

Privacy Notice – University of York – Research Using Public Data on YouTube, Reddit, and specialised public forums

This privacy notice is provided to the public to detail the ways in which personal data gathered from users is processed by the University of York, including how it is gathered, used, stored and shared, with regards to the study “Autoethnographically examining dialogic agency in RPG storytelling”.

Who is responsible for the data?

For the purposes of this privacy notice, the University of York is a Data Controller, as defined in the General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679 (the ‘GDPR’) and the U.K. Data Protection Act 2018 (together the ‘Data Protection Laws’). The University of York (‘York’) is registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office and its entry can be found here. Registration number: Z4855807. We have an appointed Data Protection Officer who can be contacted as follows: Data Protection Officer, University of York, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK. dataprotection@york.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this research?

The study “Autoethnographically examining dialogic agency in RPG storytelling” is a Masters’ by research project conducted by William Jones at the University of York, supervised by Prof. Jenna Ng.

This study is being completed as a masters’ thesis, examining the storytelling mediums of tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) and computer role-playing games (CRPGs). Specifically, this research aims to understand storytelling in these mediums as the result of social dynamics between players and developers, mediated by game systems and gaming culture.

Thus, we are gathering information regarding the culture of RPG players, ‘Game Masters/ Dungeon Masters’ (GM/DMs) and developers. One arm of enquiry will focus on analysing commonly shared wisdom, opinions, best practices and cultural values shared by participants in game storytelling, and as such we will be examining the following data sources:

- Publicly published articles hosted on journalistic sites or blogs.
- Publicly published video content on websites/apps such as YouTube or Tiktok.
- Publicly viewable posts and comments in public online communities such as relevant ‘sub-reddits’ and forums.

Any queries about the research can be directed to the researcher using their email address; ‘william.jones@york.ac.uk’

What data do we have?

All data we collect that is not considered formally published content (forum posts and comments, video comments, and video content from social media sites such as Tiktok) will be paraphrased content gathered from public online spaces. For comments and posts in forums and social media, no direct quotes, the names or usernames of the author, or any other identifiable information will be collected or stored by the researcher or the university.

In the case of formally published resources such as YouTube video content and articles, the author will be acknowledged, quoted directly, and referenced in-text and in the bibliography just like any other published academic or journalistic source.

This data will include collated statements, advice, and opinions on the following topics and other closely-related topics;

- How best to play TTRPGs and CRPGs from a narrative perspective
- Common advice, proverbs, and cultural values amongst RPG communities
 - For example, concepts such as so-called “rules lawyers”, “murder hobos” and “metagaming” from TTRPG communities.
- What RPGs do and do not provide high-quality narratives
 - Reasons for why these do or do not provide high-quality narratives
- How RPG developers and GMs approach telling stories
- How RPG players approach experiencing and contributing to stories
- How RPG players and developers create and interact with game characters and game systems
- Ultimately, how storytelling in RPGs arise from the cooperation of Players and Developers

Where does the researcher get data from?

Data collected for the cultural enquiry arm of this study will be sourced from text and video content available on publicly accessible social media and forum pages; that is, content that is not hosted in spaces one must apply to join or be invited to join.

This will include posts and comments on forums such as Reddit and DnD Beyond, articles on journalistic websites, and video content and comments on websites/apps like YouTube and Tiktok.

What is our legal basis for processing your data?

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing personal data.

For informally published content (sourced from forums and Tiktok), no personal data will be collected in any form. For articles and YouTube videos, only the author’s name and the content’s publishing body will be collected.

No data will be collected that can be classified as ‘special category data’, although the university does have strict guidelines for if this were the case.

How will we use your data?

Data will be collected in a properly anonymised manner and then entered into a spreadsheet or document for analysis. All ‘informally published’ content (all content from forums, or social media such as Tiktok or Instagram) will be paraphrased and the author will not be referenced by name or any pseudonym; total anonymity will be preserved.

For ‘formally published’ content (articles, Youtube videos), the author’s name and the place and date of publication will be recorded and, if this data is referenced directly in the final thesis, the content will be cited in-text like any other academic or journalistic source.

Will we share your data with third parties?

No. Only the individuals named on this notice and relevant authorised personnel at the university of York will have access to your data; this means that only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor, and the relevant examining staff will have access to the data.

How will we keep your data secure?

The University of York has appropriate technical and organisational measures in place to protect your personal data, should this be collected. All data collected for this research will be stored exclusively on the university's own data storage facilities or via Google cloud services.

Research conducted by staff and students at the University of York is conducted with 'privacy by design' in mind, and in-line with this principle all data collected from sources that are not formally published will be paraphrased and entirely anonymous.

No data will be stored on mobile devices (phones, laptops), external storage devices, or printed paper, meaning that the data cannot be physically misplaced or stolen. All data is stored on the cloud and protected via a login with two-factor authentication.

Will we transfer your data internationally?

Since the University of York makes use of google data services, including cloud storage, it is possible that data from this study will be stored on data storage devices overseas. Further information is available here; <https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/google/policy/privacy/>.

Will we identify you in any research outputs?

Content gathered from forums, social media, and comments on such content will be entirely anonymous, and you will not be identifiable in any outputs.

If the content is formally published in the form of an article or YouTube video, you will be referenced in-text like any academic or journalist, meaning that you will be identifiable in the output.

How long will we keep your data?

All data collected for this research will be kept in secure University of York's google drive cloud storage for the duration of the study, expected to culminate in early 2025. Following the examination process, all recorded data will be destroyed.

What rights do you have in relation to your data?

Under the Data Protection Laws, you have a general right of access to your data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. You also have a right to withdraw. Please note not all rights apply where data are processed purely for research purposes. For further information see:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/recordsmanagement/generaldataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/>

Queries can be directed to the researcher Will Jones (william.jones@york.ac.uk), their thesis supervisor Professor Ng (jenna.ng@york.ac.uk), or the University's Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@york.ac.uk)

Right to complain

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data have been handled by the University of York, you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see www.ico.org.uk/concerns. We will place any updates to this privacy notice on this webpage.