

Talking Tacitly

Activities and Experiences in Highly Interactive Media

Rikke Toft Nørgård

Abstract

Some media forms we primarily take in with our senses, like movies, music or text. Other media forms are more like activities that we have to carry out with our body such as digital games on the PC, console, smart phone or tablet. Here, we are not allowed to sit still and take media in with our senses. In order to grasp this otherness and uniqueness of digital games it is not sufficient to re-use adapted media theories, concepts, methods and ways of writing. This article is written on the realization that the theories and methods we approach a research area, activity or experience with will set the boundaries of our understanding. And the ways we represent our understanding in writing to others will subsequently set the boundaries of their understanding. In this way, the article is an attempt of erecting boundaries in new ways and placing them in unfamiliar places through the use of alternative and alien methods, theories and styles of writing. This is done in order to let new formations of studying, thinking and talking about activities and experiences in highly interactive media emerge.

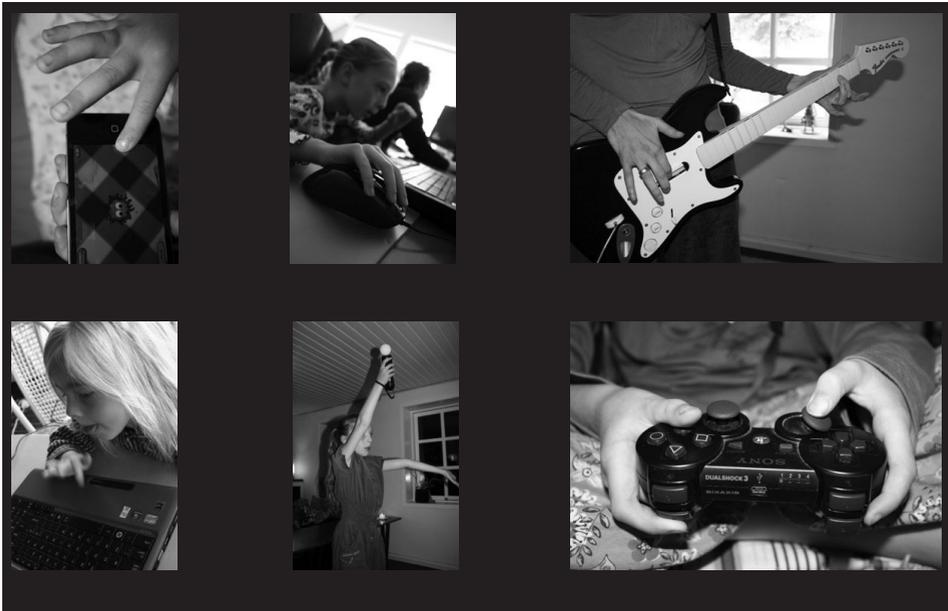
Keywords: interactive media, digital games, game research, multimethodology, grounded theory method, remix methods, introduction

Introduction

Some media forms we primarily take in with our senses, like movies, music or text. Other media forms are more like activities that we have to carry out with our hands such as digital games on the PC, console, smart phone or tablet. Some of these activities are highly interactive, that is, they require us to constantly express ourselves in actions with input-devices. Here, we are not allowed to sit still and take media in with our senses. It is important that we see such new forms of media and new forms of media activities as something other than mere re-mediations of older media forms and activities (Bolter and Grusin 2000). Like movies and television programs are something other than 'moving pictures' or 'visualized text,' highly interactive digital games are something other and altogether different than 'interactive cinema' or 'interactive narratives or texts.' In order to grasp the otherness and uniqueness of these media forms, activities and experiences it is therefore not sufficient to re-use adapted media theories, concepts, methods and ways of writing. Theories developed to analyze and understand text, narration, drama, movies or TV will only take us this far and perhaps even lead us astray. Similarly, methods developed to study, analyze and understand viewers, readers or listeners will like wise prove insufficient or even convince us that participating in digital games are like an interactive viewing, reading or listening activity and experience.

This article is written on the realization that the theories and methods we approach a research area, activity or experience with will set the boundaries of our understanding. And the ways we represent our understanding in writing to others will subsequently set the boundaries of their understanding. In this way, the article is an attempt of erecting boundaries in new ways and placing them in unfamiliar places through the use of alternative and alien methods, theories and styles of writing.

Accordingly, this article might be a difficult read as it merges new methods for researching digital games and gameplayers with new ways of writing and thinking about media and the things that take place with and within them. This is done in order to let new formations of thinking and talking about activities and experiences in highly interactive media emerge.



The article is based on the findings and results of a three-year-long study of a group of gameplayers' activities and experiences across different digital games and media platforms. The presented findings and results emerged through the use of a multimethodology (Brannen 2005, Mingers and Brocklesby 1997) that combined a grounded theory method approach (Allen 2003, Bryant and Charmaz 2011, Charmaz 2006, Haig 1995) with phenomenography (Allen-Collinson 2009, Casey 1987, Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2007, Markula and Denison 2000, Straus 1963), remix methods and interpretative ethnography (Markham 2004, Markham 2005, Markham 2006, Markham 2012) as well as visual methods (Banks 2006, Pink 2004, Pink 2011). The present article will, with the abovementioned works and concluded study as its foundation, present some of the study's main methodological developments, results and findings.

The study's produced comprehension of highly interactive media emerged through studying gameplayers as they carried out actions as digital avatars on the screen through interacting with their hands outside the screen. However, the moving hands of gameplayers, the hands that make gameplay activity and experience emerge and come to life in the gameworld proved impossible to grasp and represent adequately or satisfactorily

by use of traditional methods within media and game research such as interviews, questionnaires, onscreen participant observation, discourse analysis or collections of player-produced text or talk in the game or on online forums. Thus, these dominant and accepted ways of researching highly interactive media within media and game studies (Nørgård 2010, Nørgård 2011a, Nørgård 2012) proved to be a blind alley when these tacitly moving hands took the centre stage in the activities going on with and within digital games. Accordingly, one of the main challenges of the study became how to adequately grasp and genuinely comprehend these moving hands that seemed to be the gamers' main way of communicating with the game and with each other. Subsequently, another, equally important and difficult challenge proved to be the translation of these tacitly talking hands into comprehensible and acceptable research.

Thus, I found myself consumed with the task of developing a methodological framework for studying and an emphatic, appreciative language for talking about tacitly talking hands in a scholarly sound and meaningful way. In short, I found myself taking a leap of faith, as I witnessed my research on digital games unfold and manifest itself as a vibrant mix of 'research music videos,' 'film strips,' 'photo montages,' 'collages,' 'poetic tales,' 'theoretical remixes,' 'aestheticized metaphorical writings,' 'fictionalized narratives' and 'narrative inquiries.'

But, before jumping in at the deep end, I will present a short concrete example of a way of writing about what takes place when gamers play digital games such as the immensely popular *World of Warcraft* with over 10 million monthly subscribers (at the time of the study). This is done through articulating the ways an expert gamer (Tue) is acting, experiencing and thinking tacitly with the game material through using his hands during a scripted game-instance (or raid) in *World of Warcraft*.

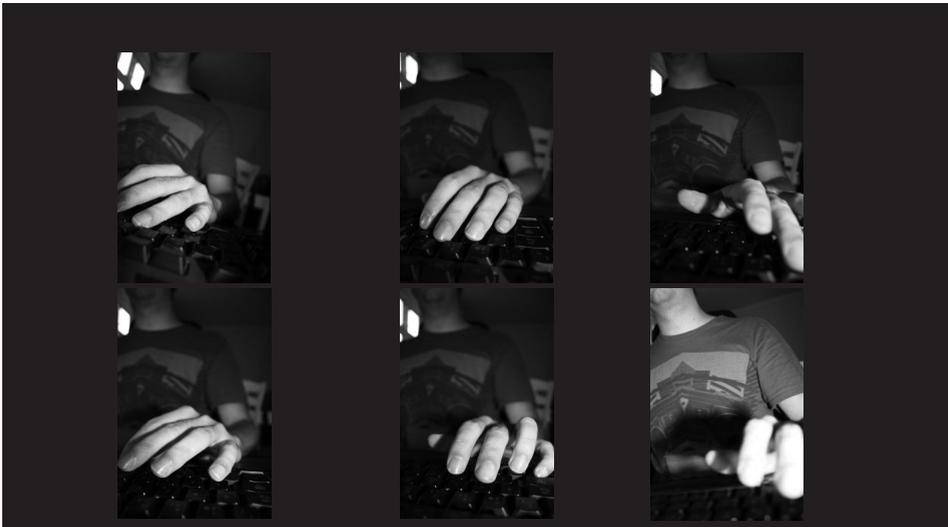
P(l)acing the Hand

The avatar stands motionless on the screen as Tue's hands lay resting on his keyboard and mouse while the raid-group officers in charge explain the course of the raid and specify how the different raid-members should align their corporeal interaction. Their hands should dance in sync to the melody of the raid's choreographed events. Everything in the raid on the screen happens at certain paces and places. Accordingly, the raid-members hands should follow this composition and be at certain places at certain paces. It is important that everybody knows the composition and his or her role in it before the raid commences. In the heat of the raid there is no time to talk it over, there is only time to grit your teeth and endure the performance while your hands move as fast and precisely as possible.

After listening for a while Tue's hands become restless. The fingers begin to make the digital avatar jump from side to side, run around in circles and dance in front of the other raid-members' avatars on the screen. Shortly after, several group-members follow Tue's example and begin to flutter about on the screen as they impatiently wait for the raid to begin so they have something useful to do with their hands. There is too much talk and not enough action. The group is getting restless.

Finally, the strategy-consultation is over and the raid-leader calls the group to action with a: '3-2-1-Go.' Promptly, Tue's left hand begins to dance on the keyboard while his right hand seizes the mouse and begins to skate with it. Keyboard-fingers and mouse-

fingers produce rhythmic waves of key-taps and mouse-clicks that ascend as a corporeal symphony: ‘1-1-A-click-click-1-W-1-2-A-click-click-2-2-click-W-2-2-click-click’. Tue’s keyboard-fingers dance around in a square on the left half of the keyboard – up and down, in and out, close together and spread out as a spider frantically spinning a very complicated, chaotic web. It is like watching a strange insect struggling to keep on its feet or staying alive. It is as if Tue’s life depended on his hands’ corporeal performance – and in a way it does. Onscreen avatar-life and offscreen hand-performance are intimately connected. Tue must make himself stay alive through delivering masterful corporeal interaction with his hands. Tue is carrying his digital life in his hands. Incessantly, the left hand dances its distinctive ‘square-dance’ choreography while the right hand skates with the mouse and composes its ‘clicklickclick’-ing melody.



Not once, does Tue look away from the onscreen interaction as he keenly monitors the other group-members digital interaction and health bars in the attempt to, through zealous corporeal locomotion, keep the other group-members health-bars up and, thus, keep them on their feet. Underneath his gaze, through and through, Tue’s hands are ceaselessly talking tacitly with the game material.



His fingers dance between the movement-keys and the spell-keys littered around on the left third of the keyboard while the onscreen digitality is exploding in shambles of information, bars, boxes, numbers, icons, dingling-sounds and digital interaction as

the gameworld reacts digitally to Tue's corporeal interaction and Tue reacts corporeally to the digital interaction. Tue's hands are moving knowingly to the rhythm of the raid-instance.

The above representation of gameplay activity and experience in *World of Warcraft* is an attempt to convey in writing how gamers are not recipients of visual screen output or digital onscreen representations. Nor is gamers partaking in a kind of interactive narration or cinema. Rather, gamers are tacitly moving first-person beings whose hands are put into motion by the game material. They have to move their hands in order to stay alive. In highly interactive media such as *World of Warcraft* a skillful gamer such as Tue shows off his competence and understanding of the game through the ways in which he lets his hands talk tacitly with the game material.

Jumping in at the Deep End

So, what are gamers experiencing through letting their hands do the talking? Pondering this question while reviewing recordings of moving hands and trying to produce an *accurate* transcription of their ways of talking, I found that neither my subtlest writing down of their singular movements would reveal the actual significance of talking tacitly. Sentences such as "then he pressed W and then he pressed A" or "the gamer wanted to jump so he pressed space bar" simply did not capture the corporeal-locomotive activity or experience of playing *World of Warcraft* with your hands.

The way these hands were talking never seemed to consist of singular motor processes or divided movements; it seemed more like an indivisible stream of fluent locomotion flowing from the hands and into the onscreen gameworld. Tue and the other members of the raid-group are diving and dwelling in locomotion together rather than being cool cognitive, communicative or perceiving goal-oriented agents. They are beings in and of the gameworld. Their hands are incessantly weaving the ofscreen and the onscreen gameworld together and, thus, making the gamer and game material come alive together. But I could not find a method within media studies for studying this. And I did not have a scholarly language for talking about this.

So, when I, as a researcher, found myself faced with the choice of either following this revealed alien research subject – gamers' gameplay activity and experience in digital games – into totally unknown waters (tacitly talking hands) or remain on the safe side and try to squeeze the research subject into familiar frameworks (communication, reception and digital representation) I took a deep breath and jumped in at the deep end. This jump proved to be scholarly fulfilling but also, at times, very challenging, estranging and frustrating.

Furthermore, I was faced with the challenge of writing about and scholarly communicate this tacit, pre-linguistic and non-representational phenomenon. Thus, I began, literally, to follow my main participants day and night, month after month while continuously observing and trying to put translate this newfound language of tacitly talking hands. Furthermore, I was also faced with the task of trying to find ways of translating and conveying this meaningful but mute movement-born and pre-linguistic language into proper scholarly writing. I needed to make an argument strong enough for letting it be scholarly acceptable within media studies to write weird writing about tacitly talking hands, so to speak.

Learning to swim and survive in this outlandish pool of inherently meaningful, but at the outset unintelligible, moving hands became possible through the construction of a ‘messy meshwork.’ During the three-year-long study a multimethodological framework (Mingers and Brocklesby 1997) for studying corporeal-locomotive connections within highly interactive media was slowly constructed. It was an intentionally messy and multifarious framework in constant flux because I did not yet fully understand the nature and structure of what I was looking at. Therefore, I needed to study the phenomenon as indecisively as possible. I needed to let the boundary of the phenomenon form on its own rather than forcing unenlightened boundaries on the phenomenon. I needed to let the tacitly talking hands grasp me, so to speak. And, subsequently, I needed to construct a new poetic and (kin)aesthetic conceptual vocabulary for representing their talking in writing.

Consequently, observational and participatory, objective and subjective, empirically grounding, phenomenologically describing and innovatively fabricating remixing methods and theories were in the study set free to intermingle, proliferate and cross-fertilize. By allowing for methodological messiness, for seemingly unintelligible writing and for extraterritorial theoretical concepts to invade the field the alien (caco)phonic, (kin)aesthetic and (in)compatible corporeal-locomotive talking coming from the field were not silenced but curiously followed and documented. The aim was to convey the importance and significance of paying attention to tacitly talking hands in highly interactive media when we talk about activities and experiences within digital games.

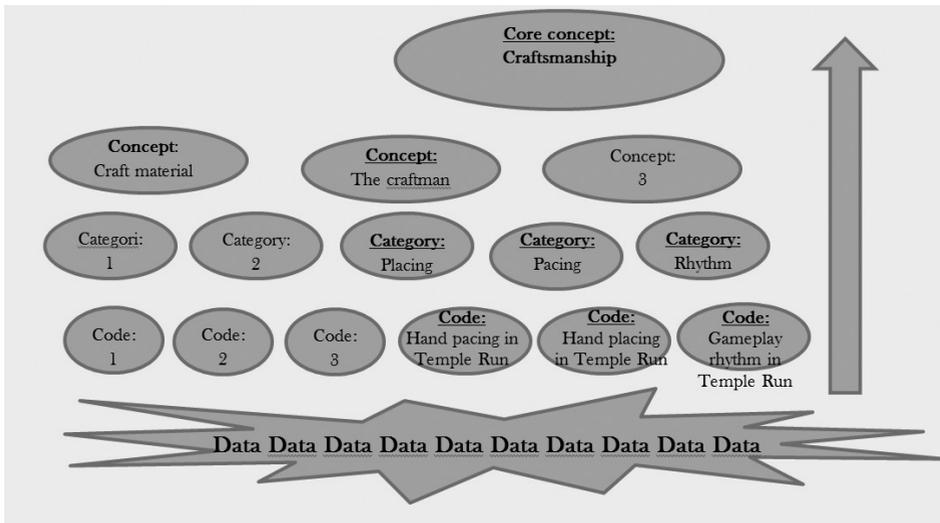
The following section presents the application of a ‘remixed and theoretically infused’ grounded theory method where the focus of attention is decidedly on letting these tacitly talking hands get a place of their own in the spotlight. The presentation is carried out with the central concept of ‘crafting media practices in highly interactive media’ as a case.

Grounded Theory Method and the Emergence of the Concept of Craftsmanship



The grounded theory method is basically a method, not for creating data or descriptions, but for creating concepts and conceptual frameworks out of data. The grounded theory method was originally presented by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their two founding books *Awareness of Dying* (1965) and *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) wherein they propounded the grounded theory mantra stating that ‘theory emerges from data.’ It is a method aimed at generating a theory or framework around a core concept (in this section the concept of ‘craftsmanship’). This developed core concept should then be able to account for most of the variation in the collected data. A model of the relationship between abstracted core concept and messy data could look as follows:

Figure 1. *The Grounded Theory Method Conceptualization Hierarchy*



The core of the grounded theory method approach taken in the study can be said to be the simultaneity of collecting data on ‘tacitly talking hands during gameplay’ and interpreting these data through open and selective coding as well as infusing these data with concepts, insights, modes and styles of thinking coming from such varied fields as sport phenomenology (Allen-Collinson 2009, Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2006), jazz theory (Berliner 1994, Sudnow 1978), phenomenology of the senses (Casey 1987, Straus 1963) and craftsmanship theory (Sennett 2008) to name a few.

Accordingly, the present study has not resulted in a ‘properly executed’ grounded theory but has, rather, adopted a messy grounded theory thinking in order to form a ‘substantive’ conceptual framework for tacitly talking hands in gameplay that is grounded thoroughly in empirical data *as well as* in theoretical concepts. A ‘substantive’ framework such as the one developed on ‘talking tacitly’ is a theoretical interpretation of or explanation for a discovered demarcated enigma (Bryant and Charmaz 2010, p. 610) such as the simultaneous significance of corporeal locomotion in gameplay and absence of corporeality and locomotion within game and media research (Nørgård 2010, 2011a and 2012).

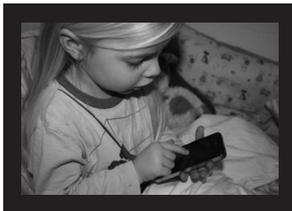
In essence, there can be no research questions only a research quest where the researcher travels along with the tacitly talking hands of gamers in order to empathic-

cally comprehend their corporeal-locomotive ways of talking. The focus is on developing a theory for grasping and comprehending something and not merely describing or confirming questions decided on in advance. Furthermore, given that the theory that had to be developed was about tacitly talking hands, grounded theory thinking seemed especially suited for the task as “Grounded theory [method] is an excellent tool for understanding invisible things. It can be used to reveal the invisible work involved in many kinds of tasks” (Bryant and Charmaz 2010 p. 79).

Below is an example of the gradual pinning down of the study’s first core concept – the concept of craftsmanship – by way of gathering data in ‘natural gameplay situations.’ In the study, research and data collection took place wherever and whenever there was gameplay in the making. In this way, gameplay was never ‘performed’ in honor of the researcher, as the participants were never ‘encouraged’ to deliver data (as is the case when using e.g. ‘interviews,’ ‘questionnaires’ or ‘lab experiments’). Instead, a three-year-long slowly matured conceptual comprehension of craftsmanship were brought about through, among other things, attentively watching the iPhone in the hands of Selma from she was three until she had turned five.

While documenting the tacitly talking of these hands through hundreds of photographs, many hours of video, several hundreds scratch notes and field notes and reading several thousand pages of theories about hands and bodies in motion a comprehension of tacitly talking slowly formed. A comprehension of inherent meaning at the tip of Selma’s finger as it glides across the shiny screen. In gameplay, it is Selma at work in the gameworld through crafting the game material with her hands. And it is myself at work in the gameworld through crafting the gameplay activity and experience with my writing. It is our laborious work together that develops a vocabulary for these tacitly talking hands as I watch and write about Selma as she play with and craft the game material.

The Tale of the Troubled Craftsman



I look attentively at Selma’s finger sliding across the screen as she plays digital games on the iPhone, with tongue in cheek and concentrates on controlling her movements with bated breath. It gradually becomes clear that an informed view on gameplay activity and experience as something contained within the process of making is needed. There is something at stake here. There is a finger that is working ceaselessly to craft Selma’s gameplay activity and experience. And there is Selma who is personally invested in her craftsmanship practices. Becoming a gameplayer requires that Selma endure repetition and do her job over and over again as she, over and over again, solves the same puzzles, avoids the same obstacles, collects the same coins, knocks over the same blocks of wood or makes the same dish. Over and over again, Selma crafts her gameplay activity and

experience by fusing thinking and doing through talking tacitly with the game material in hand.

When Selma lets a finger linger around on the screen, delicately tilts or vehemently shakes the iPhone, rhythmically taps her fingertip on the screen, pinches or stretches her fingers to minimize or maximize something on the screen or sensuously swipes her fingers across it, she is partaking in a bodily dialogue with technology. Through iPhone gameplay Selma is tacitly crafting her own first-hand gameplay activity and experience, as she is absorbed in learning to talk fluently in and with the gameworld. She sits there, with her finger on the screen and her tongue in cheek while radiating the aliveness that every craftsman before her has radiated: “‘I made this,’ ‘I am here, in this work,’ which is to say, ‘I exist.’” (Sennett 2008, p. 130). As a craftsman, Selma has spent evenings absorbed and obsessed with cutting ropes with precise timing and ‘fingerspitzengefühl’ in *Cut the Rope* or with gliding the finger smoothly around on the screen watching the tiny speck following the finger’s trail, growing as it eats the dirt she confidently leads it across in *Tasty Planet*.



Consequently, Selma’s identity as gamer becomes anchored in the tangible reality of the screen. She takes emotional pride in her handcrafting abilities, and gameplay can therefore for Selma quickly lead to frustrating tears when her corporeal-locomotive skills do not match the game’s demands for fluent craftsmanship. But Selma is patient, she struggles to curb her frustration as she knows what every craftsman knows: “To become skilled required, personally, that one be obedient.” (Sennett, 2008, p. 22). Gameplay is a dexterous form-giving activity and Selma sits obediently beside Tue and practices her dexterous form-giving skills as he encourages her to have ‘just one more go.’

Over time, Selma witnesses herself becoming a gamer as she experiences herself being able to express herself in more and more confident and multifaceted ways with the game material in hand. But, there is no way for Selma to make her tacit activity and experience explicit as it is pre-linguistic and non-representational in nature. It is, so to speak, bound to her fingertips as craftsmen “know how to do something but they cannot put what they know into words” (Sennett 2008, p. 94).

In the light of this told tale of Selma, we can see how a first conceptual framework for tacitly talking hands in which concepts of craftsmanship, first-hand doing and first-person being emerged and took center stage. It is a framework that presents the conceptualizing attempt to empathetically grasp and comprehend the unique composition of interacting and experiencing within highly interactive media. A composition that foregrounds the gamer as someone that makes gamer and gameworld come alive through first-hand corporeal-locomotive interaction and the gameworld as

something that makes gameplayer and gameworld come alive through composing and choreographing this corporeal-locomotive interaction.

Figure 2. *A Grounded Conceptual Framework for Tacitly Talking Hands & Craftsmanship Practices within Highly Interactive Digital Games*

CORPOREAL PRESENCE & ENGAGEMENT	FIRST-PERSON BEING	FIRST-HAND DOING	CORPOREAL LOCOMOTION	CORPOREAL ABSORPTION & ENGROSSMENT
MATERIAL-DIGITAL INTERFACE	CORPOREAL-DIGITAL GAMEPLAY	OFFSCREEN-ONSCREEN GAMEWORLD	GAMEWORLD DIRECTEDNESS	SENSORY EXPERIENCE
PACE	TACITLY TALKING HANDS & CRAFTSMANSHIP PRACTICES			PLACE
GAMEWORLD COMPOSITION				GAMEWORLD CHOREOGRAPHY
GAMEPLAY/ CRAFT MATERIAL	THE CRAFTSMAN	GAMEPLAY LOCOMOTION	GAMEPLAY PERCEPTION	CRAFTSMANSHIP

Remix Methods and the Construction of a Refined Comprehension of Highly Interactive Media

Remix is a term originating from within the practice of music where multi-track mix tapes could be remixed. In remixing, new tracks would be added, tracks would be removed, tracks would be altered, tracks would be substituted with other tracks or tracks would be moved to the foreground or background in the final (re)mix. This notion of remixing has over time been adopted by many different practices such as software, fan art, machinema and even research. Today, remix generally refers to the ‘reworking of previously existing elements.’ Remix methods can, within a scholarly context, refer to the remixing of different styles and genres of research representation, the remixing of various concepts coming from different theoretical frameworks, the remixing of different data forms and formats or the remixing of several analytical practices and aesthetic forms.

Hence, while multimethodology or mixed methods denote the use of more than one method, remix methods denote a more radical and unorthodox remixing approach to data, analysis and theory. A central insight gained during the study’s research is that

if one wants to both conceptualize and delve deeply into an alien unfamiliar field that is characterized by a heavy emphasis on the sensuous, experiential, inarticulate and non-representational, then grounded theory thinking might be way to begin, and remix methods might be the way to proceed. In this section, remix methods as a way of remixing your way towards a refined comprehension of highly interactive media will be accounted for.

As a ‘remixing researcher,’ you play with emerging patterns, fabricate compelling narratives, make metaphorical mosaics, construct creative visual and textual collages or quilt conceptual patchworks. It is a methodological orientation that is very attentive towards the fact that research is always fabricated. Implying that, the methods you chose to mix together and apply, the concepts you chose to put forward and mix into a conceptual framework and the forms of representation and sentences you construct and mix into your scholarly statement are three layers of fabrication that merge together into an article, a rapport or a PhD thesis. In this way, every method, concept and wording count. The truth of your tale shall be judged by your abilities to fabricate truthful research; that is, research that emanates comprehension and empathy in relation to the field under study.

In this way, even though remix methods make research fun it does, however, also make research risky. Remix methods are demanding, in that remix methods do much more than ‘respectfully transfer’ elements such as quote other people’s prior research, describe empirical observations, transcribe the interview of participants and so on into a coherent piece that you as author otherwise take full ownership of in regards to ‘originality of content.’ Contrary to this, remix is more closely associated with less honorable practices of appropriation, mimicry or assembly. This is due to the fact that the empirical, analytical or theoretical elements that enter into the mix are not necessarily unaltered or even rigidly traceable back to their origin, neither in content nor form. In this way, the study’s results become the joint accomplishment of all remixed sources. Accordingly, the researcher plays the triple role of hub, translator and transformer. The researcher is a powerhouse where data, modes, forms, styles and concepts merge into an incoherent whole. When efficiently put to use, remix methods produce an potent cross-fertilization between conceptual and empirical bits and pieces into a new (re)mix.

That is, for me the potential of remix – an art and craft that does not aspire to be coherent, homogeneous, stable, streamlined or universally representational. It is a methodological approach that takes seriously the fact that research is messy and always in flux and under construction. Adopting a remix approach means, to me at least, that one acknowledges this messiness, instability and fabrication within a final not-so-polished product. Three such varied examples of remixing research in relation to tacitly talking hands in gameplay activity and experience are ‘the research music video,’ ‘the poetic tale’ and ‘the research Pixi-book.’ Below two of these forms are explicated more thoroughly in relation to tacitly talking hands.

The research music video is a way of accessing the dynamic, tangible and lived reality of playing digital games. Through the use of music, lyrics and moving imagery of gameplayers expressive being though tacitly talking hands a composite expression is crafted. By way of remixing music and video data with a theoretical perspective it became possible to convey some of the more sensuous tacit and experience-based lay-

ers of these talking hands. Thus, the developed form of the research music video tends towards the exploratory rather than the confirmatory and aims at taking both researcher and recipient into realms and comprehensions not (as easily) accessible through purely linguistic or traditional representational methods.

Figure 3. Stills from the Research Music Video 'Body Moving' Published in the Journal *Audiovisual Thinking*



As a concrete example of trying to access and convey the significance of tacitly talking hands in gameplay the research music video *Body Movin'* – *Visualizing the corporeal reality of digital computer games* (2011b) published in the academic peer-reviewed online journal *Audiovisual Thinking – the journal of academic videos* could pointed out. *Body Movin'* remixes a selected clip of music coming from Beastie Boys' *Body Movin'* with quotes from Sheets-Johnstone (1999) about the experience of corporeal locomotion and video data from six carefully selected and timed fieldwork video clips displaying different ways of partaking in and experiencing digital games through tacitly talking hands.

Accordingly, adopting such musical-visual-theoretical remix method in the research quest became a way to get the liveliness and rhythm of tacitly talking hands across in a scholarly way. Here, dynamic visual methods proved their strength in the rendering of the tacitly talking hands in gameplay, as "...the addition of visual methods can bring an added dimension, particularly in realms where the knowledge sought is beyond the range of language" (Banks 2007, p. 116).

The poetic tale is another way of accessing the more alien, sensuous, non-representational layers of tacitly talking hands. Not in moving imagery, but in moving writing. It is a way to 'talk tacitly' through the use of metaphorical and lyrical language, synesthesia, felt emotions, personal memories, expressionistic, impressionistic and abstract writing styles, evocative phrases and multi-sensory mappings. This attempt at moving through writing about movement in highly interactive media is carried out in an effort to conjure a more empathetic, lived, felt and experience-based understanding and rendition of tacitly talking hands in gameplay activity and experience. By transforming and disfiguring classic field notes and molding them into poetic writings about the lived experience of being a gamer getting moved by and moving in a gameworld the tale tries to get the message across.

In this way, a (kin)aesthetic sensible and empathetic language was sought developed in the textual corpus in order to render the sentences more "visceral; that is, they go beyond conscious reasoning, and bring us inside experience, which give them greater credibility and authority as a realistic account" (Markula and Denison 2000, p. 418). This is done to establish a close encounter with, on the one hand, non-representational passionate

language and metaphorical transformations and, on the other hand, sober descriptive representations and theoretical frameworks and concepts in order to get an accurate but multifaceted rendering of highly interactive media. Consequently, these multiple modes, forms and styles are allowed to coexist incongruently side-by-side or remixed into an incompatible whole. Concrete examples of this way of accessing and conveying the significance of tacitly talking hands in gameplay is ‘The tale of Tue and the *World of Warcraft* raid’ and ‘The tale of Selma becoming a gameplayer with the iPhone’.

A Methodological Framework for the Non-representational

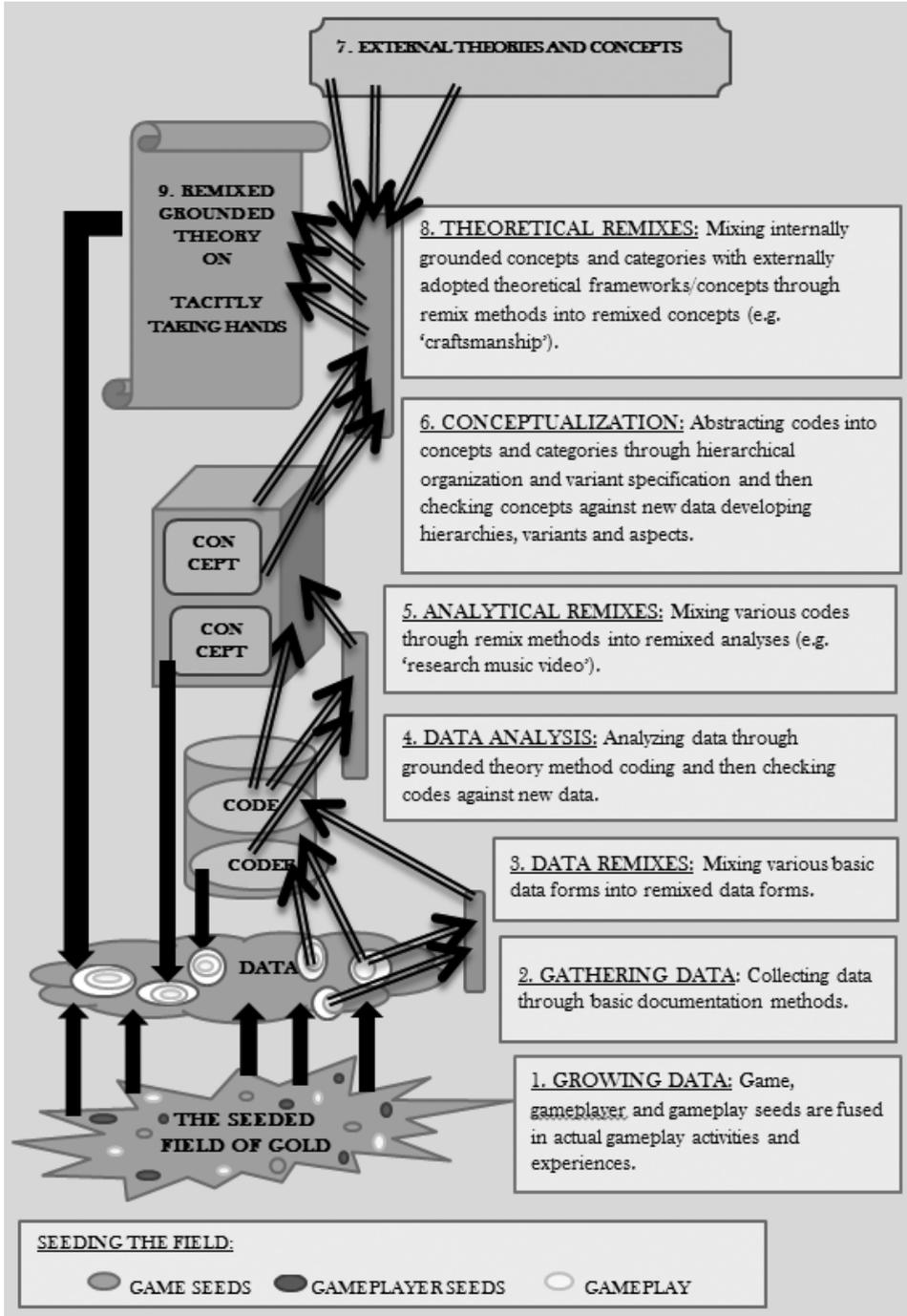
In the articles examples, both remix methods and grounded theory method come together in their joint emphasis on analytical and theoretical fabrication and synthesization, on the researcher’s interpretive authority as well as on a “method of analytical representation [which] is designed to unfocus from the individual and refocus on the patterns – those discursive activities that, when experienced live, speak to more than the specific content.” (Markham 2012, p. 344).

In this process of considering tacitly talking hands a comprehension of the intricate relationship between method and theory slowly formed. It is a formation of the realization that the emerging methodological framework shapes the theoretical approach and that the emerging conceptual framework shapes the methodological approach. Method became theory became style. And vice versa. It is the realization that method is always already inherently theoretical and theory is always already inherently methodological. And the way this theoretical-methodological intertwining plays out in articles, stories and PhDs thesis’s is style. It is “Style as theory” as Van Maanen once wrote – and theory as style. It is an intertwined methodological-conceptual-stylistic framework under constant development. Hence, the below presented framework is not solely an empirically developed methodological design for conducting research on corporeal gameplay or related areas; it is just as much a theoretical concept and a stylistic conceptualization. Accordingly, method and style are not tools, but just as much theoretical conceptions. And conversely, the developed theoretical and analytical conceptualizations are just as much methodological and stylistic expressions as they are ways of thinking about digital games.

Below is a general model of the study’s assembled methodological-theoretical-stylistic framework. Ironically, it was thus not until the study was over that the framework was practically complete. And, importantly, this is not even a finalized framework but nothing more than a temporarily crystallization of something in constant flux and formation. The model shows how specific combinations of data are decided upon and collected from the field (1+2). These data are then remixed and combined in different ways and then transformed to analysis to get a rich and varied understanding of the data (3+4). These analyses are then remixed in various ways to form products, such as the research music video or the poetic tale (5). From the analysis of data and the different analytic products a gradual conceptualization process happens where categories and concepts in relation to the phenomenon ‘tacitly talking hands’ emerge (6). The understanding of these categories and concepts, like ‘craftsmanship,’ ‘pace,’ ‘place’ and ‘choreography’ are then nuanced and qualified through fusing them with external theoretical works that relates to the categories and concepts (7+8). The data remixes, analytical remixes and

theoretical remixes are then combined into a messy methodological-theoretical-stylistic remixed grounded theory on tacitly talking hands which is brought back to the field and checked for vagueness and inconsistencies through repeating the process (9).

Figure 4. A General Model of the Methodological Framework. To be read from the bottom up



Through the use of cut-up techniques, fragmented observations and participation, punctuated and scattered narratives and multiple theoretical frameworks tacitly talking hands in gameplay is, in accordance with Annette Markham, presented not as a grand narrative but as a remix of imagery, insights and impressions in order to make a new conception of highly interactive media make itself heard: "...if the purpose is to break the frames we have arbitrarily set around the ways we present what it is we think we know, the form should also break the frame [...] to make readers think about many things while forming their own impressions" (A.N. Markham, 2005, p. 822).

In this way, the ability to entertain incompatible, heterogeneous and multifarious methods and theories gives the researcher a solid foundation for playing with and combining multiple methodological and theoretical ideas, modes, forms, styles and frameworks into a particular methodological-theoretical-stylistic framework of his/her own that is profoundly custom-made in order to suit the phenomenon under investigation. In this way, the article can be regarded as a reflection on the methodological struggle with representing something non-representational through persistently adhering to the activities and experiences of tacitly talking hands in highly interactive media.

However, such a 'remixing adherence' is not unproblematic. Challenges can and do emerge in at least five different ways that potentially could lead to a rejection of the validity of the produced results if the researcher is unable to rise to these challenges. Firstly, it might pose problems to openly state that data, analyses and concepts are 'fabricated.' By acknowledging that research is 'fabricated,' we also acknowledge that the 'results' and 'truths' stemming from the research might have been otherwise. Accordingly, to do a remixed grounded theory along the lines drawn here implies that one accept that the told research tale is but one among many. So we should make it as compelling as possible.

Secondly, making remixes is often more challenging than adhering to more traditional ways of doing research. Given the aestheticizing and fabricating nature of remix methods a badly composed remix will always fall back upon the producer. In this way, making a remix is always taking a risk that potentially can make the entire research argument collapse. This might be perceived as frightening. Given that the making of an excellent remix where all the parts click into place and something very powerful and commanding emerges hinges upon the producer this might discourage researchers from making remixes. In remix methods you cannot hide behind methods or theories. As researcher you are exposed and the judged quality of a scholarly remix is in some ways like the judged quality of good design or art – it is elusive and debatable.

Thirdly, making moving writing might prove to be abortive or dangerous. Making writing that aims to move and persuade the reader is within traditional research often regarded with suspicion. And making writing that insists on being in movement and under constant development often makes for a difficult read. This implies that the argument and methodological soundness has to be well above average. And, therefore, the stakes are higher.

Fourthly, insisting that style matters and that heavy metaphorical writing is as scholarly thorough as cool and distanced descriptions can seem questionable. Where is the scholarly soundness in writing up your research in alienating, abstruse or ambiguous ways? One answer might be that remix methods often trust the reader to find his or her own truths along the pathways and stories put forward in the research. In this way remix

methods become more about authenticity, interpretative power and verisimilitude than about replicability. A remix is always only one possible mix and, thus, its truths lie in its ability to ring true and create powerful associations, imagery and reflections in the mind of the reader.

Fifthly and finally, making messy methodologies that merges methods, theories and styles could easily prove catastrophic. It requires that one is able to thoroughly reflect on and account for all the methodological, theoretical and stylistic choices made. That is, even though custom-made methodological-theoretical-stylistic frameworks are perhaps able to grasp the researched field more appreciatively and fittingly, they are challenging for the researcher to produce, as the task lies on the researcher alone to argue for the validity, soundness and intelligibility of methodological-theoretical-stylistic choices made.

But regardless of the abovementioned challenges and potential problems the fabrication of a remixed grounded theory has the potential of both being profoundly rewarding for the researcher and result in the development of innovative methods, theories and concepts and perhaps even the development of a promising new research field as in this particular case. Central lessons learned in this double-sided development of researcher and research is, first and foremost, that research should be fun *as well as* serious. Research should be serious fun and fun seriousness – like producing beautiful *as well as* professional music remixes.

Secondly, research should be experimental, experiential and expressive *as well as* informed, thorough and well-read. It is often through the fusion of these two sides that a field moves forward. Actually, the former presupposes the latter. To create a profound and powerful remix that will move research forward you need in-depth understanding of tradition – every good remixer will tell you that. But, importantly fun, seriousness, wide reading and innovation can come to co-exist and intermingle as in making a 20 page ‘research pixi book’ or a 2 minute long ‘research music video’ based on 3 years of laborious fieldwork and 20.000 pages of theory and method. It was fun. And it was serious. It was a remixed grounded tribute to tacitly talking hands in gameplay activity and experience within highly interactive media.

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