design easier to code and evaluate. Thus, making it possible to plot the participants on the typology interest graph based on an empirical scale and in a way

that can be more easily used by non-academics in a real-world context. As some themes are shared between the LARPer types, they would provide critical information on the participants and would assist in the accurate placement of the participating LARPers on to the interest graph. However, a method for effectively recording these overlapping themes with the empirical tool is an aspect of the design that would need to be developed in a future research project.

This design framework would need to address the numerous practical issues that could occur during the application of an empirical survey tool. The LARPer motivation typology theory has been designed to be generalised for all WA LARPs and LARPers, this would counteract several of the practical issues that the tool may encounter, but not all. The empirical tool would most likely need to have an adaptable design, so that there is the option for the tool to be customised by LARP Orgs. Enabling it to better reflect the defining aspects of the LARP Org' specific LARP event. The merits of the generalised design and the adaptable design would also need to be evaluated as part of further research into the development of the LARPer classification tool. The structure of the completed classification tool will be able to bypass many of these issues, as it would use an abstract style of question design to prompt participant responses. Through subtly disguising the actual focus of the classification tool in the design of its questions to produce more candid and honest participant responses.

In summary, for this endeavour to be accomplished effectively, it would require further research, more data collection methods and additional time to carry out this investigation. The goal of this work would be shifted from using purely observational and interview data into using empirical data to determine an individual's LARPer type. This would be for the purpose of developing a reliable, easily accessible, and user-friendly method of utilising the LARPer motivation typology theory for player classification by non-academics. Thus, the process to develop and test this potential research tool would be a worthy primary objective for a research project, that continues the scholarly work of this thesis. The implications for the future design of this theory will help LARP Orgs develop new game content by providing a new way to understand their player base. In addition to providing LARPers with a better way to choose the games they want to take part in by giving them a clearer understanding of their own personal motivations. This theory additionally provides scholarly researchers with another way to approach the future study of LARP and

LARPers. Any future research project that attempts to apply this *LARPer Motivation Typology* theory to the WA LARP community on a large-scale would benefit greatly from the development of a reliable empirical classification survey tool. The development of such a categorisation process should be the focus of a future research project, which would produce a reliable and consistent LARPer empirical classification survey tool, which addresses the various practical issues that may be encountered during the real-world application of such a method.

8.5 – Chapter Summary

The primary research question of this thesis is to what extent can Bartle's (1996) MUD Player motivation typology be applied to classifying the motivations of WA LARP players? In addition to determining the viability of panoramic film as a scholarly research method for the collection and presentation of audio-visual data. This research has primarily resulted in the development of an accurate LARPer typology, a method from which several groups will benefit. The theory can be used to give individual LARP Players methods to determine what it is that motivates them to take part in LARP. Therefore, providing them with a better understanding of themselves and thus which LARP events they will most enjoy and should commit their time to. This research benefits LARP Organisers by providing them with a way to better understand their players and thus guide the development of new game content. The results of this research have provided future scholarly researchers with additional methods with which to explore the nature of LARP, as well as the motivations and behaviours of LARPers. In addition, this research project has demonstrated that panoramic filmmaking methods can provide scholarly researchers with new research methods for the investigation of previously difficult to record cultural phenomena.

This chapter aimed to accomplish the following four primary goals. Firstly, it set out a full summary of the whole research project, providing a conclusion for the presented research discussions. Secondly, it discussed the project's contributions to scholarly knowledge in the areas of LARP, player motivation classification and panoramic film theory. Thirdly, it provided an outline of the restricting elements encountered during the conducting of the research study, and the limitations to the application of its results. Fourthly, it discussed the potential avenues for future investigations based on this research.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.1 – *Phase 1*: Formal Interview Questions – LARP Organisers

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PhD Filming Component – Field Shoot 3
Formal Interview Questions – LARP Organisers

1. **What is your name, age, and occupation?**
   a. What is your role in the organizing committee?
2. **Can you briefly describe LARP?**
3. **What are the different types of LARP?**
   a. Use examples to illustrate
4. **What is the Western Australian LARP community like?**
   a. How does it compare to other LARP Communities?
   b. Is there something unique about WA LARP games or connected communities?
5. **Please describe *Shattered World LARP / Warhearts LARP / etc***
   a. The narrative (story tellers, collaborative story arcs, etc.)
   b. Game play style (rules, win conditions, etc.)
   c. How do the *Warbands / Empires / other* work?
   d. How does it compare to other LARPs?
6. **What is involved in organizing and running a LARP? (Using shattered world as an example)**
   a. What are the various roles in the committee?
   b. Describe your role in the committee
   c. Describe the various activities that need to happen for a LARP to take place
   d. How are the narrative elements developed?
7. **How do players create their characters?**
   a. What are the rules for developing a character gameplay wise?
   b. How are the backstories of so many characters able to fit within the narrative?
   c. How do the rules dictate costume choices?
   d. What elements do you think motivates the players to play how they play?
8. **What are some of the player types play styles that you've seen?**
   a. What are some of the positive types?
   b. What negative types have you had to deal with?
   c. Would you say that players could be separated out into a specific consistent typology?
9. **How would you describe the impact of participation in LARP on the lives of LARPers?**
   a. What are some of the positive aspects/effects?
   b. What are some of the negative aspects/effects?
   c. How has it affected you personally?
10. **How would you describe the representation of LARP in mainstream media?**
    a. Is it accurate? Or could it be better? And how could it be better?
    b. How do you feel about the representation of LARP?
    c. What aspects of LARP culture/community would you like to see presented to the general public to improve understanding?
11. **What are some of your most memorable LARP experiences?**
12. **Anything else you'd like to say on the topic covered during this interview?**
    a. *Additional questions from attending researcher based on interviewee responses.*

Appendix 1.2 – *Phase 1*: Formal Interview Questions – LARPers

PhD Filming Component – Field Shoot 3
Formal Interview Questions - LARPers

1. **What is your name, age, and occupation?**
2. **Can you briefly describe LARP?**
3. **What are the different types of LARP?**
   a. Use examples to illustrate
4. **What is the Western Australian LARP community like?**
   a. How does it compare to other LARP Communities?
   b. Is there something unique about WA LARP games or connected communities?
5. **How would you describe the impact participation in LARP has on your life?**
   a. What are some of the positive aspects/effects?
   b. What are some of the negative aspects/effects?
   c. How has it affected you personally?
6. **What is involved in preparing to participate in LARP? (Using an example)**
   a. What do you need to pack?
   b. Describe the various activities that need to happen for a LARP to take place
7. **Can you show and describe your LARP gear, equipment, and costumes?**
   a. Describe the development process for your costume and gear
   b. What factors do you need to consider while developing your gear
   c. How long does it take to get into costume at the LARP?
   d. What issues have you encountered with costumes in the past, any lessons learned
8. **How did you develop your character?**
   a. What aspects of LARP gameplay motivate you as a player?
   b. How would you describe your play style?
9. **What are some of the player types play styles that you've seen?**
   a. What are some of the positive types?
   b. What negative types have you had to deal with?
   c. Would you say that players could be separated out into specific consistent typology?
10. **How would you describe the representation of LARP in mainstream media?**
    a. Is it accurate? Or could it be better? And how could it be better?
    b. How do you feel about the representation of LARP?
    c. What aspects of LARP culture/community would you like to see presented to the general public to improve understanding?
11. **What are some of your most memorable LARP experiences?**
12. **Anything else you'd like to say on the topic covered during this interview?**
    a. *Additional questions from attending researcher based on interviewee responses.*

Appendix 1.3 – *Phase 1*: Semi-formal Interview Questions – Field Work Flash Cards

PhD Filming Component – Field Shoot 5
Semi-formal Interview Question Flash Cards

FLASH CARD 1 – Primary Thesis Related Questions

1. **What's your name, age, and occupation?**
2. **What is Live Action Role Play?**
3. **Who/what are you playing as today?**
   a. How did you develop your LARP Character?
   b. What sort of character are they?
   c. Would you show us your costume and weapons?
4. **What do you think motivates people to take part in LARP?**
   a. What motivates you personally?
   b. What aspects of LARP do you find enjoyable?
   c. What aspects of LARP do you find unenjoyable?
5. **Do you think that there are particular types of LARPers?**
   a. How would you define those types?
   b. What concepts would you use to define those types?
6. **What types of players, or play styles have you seen during LARP games?**
   a. Have you encountered any particularly positive player behaviours, or player types?
   b. Have you encountered any particularly negative player behaviours, or player types?
7. **What sort of player are you?**
   a. How do you approach the game?
   b. How does your character approach a quest?
8. **Do you have any LARP 'War Stories' you'd like to share?**
9. **Do you have anything more you'd like to say on what we have just discussed?**

FLASH CARD 2 – LARP Organiser Specific Questions

1. **What is your name and what is your role in this LARP?**
2. **Can you briefly describe what is Live Action Role Play?**
3. **How does WA LARP compare to other LARPs you've taken part in or know about?**
4. **What is your role in the LARP?**
   a. What does it involve?
5. **What types of players have you seen?**
   a. What are some of the positive player behaviours you've witnessed?
   b. What are some negative player behaviours you've had to deal with?
6. **Any hints or tips for beginners?**
7. **Do you have any LARP 'War Stories' you'd like to share?**

FLASH CARD 3 – Representation & Community Questions

1. **What's your name, age, and occupation?**
2. **What is Live Action Role Play?**
3. **Describe the Western Australian LARP Community:**
   a. What is good about it?
   b. What is bad about it?
   c. What makes it unique?
   d. How does it compare to other LARP communities?
4. **How/What impact has LARP had on your everyday life?**
   a. What have been some of the positive aspects?
   b. What have been some of the negative aspects?
   c. Any specific examples you'd like to share?
5. **How would you describe the mainstream media representations of LARP?**
   a. What elements of LARP and LARP Culture would you like to see in the media?
   b. What aspects of LARP and LARP Culture do you think the general public needs to know to better understand LARP?
6. **Who/what are you playing as today?**
   a. Would you like to show off your costumes and gear?
7. **What are some of your memorable LARP experiences?**
   a. Anything from this or last game?
8. **Do you have anything more you'd like to say on what we have just discussed?**

FLASH CARD 4 – In-Game & In-Character LARPer Questions

1. **Who are you, brave adventure?**
2. **Where do you hail from?**
   a. What brought you to the nexus?
3. **What is your quest this day?**
   a. How will you achieve it?
4. **What are some of your greatest achievements in this realm?**
   a. Your favourite war stories?
5. **What is your favoured weapon, item, or tactic?**
   a. Tell us though your outfit?
6. **What is best in life?**

Appendix 2.1 – *Phase 2*: Verification Study Online Survey

PhD Verification Study Component – Online Survey

Section 0.0 – **Demographic Information**
Please complete the following questions to the best of your ability.

Q:0.1 Please state your current age.
Q:0.2 Please state your preferred identifying pro-noun/gender.
Q:0.3 Please state your current occupation.
Q:0.4 Please state approximately how long you have been a part of the WA LARP Community.

Section 1.0 – LARP Player Motivations Empirical Tool Questions
Please respond to each of the following statements, using the provided 5-point scale, you are to use your experiences as a member of the LARP Community to answer each question to the best of your abilities.

1 Strongly Disagree – 2 Disagree – 3 Neither agree nor disagree – 4 Agree – 5 Strongly Agree

Q:1.1 I find myself having meaningful conversation with others.
Q:1.2 I usually don't chat much with other group members.
Q:1.3 I have made some good friends at games.
Q:1.4 I find myself working alone during games.
Q:1.5 I like to say funny things while interacting with the community.
Q:1.6 I talk to my friends in the game about personal issues.
Q:1.7 Friends in the game have offered me support when I had a RL problem or crisis.
Q:1.8 I am an effective group leader.
Q:1.9 I would rather follow than lead.
Q:1.10 I like to feel powerful in the game.
Q:1.11 I find being highly effective during combat very satisfying.
Q:1.12 I constantly try to set and reach goals.
Q:1.13 I can't stand those people who only care about earning in-game wealth.
Q:1.14 It's very important to me to get the best gear available.
Q:1.15 I try to optimize my XP/wealth gain as much as possible.
Q:1.16 I'm fascinated by the game mechanics, and love charts and tables.
Q:1.17 I research everything about a class before starting a character build.
Q:1.18 Class-balancing or realm-balancing issues do not interest me.
Q:1.19 I can often find LARP rules to be too complicated.
Q:1.20 I like wandering and exploring the world.
Q:1.21 I would make maps if they weren't available.
Q:1.22 I have learned things about myself from participating in LARP.
Q:1.23 I understand real-life group dynamics much more after participating in LARP.
Q:1.24 I like the escapism aspect of LARP.
Q:1.25 I like to be immersed in a fantasy world.
Q:1.26 Playing the game lets me vent and relieve stress.
Q:1.27 Playing the game lets me forget some of the real-life problems I have.
Q:1.28 I like to try out new roles and personalities with my LARP characters.
Q:1.29 The way I am in the game is the way I am in real life.
Q:1.30 People who role-play extensively bother me.
Q:1.31 I like the feeling of being part of a story.
Q:1.32 I make up stories and histories for my characters.

Q:1.33 I like to manipulate other characters, so they do what I want them to in game.

Q:1.34 I like to dominate other characters in game.

Q:1.35 I like to taunt or annoy other players.

Q:1.36 I enjoy attempting to deceive and trick other characters during game.

Q:1.37 I'm heavily reliant on the aid of other players to take part in games.

Q:1.38 It's important to me to achieve things with as little help from other people as possible.

Q:1.39 "It's just a game"

Q:1.40 I am uninterested in the combat aspects of LARP.

Section 2.0 – Participant Briefing Related Questions
Please complete the following questions to the best of your abilities.

Q:2.0 Have you watched the video and downloaded the summary document?

Yes - No

Q:2.1 Which of Bartle's player types does the following statement apply to:
"... *These players are focused on satisfying their thirst for discovery. Their goal is to uncover every secret of the game world, even down to the mechanics and code of the game itself. They are said to be those players that gain enjoyment purely from interacting with the world* ..."

Achievers - Explorers - Socializers - Killers

Q:2.2 Which of Bartle's player types does the following statement apply to:
"... *These players get their enjoyment of the game through roleplaying and communicating with the other characters in the game world. They enjoy creating additional narratives, forging emotional connections, and fostering real friendship via these in-game interactions with one another* ..."

Achievers - Explorers - Socializers - Killers

Q:2.3 Which of Bartle's player types does the following statement apply to:
"... *These players get their thrills from imposing their will on others in the game world, through shows of skill and force. While not always done with malicious intent, these players have little concern for the feelings of others and are concerned only with their own enjoyment and proving their own superiority* ..."

Achievers - Explorers - Socializers - Killers

Q:2.4 Which of Bartle's player types does the following statement apply to:
"... *These players are the goal-focused players of online RPGs, they are motivated to level up, acquire in-game symbols of wealth and power, and to efficiently complete all the game's possible quests. This player type is said to act upon the game world* ..."

Achievers - Explorers - Socializers - Killers

Section 3.0 – Pre-Screening Questions
Please complete the following as best you can.

Q:3.1 What do you think motivates people to take part in LARP?

Q:3.2 What personally motivates you to take part in LARP?

Q:3.3 Please list 1 to 3 aspects of LARP you find the most enjoyable?
Q:3.4 Please list 1 to 3 aspects of LARP you find the less enjoyable?
Q:3.5 Would you agree that in LARP there is a wide variety of player behaviours?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:3.6 Please list 1 to 3 positive player behaviours you have encountered.
Q:3.7 Please list 1 to 3 negative player behaviours you have encountered.
Q:3.8 Do you think that LARPers can be classified into particular player types based on their player behaviours and/or motivations?
Yes - Maybe – No

Q:3.9 Please briefly explain those factors that influenced your response to the previous question.
Q: 3.10 Indicate your response to the following statement:
"*Having a method of categorising a LARP player community, via their primary player motivations, would be a useful development tool for LARP event organisers.*"

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:3.11 Please explain your response to the previous question.
Q:3.12 How effectively do you think Bartle's theory can be applied to the classification of the LARPers?

Extremely effective - Very effective - Moderately effective - Slightly effective - Not effective at all

Q:3.13 Please explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.14 Would you agree that in order for Bartle's player typology to be applied effectively to LARP, modifications will be necessary?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:3.15 Please explain your response to the previous question.
Q:3.16 Which of the Bartle's Player Types do you think best describes your Play Style?
(Please select one or two answers that you feel suit you best.)

Achievers - Explorers - Socializers – Killers - None of these

Q3.17 Please briefly explain your answer to the previous question.

Section 4.0 – Post-Screening Questions
Please respond to the following questions honestly and in as much detail as you can.

Q:4.0 Once you've watched the film, please check the box below in order to continue the survey.

I have watched the film

Q:4.1 Did you enjoy the film you just watched?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:4.2 Please list 1 to 3 aspect of the film you enjoyed the most.
Q:4.3 Please list 1 to 3 aspect of the film you enjoyed the least.

Q:4.4 How accurately do you think the film portrayed the LARP experience?

Very accurate - Accurate - Somewhat accurate - Inaccurate - Highly inaccurate

Q:4.5 Please explain your answer to the previous question.

Q:4.6 While watching the film, were you able to recognise aspects of Bartle's Player typology theory?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:4.7 While watching the film, were you able to recognise the elements of player behaviour that define each of Bartle's Player types?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Achiever	○	○	○
Socialiser	○	○	○
Explorer	○	○	○
Killer	○	○	○

Q:4.8 After watching the film, how effectively do you think Bartle's theory can be applied to the classification of the LARPers?

Extremely effective - Very effective - Moderately effective - Slightly effective - Not effective at all

Q:4.9 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question, including why it may have changed after watching the film.

Q:4.10 After watching the film, would you agree that in order for Bartle's player typology to be applied effectively to LARP, modifications will be necessary?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:4.11 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question, including why it may have changed after watching the film.

Q:4.12 If you agree that modifications are needed, please detail how you would change or improve Bartle's theory?

Q:4.13 If you have any additional comments on any of the topics discussed during the survey, please feel free to note them down in the space provided.

Appendix 2.2 – *Phase 2*: Verification Study Dome Screenings Digital Survey

PhD Verification Study Component – Dome Screening Digital Survey

Section 0.0 – **Demographic Information**
Please complete the following questions to the best of your ability.

Q:0.1 Please state your current age.
Q:0.2 Please state your preferred identifying pro-noun/gender.
Q:0.3 Please state your current occupation.
Q:0.4 Please state approximately how long you have been a part of the WA LARP Community.
Q:0.5 Did you take part in this project's online 'Verification Study' Survey?

Yes - No

Section 1.0 – Panoramic Film Pre-Screening Questions
Please complete the following section to the best of your abilities.

Q:1.1 Have you previously heard of Panoramic/VR films?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:1.2 Have you had any previous experience with panoramic/VR video?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:1.3 If you answered '*Yes'* to any of the last two questions, please note down what you know of Panoramic/VR video.
Q:1.4 Please list, as best you can, what panoramic/VR films or experiences you have viewed.
Q:1.5 Indicate your response to the following:
"I consider myself somewhat of an expert on the topic of panoramic/VR films"

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:1.6 On the scale below indicate how you enjoyed your previous experiences with panoramic VR?

Strongly Disliked - Disliked - Neither liked nor disliked - Liked - Strongly Liked

Q:1.7 Please list 1 to 3 reasons why you did, or did not, enjoy your previous experiences with Panoramic/VR Video
Q:1.8 Do you have any further comments on Panoramic film?

Section 2.0 – LARP and Player Motivation Theory Pre-Screening Questions
Please complete this section to the best of your ability.

Q:2.1 What do you think motivates people to take part in LARP?
Q:2.2 What personally motivates you to take part in LARP?
Q:2.3 Please list 1 to 3 aspects of LARP you find the most enjoyable?
Q:2.4 Please list 1 to 3 aspects of LARP you find the less enjoyable?
Q:2.5 Would you agree that in LARP there is a wide variety of player behaviours?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:2.6 Do you think that LARPers can be classify into particular player types based on their player behaviours?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:2.7 If possible, please briefly explain those factors that influenced your response to the previous question.
Q:2.8 Please list 1 to 3 positive player behaviours you have encountered.
Q:2.9 Please list 1 to 3 negative player behaviours you have encountered.
Q:2.10 Would you agree that a method for classified LARP player populations by their primary player motivations would be a useful development tool for LARP event organisers?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:2.11 Please explain your response to the previous question.
Q:2.12 Do you recall the player typology theory of Dr. Richard Bartle? (As it was explained in the online survey.)

Yes - Maybe - No

If you answered "No" or "Maybe" to the previous question, please take a moment to refer to the "Participant Summary Document" via the link below, or the printout you received at the start of the session, in order to refresh your memory before proceeding with the rest of the survey.
Participant summary document version 2.5.4

Q:2.13 How effectively do you think Bartle's typology can be applied to LARP?

Extremely effective - Very effective - Moderately effective - Slightly effective - Not effective at all

Q:2.14 Please explain your response to the previous question.
Q:2.15 Would you agree that in order for Bartle's typology to be applied most effectively to the study of LARP players, some modifications are required?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:2.16 Please briefly explain your response to the previous question.
Q:2.17 If you agree that Bartle's theory requires modification, please briefly detail what modifications you would recommend.

Section 3.0 – Post-Screening Questions
Please respond to the following questions honestly and in as much detail as you can.

Q:3.1 Did you enjoy the film you just watched?

Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

Q:3.2 Please list 1 to 3 aspects did you most enjoy about the film.
Q:3.3 Please list 1 to 3 aspects did you not enjoy about the film.
Q:3.4 How "*immersive*" did you find the film?

Highly immersive - Somewhat immersive – Immersive - Slightly immersive - Not at all immersive

Q:3.5 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.6 Do you think the film accurately portrayed the experience of a LARP?

Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

Q:3.7 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.8 Would you agree that the panoramic film was a more accurate portrayal of the LARP experience than the traditional film from the online survey?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:3.9 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.10 Do you think that being a panoramic film allowed the film to present a more effectively and accurate representation of LARP?

Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

Q:3.11 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.12 Do you think this media form could be effective at showcasing other subjects?

Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

Q:3.13 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.
Q:3.14 What is the likelihood of you choosing to watch more Panoramic VR documentaries?

Very unlikely – Unlikely – Undecided – Likely - Very likely

Q:3.15 What is the likelihood of you recommending panoramic VR documentaries to friends and family?
Very
Definitely yes - Probably yes - Might or might not - Probably not - Definitely not

Q:3.16 While watching the film/s where you able to recognise elements and aspects mentioned in Bartle's player typology theory?

Yes - Maybe - No

Q:3.17 While watching the film/s, were you able to recognise the elements of player behaviour that define each of Bartle's player types?

	Yes (1)	Maybe (2)	No (3)
Achiever (1)	○	○	○
Socialiser (2)	○	○	○
Explorer (3)	○	○	○
Killer (4)	○	○	○

Q:3.18 After watching the film, how effective do you think Bartle's theory can be applied to the classification of the LARPers?

Extremely effective - Very effective - Moderately effective - Slightly effective - Not effective at all

Q:3.19 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.

Q:3.20 After watching the film, would you agree that modifications of Bartle's theory are necessary for it to most effectively classify LARPers?

Strongly agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree - Somewhat disagree - Strongly disagree

Q:3.21 Briefly explain your answer to the previous question.

Q:3.22 If you do *agree* that modifications are required, please explain what changes you would recommend?

Q:3.23 If you have any additional comments on any of the topics discussed over the course of this survey, please feel free to list them below?

Appendix 2.3 – *Phase 2*: Verification Study Focus Group Discussion Questions

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PhD Verification Study Component – Focus Group Discussion Questions

Panoramic Film Related Questions

1. **What are your impressions of the Panoramic film you've just watched?**
   a. Was it enjoyable?
   b. Was it unenjoyable?
   c. Did the film make you unwell in anyway?
2. **Did you feel "*immersed*" in the film experience?**
   a. If yes, why?
   b. If no, why not?
3. **Do you think that the panoramic films would be effective at accurately portraying the experience of a LARP?**
   a. If yes, why?
   b. If no, why not?
   c. How could it be better?
4. **Do you think the panoramic film was more or less effective than the flat version of the film at portraying LARP?**
   a. If yes, why?
   b. If no, why not?
   c. How could it be better?
5. **How does this film compare to the mainstream media representations of LARP?**
   a. How was it better?
   b. How was it worse?
   c. What elements of LARP and LARP Culture would you like to see in the media?
6. **Do you think this media form could be effective at analysing other subjects?**
   a. If yes, why?
   b. And which ones?
   c. If no, why not?
7. **Anything else you want to say on this topic?**

LARPer Motivation Typology Questions

1. **What do you think motivates people to take part in LARP?**
   a. What motivates you personally?
   b. What aspects of LARP do you find enjoyable?
   c. What aspects of LARP do you find unenjoyable?
2. **Do you think that there are particular types of LARPers?**
   a. How would you define those types?
   b. *What concepts would you use to define those types?*
   c. Have you encountered any particularly positive player behaviours, or player types?
   d. Have you encountered any particularly negative player behaviours, or player types?
3. **How can you see Bartle's theory applying to LARP in the footage you've seen?**
   a. Did you recognize behaviours that could resemble aspects of the Bartle's four player types? (i.e. *Achiever, Socializer, Explorer, Killer*)
   b. How about in your experience as a participant in LARP?

4. **Do you agree that changes to Bartle's work is necessary for it to applicable to LARPers?**
    a. If yes, why?
    b. How would you define these changes?
    c. How else could it be improved?
    d. If no, why not?
5. **Where do you think players motivated by crafting and creative aspects of LARP fit into a player typology?**
    a. With the physical aspect/killer players
    b. With the Competitive aspect /achiever players
    c. With the Social aspect/socializer players
    d. With the Mechanics aspect/Explorer players
    e. Does it need Its own player type?
6. **Anything else to discuss on this topic?**

Appendix 3.1 – *Phase 2* Research Data Coding Hierarchy Summary Table

The first column of this table contains the theme categories of LARPer motivations and behaviours identified through the analysis of the three data pools of *Phase 2* research results. The second column presents quotes that best act as supporting evidence to each theme, sourced from only the *Phase 2* Online Survey short-answer responses. The full coding process drew from all the Phase 2 results to identify all mentioned themes and tallied up the frequency with which they were mentioned. This tally was then used to guide the grouping of the identified themes, by importance and commonality, to be than further developed into the theme categories presented here.

Theme Category	Example Quotes
LARPer Motivation	
Freedom of Expression	"I enjoy combat, both tactical and physical, and the freedom of larp combat as compared to more rigid re-enactment or HEMA fighting. I also joy immersing myself in new experiences and characters, as well as experiencing the story of the game and world as well as having interesting interactions with other players." "I would always try to explore different archetypes and persona to allow me to best interact with the game and not become some one-trick pony, who could only gain enjoyment from combat or social interaction alone." "Many different things. For some it is the social aspect, others the creativity, and more still the sport side of things. Many LARPers engage primarily with the combat and physical aspects, or with the costuming and creative aspects, more so than the roleplay initially. However, many have stated that the increased Social Involvement and presence is a huge part."
Mechanics	"Combat is my absolute favourite part of larp. Large scale fights and the feeling of completing manoeuvres or seeing someone else pull some ingenious tactic against you" "Money/Wealth accrual, Resource gathering, Game balancing, forced diplomacy" "Mechanic heavy games, the more mechanics which are in the game, the less room there is to move and roleplay, the less room there is for improvising and making things up."
Physicality (combat)	"The first is the combat, it's a fun and easy way to pretend to be a fighter, mage, road-warrior, augmented street samurai of whatever floats your boat. Even if you're not great at fighting in real life, you can be a dangerous warrior in life."

	"Combat is my absolute favourite part of larp. Large scale fights and the feeling of completing manoeuvres or seeing someone else pull some ingenious tactic against you" "I like being able to use my taught combat skills in a real environment, when I LARP'd I was a demon on the battlefield, an archer with unparalleled skill, all because I spent years with my family training just so we could hone skills, it was always sad for me to never be able to use them."
Role-playing	"The second is the role play, you can be whoever you want. You can explore different sides of yourself or emotions in a safe space. You can escape from your real life and do things that you could never normally have the chance to do." "I love being myself in a different setting. Being able to wear a different costume and pretend I have different powers or live in a different society." "I enjoy all the aspects of LARP. It's fun to role-play and get immersed as a character. It's fun to fight even though I'm not that good at it. I also thoroughly enjoy making things for my costumes and creating my character's persona. As well as that, I have made some great friends at LARP who I enjoy hanging out with."
Embodiment	"Opportunity to enjoy role play in action as a progression from table-based RP." "I love being myself in a different setting. Being able to wear a different costume and pretend I have different powers or live in a different society." "Being able to let myself really sink into a character and explore themes and personalities which I as a person would never act like. Am I half-senile sea-elf racist against humans, a Prophet of Ruin encouraging people to dive into their vices, A lich who soul is trapped in their armour desperate to save the world no matter how many non-magic users it costs"
Community	"The fourth is the community. You'll be hard pressed to find in Perth a more welcoming and wholesome group of people. As long as your open to new experiences and people you'll find friends in the larp community. I look forward to my LARP events as much to see the generous and amazing friends I've made as much as I enjoy LARP itself" "The community is wonderfully friendly and supportive and always cheers my mood, no matter how bad I'm feeling." "I also run a Tavern, and love running that purely for the Roleplay/Social/Immersion aspect."
Immersion	"Extension of play acting in a defined universe"

	"I love being myself in a different setting. Being able to wear a different costume and pretend I have different powers or live in a different society." "Being able to let myself really sink into a character and explore themes and personalities which I as a person would never act like. Am I half-senile sea-elf racist against humans, a Prophet of Ruin encouraging people to dive into their vices, A lich who soul is trapped in their armour desperate to save the world no matter how many non-magic users it costs"
Escapism	"Opportunity to get back to "being a kid" again, Stress relief." "'The best holiday away from yourself you could have.' That's how I described my first larp experience and it still rings true." "Escapism, exploration of both themselves and the game world, feeling powerful compared to real life, socialisation with others over a shared hobby, creating characters and portraying them through costuming and roleplay. Camping and constructing their own living quarters for the game, mock combat fighting and strategising in a team for shared goals. Bringing their ideas and imagination to life."
Exploration	"I would always try to explore different archetypes and persona to allow me to best interact with the game and not become some one-trick pony, who could only gain enjoyment from combat or social interaction alone." "I also love to explore the game area and background Lore and learn about people, and specifically create new environments for people to explore." "Exploring the story of a game, discovering something new and unique to the world or story, being able to share those moments with others."
Creativity	"The third is the crafting, no matter how you create, there's an opportunity for it. Whether it's leather working to create scabbards and armour, foam-smithing to make amazing set dressing, weapons or armour, costuming to create amazing dresses and tabards or sketching and painting peoples' characters and scenes. LARP gives an amazing opportunity for creativity and inspiration. It's the reason why we've had so many people from other communities join us." "I enjoy all the aspects of LARP. It's fun to role-play and get immersed as a character. It's fun to fight even though I'm not that good at it. I also thoroughly enjoy making things for my costumes and creating my character's persona. As well as that, I have made some great friends at LARP who I enjoy hanging out with." "Role-playing and creating my own character with specific costuming, creating dramatic tension and roleplay opportunities through combat encounters, camping in the outdoors with friends, being immersed in a fantasy world."

Achievement	"Escapism, exploration of both themselves and the game world, feeling powerful compared to real life, socialisation with others over a shared hobby, creating characters and portraying them through costuming and roleplay. Camping and constructing their own living quarters for the game, mock combat fighting and strategising in a team for shared goals. Bringing their ideas and imagination to life." "I have been larping for a long time now and have had characters whose primary goal was to dominate and conquer, those who were there to explore peacefully and timidly, and many many other ways of play." "I also love to complete quests and achieve goals within the game and spent a long time writing these exact things for others to enjoy."
LARPer Behaviour	
Positive Social Behaviours	"Socialisation in a fantasy setting where RL norms may not apply as rigidly (eg I can pretend to be a different persona and explore/act differently than I would IRL)" "I love being myself in a different setting. Being able to wear a different costume and pretend I have different powers or live in a different society." "The community is wonderfully friendly and supportive and always cheers my mood, no matter how bad I'm feeling."
Good Sportsmanship	"I enjoy combat, both tactical and physical, and the freedom of larp combat as compared to more rigid reenactment or HEMA fighting. I also joy immersing myself in new experiences and characters, as well as experiencing the story of the game and world as well as having interesting interactions with other players." "LARP is the only sport I enjoy, and it motivates me to exercise outside the larp so that I can be fit enough to enjoy the combat in the larp. And therefore wanting to get fit is a motivation for attending larps, so I can remind myself why I exercise. I have no real friends in the larp community, and none of my friends want to go, but I go anyway." "I enjoy all the aspects of LARP. It's fun to role-play and get immersed as a character. It's fun to fight even though I'm not that good at it. I also thoroughly enjoy making things for my costumes and creating my character's persona. As well as that, I have made some great friends at LARP who I enjoy hanging out with. Also the most fun way to get physical exercise."
Leadership	"I like being able to use my taught combat skills in a real environment, when I LARP'd I was a demon on the battlefield, an archer with unparalleled skill, all because I spent years with my family training just so we could hone skills, it was always sad for me to never be able to use them. When I fought, people knew me, they saw an arrow out of nowhere, they knew it was me who was shooting, having my character renown for

	tangible skill was deeply rewarding. People I had never met knew stories of me, and to this day, still talk about me in communities I haven't been a part of for a long time." "Combat - Nothing gets me more invested than a well-formed army, fighting together." "Political roles - Everyone had different roles, me being slated as anything the lords wanted me as, it was excellent. being sent to assassinate by first befriending enemy leaders, it was exhilarating to be relied upon to balance the political side of things, and the way my actions influenced the outcome."
Positive Role-play Practices	"Role-playing and creating my own character with specific costuming, creating dramatic tension and roleplay opportunities through combat encounters, camping in the outdoors with friends, being immersed in a fantasy world." "The "Real World" does not offer enough for them, either social or emotional support or creative artistic satisfaction. In some cases, it is the only source of self-empowering for come people." "Being able to let myself really sink into a character and explore themes and personalities which I as a person would never act like. Am I half-senile sea-elf racist against humans, a Prophet of Ruin encouraging people to dive into their vices, A lich who soul is trapped in their armour desperate to save the world no matter how many non-magic users it costs"
Creative Expression	"The third is the crafting, no matter how you create, there's an opportunity for it. Whether it's leather working to create scabbards and armour, foam-smithing to make amazing set dressing, weapons or armour, costuming to create amazing dresses and tabards or sketching and painting peoples' characters and scenes. LARP gives an amazing opportunity for creativity and inspiration. It's the reason why we've had so many people from other communities join us." "I enjoy all the aspects of LARP. It's fun to role-play and get immersed as a character. It's fun to fight even though I'm not that good at it. I also thoroughly enjoy making things for my costumes and creating my character's persona. As well as that, I have made some great friends at LARP who I enjoy hanging out with."