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Teaching historical scientific concepts such as historical empathy through This War of Mine.

An attempt at adapting Egenfeldt-Nielsen's theoretical framework of video game learning to the Norwegian school.

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Abstract

As part of the Norwegian educational reforms of 2020, the Norwegian ministry for education (Utdanningsdirektoratet) ordered that historical empathy would become a part of the Norwegian subjects; history and social studies (samfunnsfag- og historie) curriculum as one of its core elements (kjerneelement). While historians may still argue over how exactly historical empathy should be defined, this has become a problem for your everyday teacher who may struggle to find a way to incorporate this new concept as part of their curriculum. The goal of introducing a concept like historical empathy seems to have been to further students' understanding of the people and events that took place in history through empathy. In addition to the above, we have also seen a rise in the use of video games as a supplement to traditional classroom based education. As more and more schools have now acquired their own '*gaming rooms*'; I personally know of three schools in the Stavanger area who have all built and maintained their own rooms dedicated towards gaming and the educational use thereof; *Tastarustå Ungdomsskole, St. Svithun Ungdomsskole, and Revheim Ungdomsskole.* The problem with the teaching of historical empathy and the use of video games in class is that as the school becomes more digitalised, there are those who are eventually left behind this rapid development.

This difficulty has become part of the inspiration for this thesis. This thesis aims to look at historical empathy and how we can use video games to supplement teaching that concept. Furthermore, this thesis will look to find a way to create a curriculum that may be used in a classroom setting to teach historical empathy through video games. As the teaching of historical empathy through video games is something that has already been documented in articles and dissertations previously, this thesis will look at historical empathy as a historical scientific concept to be taught by applying Egenfeldt-Nielsens theoretical framework for teaching concepts through video games.

The thesis' questions will be answered through the use of Barton & Lestvik as well as Endacott & Brooks where questions of historical empathy are concerned. This thesis will further utilise Egenfeldt-Nielsens theoretical framework as backdrop for how to create a curriculum that teaches historical empathy. Finally, this thesis will be utilising the qualitative method to conduct this project, focusing on a group of eight year 10 students.

Sammendrag

I den nye læreplanen som ble introdusert i 2020 av Utdanningsdirektoratet ble det blant annet lagt frem at historisk empathy skulle bli del av Historie- og samfunnsfag-undervisning og da som en av fagenes kjerneelementer. Dagens forskere og historikere er fortsatt uenig i hva historisk empati er og hvordan det best burde defineres. Nå har også lærerne blitt en del av diskusjonen og må arbeide med å finne en måte å inkorporere dette konseptet som del av undervisningen. Målet med å introdusere et slikt konsept som historisk empati ser ut til å være for å videre fremme elevens forståelse for folkene og hendelsene vi finner i historien gjennom empati. I tillegg har vi sett en økning i bruken av spill for å supplere tradisjonell klasseromsundervisning. Flere skoler har også bygget egne dedikerte spillerom for bruk både for *gaming*, men også som en læringsarena. Jeg kjenner til tre skoler her i området som har gjort dette; Tastarustå Ungdomsskole, St. Svithun ungdomsskole, og Revheim ungdomsskole; dette er bare de tre jeg kjenner til, men jeg regner med at mange flere har gjort det samme. Problemet med å undervise historisk empati og å inkorporere spill som del av en mer og mer digitalisert skole, er at flere og flere til slutt faller bakpå denne raske utviklingen.

Denne problemstillingen har blitt en del av det som inspirerte denne oppgaven. Oppgaven har som mål å se på historisk empati og bruken av spill for å supplere undervisning i historisk empati. Denne oppgaven vil også se på å skape et undervisningsopplegg som kan bli brukt i klasserommet for å undervise historisk empati gjennom spill. Dette er fordi undervisning i historisk empati gjennom spill er noe som allerede er et dokumentert fenomen i andre artikler, masteroppgaver og bøker. Det forskningshullet oppgaven ønsker å besvare er dermed hvordan vi kan undervise i historie vitenskapelige konsepter ved å bruke Egenfeldt-Nielsens teoretiske rammeverk for undervisning med spill for så å fremme historisk empati.

Oppgaven kommer til å besvare spørsmål angående historisk empati gjennom bruk av Barton & Lestvik og Endacott & Brooks sine teorier. Videre vil oppgaven bruke Egenfeldt-Nielsen sitt teoretiske rammeverk som bakgrunn for hvordan vi kan skape et undervisningsopplegg som underviser i historisk empati. Oppgavens empiri vil bli innhentet gjennom intervju av åtte tiende klasse elever.

Forord

Reisen fra en helt fersk ut av videregående 18/19 åring til å nå ha fullført masteroppgaven rett på grensen til mitt 24 år har vært en utrolig lang prosess med opp og nedturer, og mye arbeid. Det har vært en utrolig reise og jeg er glad for å endelig se lyset i enden av tunnelen. Selv om jeg nå sier dette, har jeg flere ganger klaget til mine medstudenter at *"Vi begynte nettopp på studiet, det kan ikke ha gått FEM ÅR allerede!"*. Tiden som student har vært fantastisk gøy og jeg har bygget mange vennskap som jeg skal ta med meg videre.

Emnet historie og videospill har vært et som har fascinert meg lenge, jeg lekte med tanken om å skrive om spill allerede på tredje året mitt, så jeg visste egentlig at dette ble det jeg ønsket å skrive masteroppgaven min om. Jeg ble også rådgitt av både familie og andre lærere at jeg burde skrive om noe som jeg senere kunne bruke i egen praksis, og er utrolig glad for at jeg har gjort dette, jeg har allerede begynt å ta deler av oppgaven i bruk utenfor det som var dette prosjektet både som del av mine egne engelsk timer og valgfags timer.

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Jeg må også takke familien min, spesielt Mamma som har stått meg i ryggen gjennom hele prosessen med masse støtte og kjærlighet. Tusen takk for at du har gitt meg den støtten jeg trengte mens jeg holdt på å drukne i arbeid.

Jeg må også nevne mine medstudenter som virkelig har bidratt til å gjøre tiden min på studiet til en gøy og lærerik del av mitt liv. Jeg ønsker spesielt å takke bakerste rad for både bingo og latter, hadde ikke klart dette uten dere.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Games and video games are something that almost everyone is familiar with. Many have grown up forming fond memories of having their first ever handheld, consol or PC from which to play games. As video games become a larger part of our world and a new digital generation grows the interest towards how we may apply video games towards our everyday lives and what skills they might teach us may become an even greater field of research which we see represented in a growing number of studies today. We can already see that jobs relating to the digital world are becoming more and more attractive for the current generation; As this has since become the new generation's top job prospect. (Lester, 2023) I grew up just as the digital revolution really started to take flight in the early 2000s, and I have a distinct memory of my first game that I played, which was the third generation pokemon series. A few years later, I was lucky enough to get to play my first ever historical game, Age of Empires III, which I played on my fathers computer, from which a love of history and learning of history began. This interest has stayed with me until this day and has become the basis for my taking up history as a subject.

It is not only my personal interest in video games that sparked the idea for this thesis, video games as a medium for teaching different concepts have captivated the interests of many researchers, teachers and students. The literature that covers this topic has since the turn of the millennia exploded as more and more degrees and articles are written on the topic. Examples of this include James Paul Gee, Huijgen, Egenfeldt-Nielsen and Kapp. A study by Marin-Sulves et al. further suggests that this has become an upwards trend, as of 2019 there were 226 articles and 42 publications of video game based degrees and dissertations. (Marín-Suelves et al., 2020) For me, video games have been a part of my life since a young age, where I have experimented with every platform from consoles, handhelds, mobile phones and computers. To this day they still play a large part of my day and my learning.

Through international friends and conversations I learned English as a language and later as my interest in strategy games developed, I gained an interest in the subject of history. After becoming a student of history and especially so a teacher of history and English I asked myself why we don't see more teachers using games as a teaching medium. Throughout my entire schooling life we never used video games as an active part of our learning. The epiphany came during our fourth year at university, where our professor referenced a study in which most teachers in Norway found themselves unfamiliar with how to choose and best utilise film; another audio/visual experience, in the classroom. (Wagner, D.-A., 2018) To me, this seemed strange as I mentioned, I grew up in the midst of the great advances that took place in the 2000s, and have as such grown and adapted alongside technological advances from an early age. The opportunities that I and others of my generation have seen in how we can utilise video games as a teaching medium stems from our familiarity with it. A large part of this thesis will focus on historical empathy, how we can identify historical empathy through video games and the implications of using the framework that this thesis has chosen in order to establish the appearance of historical empathy through a game based curriculum. The purpose for this thesis has therefore been to attempt to utilise an existing framework from Egenfeldt-Nielsen published in 2004 where Nielsen proposed a theoretical framework from which video game learning may be adapted. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

1.2 The Thesis' objective:

After the Norwegian Ministry of Education released the promise of knowledge (kunnskapsløftet) curriculum of 2020, historical empathy was brought into the Norwegian school as a core competency aim (kjerneelement) (UDIR, 2020). As such all Norwegian students are supposed to learn what historical empathy entails through their schooling in Norway, historical empathy is present as an overall learning concept for the students from year two all the way to year 10. Through several studies conducted in Norway it has become clear that video games are a great source of teaching historical empathy, especially so the game which is the subject of this thesis "This War of Mine", from which there have spawned several masters degrees, amongst them in recent years, Aakre (2022), Hole (2022), and Nygård (2022) who all wrote about how this game may be used to teach historical empathy.

The main obstacle for Norwegian teachers in using video games has been as mentioned above, the lack of experience with and concrete frameworks to support using video games as a teaching tool and the difficulty in selecting games/films that are relevant, time constraints and how these digital resources impact student motivation (Wagner, D.-A., 2018). This thesis will look to rectify that somewhat by using an existing theoretical framework and create a curriculum from which we can teach historical empathy as a subject in school. Part of the reason for selecting this approach comes from reading Hole's masters dissertation (Hole, 2022) where he suggests that as part of future research; we should look at how a stronger framework and instruction relating to the historical period could improve upon the contextualisation aspect of historical empathy. As such, this thesis will be using the video game "This war of Mine" as it attempts to answer the following two research questions;

- Are students more motivated towards learning history when applying Egenfeldt-Nielsen theoretical framework to video games in a classroom setting?

- Having used Nielsen's expanded version of Kolb's learning model, can we identify historical empathy in the students?

This thesis will be operating under these research questions, and the overall question of;

- Is it possible to use the Egenfeldt-Nielsen model to develop a curriculum that teaches historical empathy using This War of Mine.

These two research questions cover different categories of what we will be looking for. As the first research question looks at students' motivation towards learning history through video games, from which the students perspective will shine light on their experiences with the project and what the students learned through experiencing history in a different manner from what they are used to. The second question covers the topic of historical empathy upon which this thesis' result hinges upon. As historical empathy plays such a big part of this thesis it will therefore be of great importance to see if the students develop historical empathy through the curriculum that I and their teacher develop. Finally there is the greater question that hangs above the thesis in its entirety, which is if it is possible to develop a curriculum that teaches historical empathy using This War of Mine. At the end, these questions will be summed up and discussed in a chapter dedicated to discussion on how

the project went and what we saw in these research questions. My hope is that through this thesis the curriculum we develop will be a curriculum that I myself and others may draw upon in the future to make the use of video games appear more approachable for those interested in using video games as a part of their teaching arsenal.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter acts as an introduction from which you will find the introduction, the thesis' objective, the author's personal experiences with video games and the thesis' structure.

The second chapter of this thesis looks at theory which is relevant to the study. This is where prior research as well as topics relating to video game learning and historical empathy can be found. For this thesis, the theories that are of utmost interest pertain to historical empathy and Egenfeldt-Nielsen theoretical framework for video game learning. This will be a comprehensive chapter as this thesis relies upon establishing whether or not the participants in the project have developed historical empathy. As such I have deemed it necessary to go into greater detail in regards to what historical empathy is and how it relates to this thesis.

The third chapter will be looking at the methods used in this study. This chapter focuses on the approaches this thesis will be using and an explanation as to why this approach has been used. This thesis will also talk about the curriculum and how we; that is myself and the students' teacher chose to approach this project.

Chapter four

Chapter four is where this thesis will analyse the collected empirical data in order to help answer the research questions proposed in this thesis. As part of the analysis, as this

thesis hinges on the importance of establishing historical empathy, the thesis will attempt to establish the presence of historical empathy in the students by analysing the different categories established as part of the chapter on theory.

Chapter five

The fifth chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to discussions on the project. How we decided to proceed, what we saw, and importantly discussing the different aspects of Nielsens theoretical framework and how they apply to this thesis and project overall. There will also be some thoughts and reflections on how the model was applied and used in this project.

Chapter six

The sixth and final chapter of this thesis will act as a conclusion to the project there will be some reflections on how the project went, what was found during the project and finally there will be a section dedicated to ideas for future research within this topic.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1 An introduction into video games as a teaching resource

Video games have come to stay, they have become a large part of some students' days and are more and more relevant today than ever. One set of games that holds a distinct advantage in today's school are those representing history, as the player is given a chance to interact with and live in these historic times. The gaming industry has as of 2022 eclipsed both the movie and music industry, generating an estimate of $184 billion, whereas the movie and music industry generated an estimate of $52.2 billion. (Forbes, 2023) From these numbers it is clear to see that the gaming industry is massive, and so is its playerbase. It is therefore no wonder that according to the Norwegian Media Authority (medietilsynet) in 2022 about 76% of all Norwegian school age students aged nine - eighteen years old play video games in their free time. Furthermore, the Norwegian Media Authority (medietilsynet) found that about 92% of boys and 59% of girls play games in one form or another. (Medietilsynet, 2022) Games have therefore become more relevant than ever. This also applies to the classroom. Schools and the way we teach are in a constant state of changing and adapting to the times we live in. If you were to go onto the internet and search video games and learn, you'd find millions of articles, papers and studies that look at how video games could or should be used to promote learning. Though it would seem that the interest in this topic has since expanded in recent times as generations of students who grew up with video games choose to study its effects and efficacies in learning.

Games as a teaching medium can be considered a rather new innovation when compared to the long history of other teaching practices. Emerging from the shadows for the most part after the popularisation of digital gaming. Whereas there were games and game based learning before the digital revolution, game based learning has in recent times captured the interest of both teacher, student and researcher alike. This has resulted in a vibrant field of pedagogical study (Gee; Prensky; Whitton, 2013; 2001; 2009) in how video games may be used in the classroom, but also as a separate field all of its own within a variety of different fields.

More so than simple popularity we see that video games as a teaching method also in some ways, tend to be a more potent educational tool when compared to its more traditional counterparts. (Houghton, 2022) This may in part have to do with how video games represent

the world in which the player finds themselves. As, according to Gee, a sign of a good video game is that the player finds themselves identifying with the character that they are playing and that they immerse themselves into the world. (Gee, 2013) As part of the analysis we will see that this statement from Gee is in fact correct, and some students do identify quite strongly with the game.

As part of my thesis I'll be looking into how video games can be used as a way to engage students into learning about history and how it may be a resource in teaching historical empathy. Video games as a tool is not anything new however previous research has suggested that a theoretical framework would assist with the historical aspect of historical empathy. Moreover, the way in which video game learning can engage and whether or not this engagement can be translated into historical empathy is certainly a different approach, whereas most studies tend to focus on one or the other, I hope to, as seen in the first research question of this thesis, to draw a connection between the two; engagement and learning of historical scientific concepts.

To provide an example on how history can be taught through video games we can look at the game series Civilization, where they use 'unique' units to help portray a nation's historical affiliations or advantages. These units being unique to the respective countries. For instance, England has the unique units Red Coats and Ship-of-the-Line, giving them a bonus. The red coat receive a 10+ to combat when on another continent other than their own, a clear reference to the British Colonial Empire. The ship of the line also being a reference to the saying "Britain rules the waves" giving the English a decided advantage in Renaissance Naval warfare, a period of which the English held a sporting advantage. (Sid Meier's Civilization V, 2010)

As for this study, we'll be mainly focusing on the video game "This War of Mine". Before discussing mechanics and story, I find that we should take some time looking into prior research into how this game and games in general contribute to learning. There have been a variety of masters degree studies into how this game may be used as a learning tool, both as part of the history field, and also pertaining to other subjects in the Norwegian school system. Amongst which there were four recent degrees and an article; Hole (2022), Aakre (2022), Nygaard (2022) and Gilbert's article (2019); both Hole and Nygaard wrote of

historical empathy and history, whereas Gilbert wrote from a Norwegian subject point of view. More specifically we see Hole focusing more on students' experience with historical empathy, writing a qualitative analysis of student experience with historical empathy through the game, where Nygaard focuses more towards using a set teaching plan to further students' historical thinking ability.

Aakre (2022) has also written about the same subject though their study looked into several video games and how these contribute towards historical empathy, their study focusing more so on in which manner these games aim to develop historical empathy. Sufficient to say, there are a whole slew of different studies already using this video game as a resource or primary lens in which to study the development of historical thinking. That being said, Our subject somewhat overlaps as we're also considering historical empathy in this thesis, however, this study places an additional emphasis on Nielsens learning model. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) Hence, our focus isn't just to see if historical empathy can be achieved through the game, but rather if historical empathy and its sibling concepts can be taught using the aforementioned model. Another research question which I hope to answer in this thesis is how this approach towards learning contributes to student engagement and interest towards the subject.

2.2 Prior research into Game based learning

Breaking down the concept of video games in the classroom, it's perhaps most natural to start with Groff's study on how console video games contribute to learning in the classroom. Groff's study takes place in Scotland based on Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and their interest in the possibilities of console games in schools. (Groff, 2012) One of the findings that Groff concludes with in his study is how game-based learning doesn't necessarily need to be confined to the classroom but can be used both inside and outside of school. Differing from Gee, Groff isn't as concerned with the academic approach, the pure theoreticals of how learning can be achieved through games, Groff in this study puts her theory to the test in an actual classroom. Whereas there are several studies focusing on the teachers role in the classroom, Groff identifies some known quantities but also pushes out different challenges that are unique to the classroom learning portion of his theory. Specifically how we are limited by the space we are in and that the school offers distractions

unique to a school situation. Another point of interest to this thesis are the strategies, challenges and impact on pupils that Groff presents as part of their study. Firstly, Groff presents learning strategies originating from a Futurelab report "*Teaching with Games: Using commercial off-the-shelf computer games in formal education*", as a suggestive framework for game based learning. (Sandford, Ulicsak, Facer, & Rudd, 2006) Amongst the findings relating to the pupils, Groff found that engagement and motivation amongst the pupils skyrocketed as a direct result of utilising the game as a learning tool. One headteacher even reflected that as a motivational tool it was "Unsurpassed". (Groff, 2012) Another key finding of which might be of interest to this study was how underperforming and less academically inclined students performed well, "levelling the traditional hierarchy" as Groff puts it.(Groff, 2012) Groff concludes this study surmising the effects video games have on the teachers and students. The most common finding being that video games have helped increase motivation towards learning and the pupils became better producers of texts, their willingness to produce works having been greatly improved.

We've also seen a special interest for video games within the field of language learning, and especially so as part of English Language learning (Shaw; Hansen, 2009; 2018), whereas most games are produced with English being their main narrative language. However, also the field of History has taken a special interest in digital game-based learning, be they Age of Empires, Assassins Creed, Anno or Total War, or another historical game. We see that the unique combination of audio/visual stimuli that videogames can create, may be part of the spark that ignites a students interest for the historical field. (Houghton, 2022) Through a further use of game mechanics these historical video games may also help create a framework from which the student may build their understanding of historical events and understanding.

Egnfeldt-Nielson is another person that has taken special interest in the efficacies of game-based learning. Nielsen has written a PhD thesis on this exact topic. At the time of writing his thesis, the subject of video games and research into their impact on learning was at times sparse and covering a wide array of perspectives; which was also addressed by Nielsen here;

"There exists few attempts at overviewing the field of educational use of computer games and most are dated, aimed at a specific area or have a profound skewedness towards educational use of traditional games. The field is scattered without internal consistency, few successful applications and questionable research."
(Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

The goal of his paper has since become to attempt and connect some of these perspectives and prove how games can contribute to more than just entertainment, or as he puts it, "Edutainment plays the role of villain in this thesis" (Egnfeldt-Nielsen, 2004). Nielsen will be playing a central role in my thesis, as he was one of the early writers on videogame learning taking this approach of viewing video games as more than just a form of entertainment; as a consequence of that, Nielsen took it upon himself to expand upon Kolb's learning model, widening the model so as to accommodate video game learning, and creating a theoretical framework for how future video game education may be conducted. In this thesis we will be using said model to attempt to gauge students' learning outcome as it pertains to Nielsen's expanded model. It should be noted that video game research has since the publishing of Nielsens thesis, greatly expanded to cover a wide variety of subjects and disciplines; as can be seen from Gee, Groff, and Gilbert. (Gee; Groff; Gilbert; 2013, 2012, 2019) As consequence of this, there have since been developed several approaches to gauging learning and specifically as it applies to this thesis, gauging historical empathy (Hole; Aakre, 2022). Nevertheless, this thesis will be applying the above-mentioned model as a reference frame for how one may use the model and if it does or does not contribute to a specific learning outcome. Where this thesis uses historical empathy as its lens, it would be of interest to see if this model could later be used to teach other "specified scientific concepts" (Egnfeldt-Nielsen, 2004) within the field of history. With that in mind I will reiterate that in the case of this thesis, the focus will be on historical empathy as the primer for discussion in this study.

A study conducted by Lisa Gilbert looks more closely at the narrative aspects of a video game that may impact students' perception of history. This study suggests that interacting with historical video games through the lens that is video games helps increase the students' sense of immersion. By emphasising this sense of immersion the study finds that students not only witness historical events but they are able to *feel* it take shape around them.

According to one student that took part in this study "That was terror not like anything I had ever read. But I *felt* that." The study finds that the students' perception of history was widely increased as it went from an abstract concept full of text on parchment to a visceral 'real' experience. This allows students to develop their historical empathy in a totally different way. Gilbert goes on to mention that allowing for the immersion, the students nonetheless were still unable to reflect properly around their experiences and how to problematize that feeling as something that may have unintended consequences for how they understand the past. (Gilbert, 2019)

Part of the reason as to why these students may identify so strongly with the events of the game may have to do with how video games as a platform allows players to strongly identify with their characters. From personal experience and through observations of students playing games I tend to see games offering a much deeper immersive experience than what books or traditional learning may afford a learner. As according to James Paul Gee "Deep learning requires an extended commitment and such a commitment is powerfully recruited when people take on a new identity (…)" (Gee, 2013) This in relation to the game used by Gilbert above (Assassins Creed) allows the student to become much more immersed in the game. The way in which different games achieve this varies, games such as the Elder Scrolls (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011) or Cyberpunk (CD Project Red, 2020) achieve this by allowing players to create their own character, customise and build their own identity inside the video game. In the case of Gilbert's study the immersive effect is achieved as according to Gee; giving the player a character that is so intriguing that the player wants to inhabit the character and thereby project their own feelings and fantasies onto the character. This is all to say that perhaps the reason why this student mentioned above is able to **feel** the terror in the game is because of how they've projected themselves **into** the game.

Another of Gee's principles is that of manipulating the environment as a way of learning. (Gee, 2013) I will later touch upon how the game we will be using, allows for such manipulation though what is more interesting here is the example Gee uses and how it could be applied to this study and more importantly to the concepts we wish to teach our students. As mentioned this study will be looking into engagement and historical empathy and how games could be used as a resource in teaching empathy and engaging students towards learning. Gee makes an example of how Galileo Galilei invented the pendulum. Galileo uses his knowledge of geometry and applied these laws to a problem. Whereas, according to Gee

it is normal to ask children *"innocent"* of the pendulum to play with one to learn the laws of how it works. (Gee, 2013) The implications here are quite interesting as they suggest that instead of simply having the students play the game without any prior instruction or knowledge of historical empathy for them to then learn of it. The focus should instead be on teaching first how empathy in history works and then have the students apply this knowledge to the game world. This isn't a new way of thinking within the Norwegian school system; however, it may lead to an interesting correlation between the players' learning outcome and engagement throughout the playing process.

Following Egnfeldt Nielsen's PhD dissertation, Nielsen suggests that though video games may appear to be a great tool for teaching certain skills and concepts, the educational relevance of games are nevertheless hampered by the students' own perceptions of games and games in school. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) Nielsen therefore points out that early instructions are a must and that this instruction must point towards the educational benefits and relevance of the game. Connecting the educational relevance of the games leads to the players interacting with the game in a different way, one which leads towards both engagement and learning as according to Egnfeldt-Nielsen. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) Furthermore, Nielsen asserts that when playing games the player tends to engross themselves in the videogame to such a degree that the immersion comes at the cost of reflection and observation. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) This is in-line with Gee's conclusions of how younger learners tend to experience games with their entire being, living in the game and re-creating movements they see on the screen. (Gee, 2013) While they both contribute to learning to a degree, this does not lend itself to higher learning concepts as the player experiences what Nielsen calls "spontaneous concepts" and thereby excludes the scientific conceptual approach. Hence, should learning result in a scientific learning concept the player will require formal instruction beforehand as to better prepare themselves for what they ought to look for.

The question then remains, how can we build on the theories outlined above to further explore the potential of historical video games in the Norwegian classroom? Our primary concern in this thesis is how video games can be used in a classroom environment to create engagement and as a tool to foster historical empathy. The principles discussed above make for a good outset for such a study. Students being able to identify with video game characters creates a platform from which they may springboard into the world of historical empathy. Though one of the pitfalls that we have to be wary of is to make sure students do not

sympathise with the characters. Though a difficulty arises as there is wide discourse as to how we define historical empathy and furthermore how do we distinguish from historical sympathy. The consensus seems to hold that empathy acts as a neutral understanding of history, whereas sympathy encourages a deep feeling for the historical figures having the learner advocate for historical figures as opposed to keeping that neutral stance. Before moving on it is important to establish the parameters around the concept of historical empathy as utilised in Norwegian history teaching.

2.3 Research into and reason for picking This War of Mine as the focus for this thesis

This project will be conducted through the use of the video game This War of Mine (TWoM) which this thesis will be referring to as either "This War of Mine" or "TWoM" going forwards. The reason I have chosen this specific video game for this study is due to multiple reasons. Perhaps one of the more important ones is that this is a game that has been studied quite a lot in recent years (Hole; Aakre; Nygård; 2022), the purview of these studies also line up well with what we're looking for in this study. This thesis' goal is to see if video games can be used to teach specified scientific concepts based on the games strengths and weaknesses. In this case, these studies have already considered whether or not This War of Mine can be used as to teach historical empathy. Though we are also looking for historical empathy here, this study is further looking to prove that by following Egenfeldt-Nielsen expanded version of Kolb's learning model (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005), we will be able to foster historical empathy in our students. That is to say, the aim of this thesis will be to use Nielsens expanded theoretical framework on how we can teach scientific concepts using video games to create and teach a curriculum on historical empathy through the use of the game.

Another reason for picking This War of Mine is that because of its relevance in history-pedagogical studies, the school has access to a copy of this game, solidifying its existing relevance for historical education in Norway. Picking a game to use in school is a task that is fraught with challenges as not only is access important, the school also needs to consider the age restrictions on different games. In this case, as This War of Mine is a game rated 14+ (This War of Mine, 2014), the students that participated who were all year 10

students were above the minimum age requirement. In cases where a teacher would like to use this game as part of their education for students in year eight, the teacher would have to receive permission from the students' parents before playing, adding an additional hurdle to a teaching tool many Norwegian teachers feel they have little to no experience using. (UDIR, 2021) Thirdly, the games relevance for the subject at the time; the game takes place in the 1990s during the Bosnian war following the fall of Yugoslavia. The people in the game are set in a fictional city, though they go through many situations that create parallels to both our modern day conflicts, and historical events. This makes the game an excellent tool when teaching about conflicts in history, both modern and historical.

Through the course of the game, the students are left in control of a group of characters, three to be exact. The students are required to control these three in order to survive. At first the students are not given too many challenges, such as gathering food, scavenging, cooking and so on. Though as the player keeps playing, the game ups the ante and they're given several moral quandaries that force the player to consider the best course of action, this action doesn't always correspond with the right moral thing to do, putting the players in a bind. These situations can be seen in two of the most recent master thesis' pertaining to the video game This War of Mine and historical empathy. (Nygård, Hole, 2022)

The final reason for picking this game comes from Hole's master dissertation in 2022, where he identifies a problem with his own research project, mainly that the students were unable to achieve historical empathy as they didn't manage to establish *historical contextualisation*. As such Hole suggested a stronger theoretical framework and a larger focus on history contextualisation. This helped inspire this thesis and laid the groundwork for the research hole I aim to answer. (Hole, 2022) How this thesis plans to do so will be delineated as part of the third (method) chapter.

2.3.1 Game mechanics

The above section aimed to outline why and how we're going to use TWoM. I believe it is also important to visit the topic of the game's mechanics and especially that of how morale works in TWoM as understanding how the system for morale works is crucial to understanding the game's mechanics. Where this system reflects how different actions influence the behaviour of the characters in the game. Whilst there are many game mechanics such as combat, base building, crafting and hunger; morale focuses mainly on the players

actions and events pertaining to the characters in the game. Given that one of the goals of this thesis is to identify historical empathy, I believe this is an important aspect to consider.

The characters' mental state may be affected by several events throughout the game, also depending on which character experiences what events. As an example, the character Bruno is tagged with the "altruistic" tag, meaning that Bruno is one of the characters most affected by moralistic choices, where stealing from the less fortunate, killing others, or refusing to help civilians may lead to a drop in his morale. (This War of Mine, 2014)

Morale is divided into five states scored on a scale going up to 100. The following is a table collected from This War of Mines wikipedia page which shows the different states of the characters, where there is an established point system where actions that go against a character's morals will negatively impact the characters mood.

Status condition	Effects
Content (0-19)	The characters make positive comments when at the house, and gain increased walking speed.
Normal (20-39)	None.
Sad (40-59)	The characters make negative comments with a chance to trigger traumatic responses such as insomnia, crying or infighting.
Depressed (60-79)	Same as sad, the character's speed is reduced, and the character will at random intervals take a break whilst performing actions.
Broken (80-99)	Same as the above, but the character will be unable to perform any action, and requires help from the other characters for sustenance and medical attention.

Table 2.1 (This War of Mine Wiki, 2024)

Using the table above, we can determine the state of different characters in the game, and by combining this with the character's personality traits we can therefore understand their

responses and decisions to events in the game. The characters may be further divided into four stages of moral stances; Egoist, Survivalist, Homie and Altruistic. (This War of Mine Wiki, 2014) These traits represent how the characters react to different situations in the game, as an example the character of "Roman" holds the egoist trait. In essence this means that "Roman" will not be as affected by actions that other characters such as Boris (altruist) would consider terrible. Throughout the game, should the characters reach an extreme mental break, their personality group will be further subdivided into "modifiers", these being; aggressive, insensitive, and apathetic. A character that becomes aggressive will no longer receive penalties from killing enemy bandits and will have new dialog options in the hideout. The same goes for the other *modifiers* where characters will respond in a manner accorded to them by the modifier. As the name may suggest, an incentive person will be less likely to have their status reduced by not helping other survivors in the field.

We will touch closer upon this later during the analysis but as an example there were two characters whom decided to commit suicide during one of the playthroughs, this indicates that the characters involved were at least depressed, as suicide is a function of the mood/moral system in the game.

2.4 Historical Empathy

Historical empathy has been a subject of research for over three decades now, and has sprouted several definitions and issues relating to historical empathy. However, before we can address any of these points; we must first clarify what exactly Historical Empathy is and how we ought to define it.

The most natural place to start is looking at what Historical Empathy isn't, at least that is how Foster suggests one approaches the subject in his book "*Historical Empathy and Perspective Taking in the Social Studies" (Foster, 1999).* As according to Foster, people too commonly mistake Historical Empathy as "a form of sympathy or appreciative sentiment". Hence Foster concludes that any learning that takes place using this misguided notion of historical empathy results in the learner "learning" history incorrectly. Foster further clarifies his understanding of historical empathy by excluding "identification, imagination and sympathy" as characteristics of historical Empathy. (Foster, 1999 & Endacott and Brooks 2018). Foster also suggests that historical empathy is for the most part a cognitive process;

intellectual in nature with elements of the "emotional dimension", arising from "active engagement in thinking about particular people, events and situations in their context". (Foster, 1999) In recent years, this notion of identifying and imagining the past as a part of historical empathy has been challenged, especially so in the new dual-domain concept put forth by Endacott & Brooks. Though even before Endacott & Brooks, Barton & Lestvik also put forward the concept of empathy requiring a certain amount of identification and imagination in order to properly understand the past. Barton & Lestvik instead reiterate the pitfalls of sympathy when studying historical empathy. As they would so aptly put it;

"Sympathy implies that all humans are basically the same across time, cultural boundaries, and individual preferences, and that a single frame of reference—one's own—represents an acceptable standard with which to measure the world" (Barton & Lestvik, 2004).

A sentiment which is echoed by many who have studied historical empathy, Foster among them (Foster, 1999), as this could lead to a misinterpretation of history and would be an opening for presentism to seep into one's history perspective and understanding. Instead, Barton & Lestvik put forward their own categories, some of which are later echoed in Endacott & Brooks' dual-domain theory.

Furthermore, given how videogames are a medium for audio-visual stimulation the process of perspective taking is alleviated for the player. The player is given visual stimulation that allows for the player to somewhat understand the time period in which the game takes place. Perspective taking still requires the player to be able to view the past and understand the actions of the characters as a part of the greater whole. This is where the interactive aspect gives the player a greater understanding of historical context allowing for historical perspective taking. As an example; Why would anyone steal food from a defenceless old man? In normal times, of course not; however, given the games survival-like nature and the backdrop of war the player sees how their own characters are starving and are settled with this moral dilemma. This will become part of our analysis later, how the players deal with this specific dilemma.

2.4.1 Historical empathy as redefined by Endacott & Brooks

As with most scientific concepts they spark detractors and discussions from the scientific community.

Some of the challenges we see discussed in regards to historical empathy: include presentism; where learners may use their own understanding of the present, our values, ideals or goals to judge historical figures or events based on this understanding of the present and not their understanding of the past or its contextualization. (Huijgen et al., 2017) According to Huijgen, when researchers discuss contextualization as a contextualization of actions conducted by people and peoples of the past, they use the words Historical Perspective

Taking. Historical Perspective Taking being; Historical Perspective Taking (HPT) refers to the ability to understand how people in the past viewed their world at various times and in various places to explain why they did what they did. (Huijgen et al., 2017). One could say that historical empathy is built up of several component parts, one of which being contextualization (/HPT), others being having a personal connection to the characters or subject as pointed out by sociocultural researchers Endacott & Brooks as well as Barton (Endacott and Brooks 2013; Barton 2016; Bartelds et.al 2020). They furthermore stress that this sense of a personal connection may arise when students feel a sense of relevance to their current modern day life.

However, in recent years there have been attempts at reconceptualizing historical empathy, Endacott & Brooks in particular have suggested a new definition of historical empathy: their definition reading as follows;

"the process of students' cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualise their lived experiences, decisions, or actions. Historical empathy involves understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013).

The point of which was to expand the understanding of historical empathy from a singular perspective or "domain" as Endacott & Brooks refers to it, into a "dual-domain". As opposed to the previous definitions of historical empathy that sought to distance themselves from the dictionary definition of empathy, Endacott & Brooks here seek to tie the two together into a "dual-domain" that draws from social psychology. (Endacott & Brooks 2018). As part of their dual-domain interpretation of historical empathy, Endacott and Brooks requires historical empathy to contain the three following concepts;

- Historical Contextualization
- Perspective taking
- Affective Connection

Endacott & Brooks models the concepts by the following model
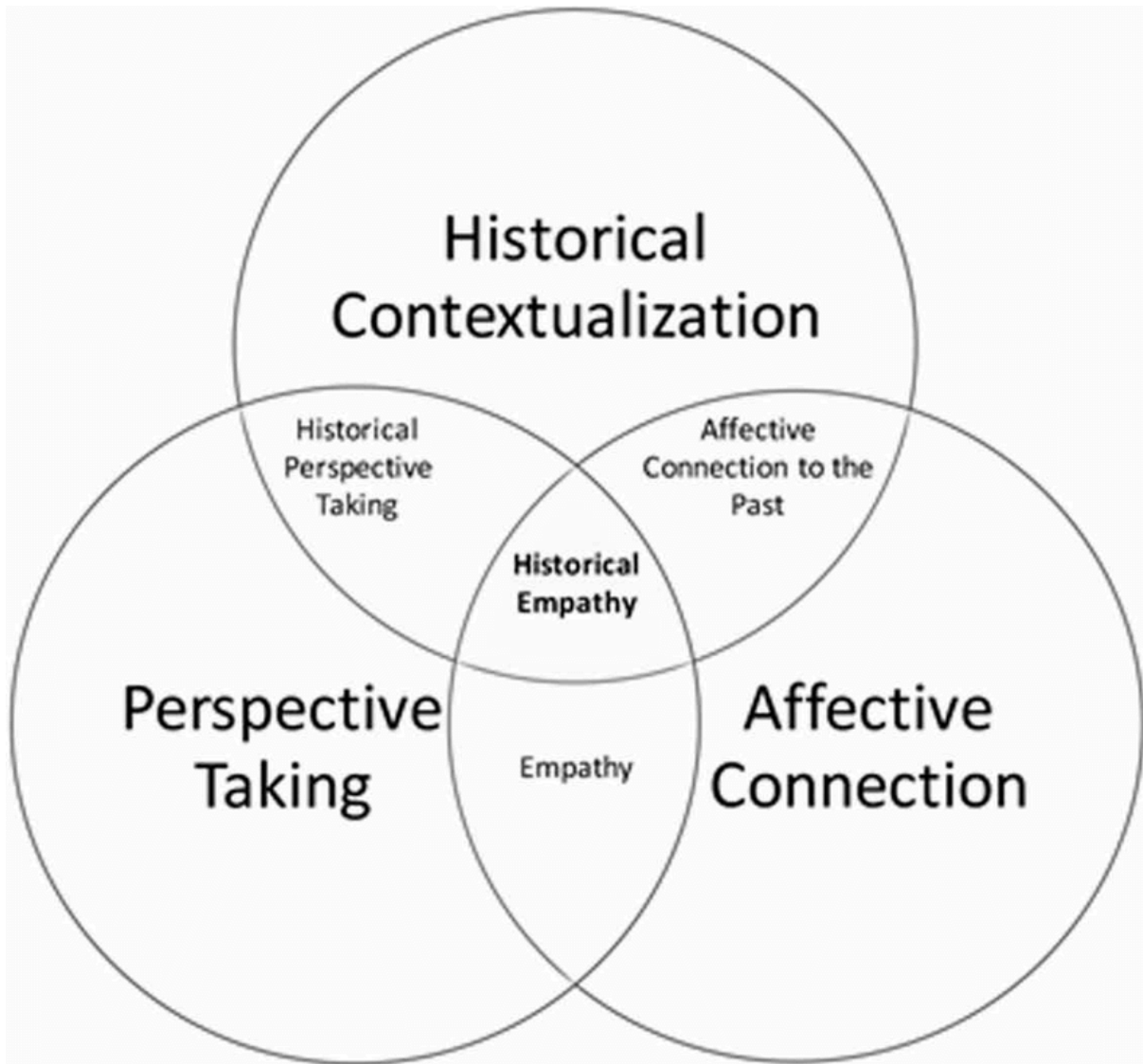
Figure 2.1 A visual conceptualization of historical empathy. (Endacott & Brooks, 2014)

In this figure, as well as in their definition of historical empathy, Endacott & Brooks assert that whereas earlier works within this field sought to discourage the identification towards historical figures, this model of historical empathy has the distinct advantage of empathising affective dimension, which as mentioned runs contrary to many of the points previously central to the concept of historical empathy as defined by those more faithful to the more dispassionate historical method. Whereas they acknowledge that not all figures are desirable or compatible with this method, Endacott & Brooks asserts that in their definition of historical empathy, the identification factor is closely linked with the concept of empathy. (Hardy, 2006; Hunt 2006; Endacott & Brooks, 2014; 2018)

2.4.2 Historical Empathy according to Barton & Lestvik: Historical Empathy as perspective recognition

As Barton & Lestviks theories will be playing a large role in this thesis, I have decided here to dedicate a subchapter to these categories, as such the thesis will outline the five concepts developed by Barton & Lestvik here as a reference point for how we will be conducting the actual project and as these categories are pertinent to our later analysis they require their own dedicated section. These categories as according to Barton & Lestvik are as follows;

1. A sense of "Otherness"
2. Shared Normalcy
3. Historical Contextualisation
4. Multiplicity of Historical Perspectives
5. Contextualisation of the Present

These categories are according to Barton & Levstik a necessary requirement in order to understand and develop historical empathy. Interestingly these categories share many similarities to the model later developed by Endacott & Brooks. Amongst which historical contextualisation is present in both these definitions, whereas some other categories are implied though not outright mentioned. As an example, we could perhaps say that points one and two from Barton & Lestvik pertain to the Affective Connection outlined by Endacott & Brooks.

A Sense of Otherness

In this case, by "A sense of Otherness", Barton and Lestvik are referring to how in order to understand historical empathy the first thing that is required by a learner is to understand that the thoughts, behaviours and feelings of others may differ from one self. In short, the learner needs to, as they put it, "De-centralise" themselves and understand that not everyone shares the same thoughts and feelings. (Barton & Levstik, 2004)

Shared Normalcy

By "Shared Normalcy", Barton & Levstik believe that in order to develop historical empathy it isn't enough that the student understands that others have different thoughts, beliefs and such. Instead the student must be willing to accept that these thoughts and considerations are valid in and by themselves, and "are not the result of ignorance, stupidity nor delusions" as they so aptly put it. (Barton & Levstik, 2004)

History Contextualisation

Thirdly there is the topic of History Contextualisation. Both Endacott & Brooks as well as Barton & Levstik agree that history contextualisation is a crucial part in understanding and developing historical empathy. According to Endacott & Brooks historical

contextualisation can be defined as "a temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently". (Endacott & Brooks, 2013) Going by this definition it may be considered that students in younger age groups would be unable to fully grasp the concept of history contextualisation. However, according to Barton & Lestvik this is not true. As their study primarily focused on fifth grade learners, they found that even at this young age it is possible for students to grasp and understand the concept. In their study Barton & Lestvik used the Salem witch trials as their testing arena and found that despite their lack of formal historical education these students were able to partake in recreating past perspectives and further understood how these perspectives affected the behaviour of people of this time. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

Multiplicity of historical perspectives

The fourth concept put forward by Barton & Lestvik the multiplicity of historical perspectives refers to how though historical contextualisation is an integral part of historical empathy often the concept is taught in a manner that though yes, shows us that the past held different attitudes and values than the ones we hold today, it often stops at this juncture. Students are not taught that even in the past there were many differing opinions, Barton & Lestvik uses the American revolution as an example, students in the U.S are not often taught that the majority of the civilian populace in the thirteen colonies at that time opposed the American revolution. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004) In a similar vein, Norwegian students are not often taught about the communist resistance in Norway during the second world war, instead it is often implied that the resistance movement during the war was a unified front where everyone agreed with one another. Barton & Lestvik suggests that this isn't enough in order to develop historical empathy, and that the students also need to understand that people of the past often held differing attitudes and beliefs, and that this was often a source of conflict for people of that time. Barton & Lestvik further clarifies that even if students learn about these differences, they are not expected to accept them immediately, though it builds a foundation upon which coming to accept the differing views of the past would seem more "acceptable". (Barton & Lestvik 2004)

Contextualisation of the present

The final concept that makes up historical empathy according to Barton & Lestvik is the ability to contextualise the present. This is to say being able to understand that we are also a product of our own history, and that just as how we view our own actions as reasonable, they are a product of our time and history, and that these values will change over time as they have done for years prior. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

These concepts all culminate in what Barton and Lestvik refer to as "Historical Empathy as Perspective Recognition". This form of historical empathy falls into the category of thinking, where emotions and the affective connection isn't emphasised as a part of historical empathy. This is the form of empathy that has been emphasised previously and in essence leaves feelings out of empathy. Empathy being an emotion which at its core requires the learner to show feelings makes taking the emotion out of empathy somewhat of an oxymoron according to Barton & Lestvik. This is in line with the definition put forward by Endacott & Brooks where the affective connection plays an increased role in how we understand historical empathy. (Barton & Lestvik; Endacott & Brooks; 2004, 2013).

Taking into consideration the interactive nature of videogames I believe that it is natural to consider the affective connection as proposed by Barton & Lestvik as well as Endacott & Brooks. This is due to how video games as proposed by Gee (2013) allows the player to 'live' the world within the video game. The game that we will be using; This War of Mine, takes place in a war torn city filled with moral dilemmas for the player to deal with. This creates an interesting interrelationship between the characters in the game and the student-players who have to deal with how to balance their morality with their need for survival.

2.4.3 Historical Empathy according to Barton & Lestvik: "Empathy as caring"

Following the cognitive approach to historical empathy we see that our personal emotions and thoughts are to be set aside in the process of historical inquiry, lest we taint our perceptions of what happened in the past, at least this is how most historians thought a decade ago according to Barton & Lestvik. This, they suppose, is incorrect. Care is a great motivator for historical research and shapes our interests in its products, whether they be books, movies, documentaries, historical articles or much more. To this effect, Barton & Lestvik propose that there are four categories important to understanding empathy and historical empathy as a form of care. These are;

- Caring About
- Caring That
- Caring For
- Caring To

(Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

Going over these briefly;

Caring About

Caring About refers to how when the student cares about a topic, they will be more motivated towards receiving instruction, towards searching out information by themselves and to reflect over what they have learned throughout the process. Moreover, Barton & Lestvik asserts that in cases where students are not interested in a topic, they will be less interested in conducting these intellectual tasks in order to gain an understanding of people from the past. Traditional approaches have since focused on a set curriculum where these points of interest have been ignored, focusing more on the curriculum of which some students may not take interest, resulting in a lack of interest towards whatever topic the teacher presents as part of the curriculum. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004) In short, Caring About refers to the topics relevance for a student, and that if the student cares about the topic, we'll see a greater focus and more motivation towards learning about the topic from the student(s).

Caring That

Caring That refers to the students caring that something happened. Often topics involving injustice or unfairness receive a strong response from students. Barton & Lestvik found that these topics of unfairness and injustice to be of great interest to the students, and that in the U.S where the study was conducted that these students

"(...) they consider the progressive expansion of rights and opportunities—greater fairness, that is—to be the central theme of the national past." (Barton & Lestvik, 2004).

Interestingly according to Barton & Lestvik, the students would also respond differently towards historical events of different natures. Cases of technological advancements which were of great historical importance would receive less attention and discussion than events pertaining to discrimination and injustice. Caring that prepares students to establish their own responses to history and the events of the past. Barton & Lestvik points out that by using solely the cognitive approach of perspective taking, we may gain insights into what happened and why it did so, however, the students learn of the causes, leaving out the consequences of these historical events. Hence, "caring that" opens the door to in union with historical empathy as perspective taking, learning both the cause and consequences of historical events. (Barton & Levstik, 2004)

Caring For

Caring For, refers to how students throughout Barton & Lestviks study would show clear signs of caring for the people who suffered throughout history, often manifesting itself in the form of outrage or the desire to take physical action. Critics of this way of *"caring for"* claim that this sort of feeling comes dangerously close to simulation, by simulation they are referring to the exercise "Imagine you are a x", from which students may gain a glimpse of how someone may have felt, though the exercise is over in but a few minutes, whereas the character they imagine themselves as had to live through the entire experience. The example used by Barotn & Lestvik is to imagine oneself as a WW I soldier, where the students could

not possibly imagine the feelings of not knowing whether or not the soldier would live or die. Regardless of the critique, Barton & Lestvik believes this is an important tool that we as educators could make use of to contextualise historical experiences. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

Caring For

The final category brought forth by Barton & Lestvik is "Caring To", according to Barton & Lestvik, the ultimate goal of historical education is for the student to want to take action in the present, and that to do so the students must *care to* do so. In other words, based on what the students have learned of the past, they must be willing to make changes to themselves; their own values, attitudes and their beliefs. (Barton & Levstik, 2004)

2.5 - Our definition of historical empathy

Given how the concept of historical empathy has so many ways in which it may be defined, I believe it prudent to establish here how this historical concept is defined in this thesis. Researchers prioritise differently when defining historical empathy. Some may use the above mentioned definition but weigh certain aspects more heavily than others. In this thesis, the two most prevalent definitions of historical empathy are those of Endacott & Brooks as well as Barton & Lestvik, both definitions focus on some of the same aspects and propose somewhat different views on what historical empathy should be. We will be utilising the reconceptualised psychologically inspired dual-domain definition as proposed by Endacott & Brooks quite centrally in this thesis alongside the categories developed by Barton & Lestvik in order to identify historical empathy. Though there are several other definitions and approaches to historical empathy, this remains the approach that this thesis finds most attractive. The emphasis on the affective connection as it strays from previous historical thinking is of particular interest given the nature of video games and how they affect the player.

As we have already discussed, per James Paul Gee, video games are great at building this affective connection to the player; moreover, we see that the affective connection is one of the more difficult aspects for traditional learning to emulate. This is where video games have a distinct advantage and the reason why we'll be taking a closer look at exactly this aspect of the historical empathy model as proposed by Endacott & Brooks. Of course this thesis does not propose that the affective connection is by far the most important aspect of historical empathy as all parts are equally important in order to achieve *historical empathy*. However, this is an area that video games are particularly well suited for and that we'll be attempting to measure alongside the other aspects.

In lieu of the above, I feel it prudent to explain the basis of my statement, that being; why videogames are particularly well suited towards the affective connection part of a video game. Speaking purely from personal experience here; I find that named characters in a videogame remain memorable, especially when they're designed to be likeable or helpful towards the player. This is further supported by Gee who in his book "Good Video Games and Good Learning" denotes how players connect to game characters mostly by playing as the character, but also by their interactions. As an example of this a distinct memory of a character in which I deeply sympathise was Jarl Balgruuf in Skyrim: The Elder Scrolls. The character helps the player throughout the start of the game, and remains a likeable figure throughout the game. As such, when I by accident gave his city away around the mid game, I was genuinely disappointed. Not finding out until several gameplay hours later, I willingly went back to change this action, abandoning hours of progress. The point of this analogy being that players may form affective connections not only to their player characters but also NPCs in the game. Story driven games being particularly susceptible to this sort of historical affection.

In this chapter (sub-chapter), we have talked extensively about Barton & Lestvik's theories on historical empathy, as well as Endacott & Brooks' revised model for historical empathy, and the interpretation of historical empathy this thesis will be using.

The thesis spent quite a lot of time on Barton & Lestvik here, as their understanding of historical empathy and the categories that make up both history as perspective taking and the affective connection will be used during the analysis alongside Endacott & Brooks to gauge if historical empathy has taken place or not. Barton & Lestvik have here been divided into two sub-chapters, chapter 2.4.2 referring to the cognitive aspect; *Historical Empathy as Perspective Taking* as well as chapter 2.4.3 *"Historical Empathy as Caring"*. Historical Empathy as Perspective taking refers to the cognitive process of historical empathy where feelings are largely put aside and is therefore more in line with how historical empathy was interpreted previously. *Historical Empathy as Caring* instead refers to the acceptance and usage of the students' own feelings when studying history. Moreover, the categories "*Caring*" being; *Caring About, Caring That, Caring For, Caring To*, opens up for closer inspection of historical empathy through gauging how the students respond to these different categories.

We've also looked at Endacott & Brooks this chapter, and their re-imagination of historical empathy as a dual-domain cognitive and emotional approach. Their model is divided into three parts, Historical Contextualisation, Perspective taking and the Affective Connection. Through a combination of these concepts one can, according to Endacott & Brooks, achieve historical empathy. We can draw several similarities between the approaches put forward by Endacott & Brooks and Barton & Lestvik, most notable of which being the affective connection, as the theme of personal feelings applies to both interpretations of historical empathy. Furthermore, both works propose ways in which one may examine the differing aspects of their research. These methods greatly apply when considering how this thesis should approach the topic of historical empathy and further how to categorise the findings during the empirical phase of gathering data for this thesis.

Furthermore, as of time of writing this thesis the game we'll be using draws a sharp comparison to the real life events taking place in the middle east today; specifically in the wake of the Syrian civil war. We therefore plan on broaching historical empathy in the game (This War of Mine) with the current day refugee elements of the above mentioned conflict. We'll encourage students to think as if they were there in what is effectively a siege of Damascus.

In our case HPT and Contextualization holds an important role as part of the game we'll be using, This War of Mine, where the students are put into the shoes of a war torn city where survival is the name of the game. The goal is for students to be able to contextualise their surroundings and the times they find themselves in, reasoning and understanding what they have to do to survive. Contextualization and HPT isn't of huge interest as far as the gameplay loop is concerned; however, when considering the concepts that we wish to teach specifically Historical Empathy, Contextualization takes on a more active role in our study; especially so given the suggested further research proposed by Hole (2022). Because of the aforementioned premise of the game students will be asked to place themselves in the shoes of someone struggling through the horrors of war. With regards to current world events, the students are presented with a uniquely good opportunity to contextualise and feel the relevance of the game; namely being a refugee in war.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to contextualise the research from which this thesis will be drawing, to lay the groundwork for future interpretation of data and to define how this thesis defines historical empathy so that we may use the aforementioned interpretation when discussing and analysing the empirical data pertaining to This War of Mine, historical empathy and scientific concepts. As I hope to have shown through this chapter, there exists a plethora of research into the topics of historical empathy and video game learning through *This War of Mine*, as well as a combination of the two. This is partly the reason for this chapter being as long as it is, as there is a lot of research to look at, furthermore, with historical empathy being a concept that isn't neatly defined and which is still to this day being discussed and reconceptualised. Hence I found it important to clearly delineate through this chapter how previous researchers have discussed and conceptualised historical empathy, as well as to provide my own contribution to the discussion, modest as it may be. This chapter has looked into prior research into video game learning, the video game *This War of Mine*, game based learning, and spent quite a bit of time on the two main perspectives within historical empathy from which this thesis will be basing itself upon and as part of its analysis. This thesis spent that time discussing these perspectives as in order for the thesis to analyse the responses from this project, a strong groundwork needs to be established pertaining to what and how exactly this thesis interprets historical empathy.

Chapter 3: Method

Given how the concept of historical empathy is one that is quite difficult to capture using only one method, I have chosen to incorporate several approaches to assist in being able to capture historical empathy in the students. The plan here is to give not only the researcher but also the teacher responsible for the class a deeper understanding of the choices that these students take throughout the game. Given the new teaching practice plan recently incorporating a constant state of evaluations over a prolonged period of time independent of specific evaluations *(underveisvurdering),* the method we use should also incorporate the competency aims related to teaching in Norwegian schools. (UDIR, 2022) Moving on, I have chosen to conduct an interview with the students after they finish playing the game, I'll also be present in the gaming room making notes on how the students react to the different moral dilemmas they face throughout the game focusing on a select few students; not necessarily all the same students that are to be interviewed. Finally, I alongside the teacher responsible for this class will be conducting an evaluation at the end of the teaching plan. As a result the students are given several arenas as basis for reflection from which I hope to capture historical empathy amongst the students. I have chosen these three approaches because I believe that should I limit myself to one or two, there is a high probability that should one process yield several results or should a process fail to yield any, I'd be left with no grounds

to make any assertions on if historical empathy made its presence known to the students or not. Hence I have chosen three different approaches to the subject to create some redundancies. It may be of interest here when analysing to look at both those who score well (in regards to historical empathy) on all points, as well as those who do well on only one or two of the approaches, as to capture how or what went wrong or could have been done differently as to not yield what may appear to be a false positive.

In short, in this thesis we plan on conducting an interview after varying activities, both playing the game, a worksheet encompassing the game and real world events as well as observations and conversations with the students. This is to gather the pupils' understanding of video games, and their conclusions of how they themselves understand the use of video games in the classroom. The goal is to have the students reflect over the applications of video games in a teaching situation and the emotions they might have felt whilst playing the game. After talking with some of the other supervisors it was recommended to me that I perhaps look at video games as a motivating factor towards student learning. Hence I'll conduct an interview where the students may reflect on the use of video games and their own motivation towards learning through this medium, and not strictly focusing on only the historical empathy part of this study. Hence, this part will be divided into focus areas. Firstly how students perceive video games as a motivating factor, and then how the students experienced the game, did they develop historical empathy through the myriad of moral dilemmas the game puts them up against, and finally if its possible to apply Kolb's expanded learning model as a way of teaching scientific concepts such as historical empathy.

3.1 Method – Qualitative

As part of this thesis we will be using the qualitative method as our approach. Before we move any further I believe it prudent to expand upon why this thesis has chosen a qualitative study, and how it benefits this study. In addition to how it will be used throughout this thesis, as well as why I have chosen this approach in this study. The qualitative research method is something that is hard to accurately confine within a simple, neat definition. The qualitative method encompasses a wide variety of research methods and techniques, according to Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey a qualitative research method is a method that which allows you to experience someone's experiences in detail by using a certain set of

research questions, an example of such research questions being; in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, observations, content analysis, and several others. (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey, 2020) Moreover, according to Hennink et.al, the qualitative method is the prime method to use when trying to achieve an in-depth understanding of the topic the researcher is looking into. It's also a great method when attempting to "understanding complex issues; for explaining people's beliefs and behaviour; and for identifying the social or cultural norms of a group or society." (Hennink, Hutter, Bailey, 2020)

It is further important to also understand the ethical challenges with qualitative research, as mentioned in the above quote, the qualitative approach aims to understand people's beliefs and behaviours and can be used in identifying the social or cultural norms of a group. Therefore since the researcher is granted a view into their subjects' beliefs and behaviours, this involves an inordinate amount of trust between the parties both conducting and partaking in the research. In our case there is a further layer to this as my role as one of the school's personnel also applies. Hence anonymity and informed consent to participate in the study has been of great importance as to maintain the high ethical standards that go into the qualitative research method.

We have chosen for this study to use the qualitative research method as our goal is to assess if we may apply Egenfeldt-Nielsen expansion of Kolb's learning model (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) in order to assess if we can use video games as a way of teaching historical scientific concepts at school. In order to gain insight into whether or not this is possible I have decided that a qualitative approach would be the best suited to gain the necessary insight into the students' understanding of the game and how they interpret the events in the game.

3.2 Project Progression

This project has been a cooperative endeavour between myself and a year 10 social studies (samfunnsfag) teacher. The purpose of this project being to develop a curriculum that can be used to teach historical scientific concepts, specifically historical empathy. To do so we created a plan that outlines how we planned to structure the curriculum, which I will discuss here.

Class as divided into one hour sessions	Topic
#1	Introduce the topic "*Conflicts in the Middle East" - Tasks related to Israel-Palestine*
#2	PowerPoint presentation on the Syrian Conflict - *Text on the Roman & Ottoman empires*
#3	Introduce the Syrian Conflict - *PowerPoint on the Middle East (Contains Syria)*
#4	Introduce "This War of Mine"
#5	Play the game
#6	Game
#7	Game
#8	Game
#9	Worksheet related to This War of Mine
#10	As above / Oral evaluations

Tabel 3.1

The table above shows the progression of the curriculum, each part has been divided into an hour long teaching segment with a different topic that connects to the overall curriculum. The students started a new topic: Conflicts in the Middle East, this became the backdrop for the use of This War of Mine. The first few classes were dedicated to introducing the topic as well as teaching the students about the different factors leading up to, and responsible for conflict in the middle east. After having done so, the students were given another introduction into the game, what it was about and a brief introduction into historical empathy.

The following classes were dedicated to playing the game, there was a teacher present in the room taking notes on their interactions during this time. After the consecutive classes of playing, the students were given a worksheet where the students answered questions pertaining to both the game and real life historical events aimed mainly towards allowing the students to show their ability to reflect. The project was then rounded off with an oral evaluation.

3.2 - Background for the interviews.

The study will be observing a year 10 class as the objective for this thesis, furthermore, though the entire class is invited to participate, the interviews will be conducted on only a few students. As this is a qualitative study, I have chosen to only conduct a few interviews as the interview guide as found in the appendix is somewhat extensive, hence, instead of focusing on as many students as possible, I will rather focus on a smaller number, but attempt to diversify the group as much as possible which I will delineate as part of this subchapter.

Working alongside the students' primary teacher, we'll split the students based on their academic ability first. Their teacher knows the students' abilities well and due to the limited number of computers will pair the students up based on this criteria. This is to see if the results we get back will differ based on students' academic ability or not. Out of the nearly thirty students in the class, interviews will be conducted with eight students whose abilities differ and their familiarity with history, video games and of varying interest in the school subject social studies.

According to both Gee and Nielsen, we cannot expect students to simply play a game and then develop scientific concepts such as historical empathy, it is therefore prudent that we tentatively teach historical empathy before we start playing the game. (Gee; Egenfeldt-Nielsen; 2014, 2004) We therefore agreed that we should use the current day Syrian civil war as backdrop alongside the Serajevo incident as guise for teaching the subject of historical empathy. For this purpose Egnfeldt-Nielsen has developed a model of which will be of particular use to this study; which we will now discuss.

3.3 Kolb's expanded learning model.
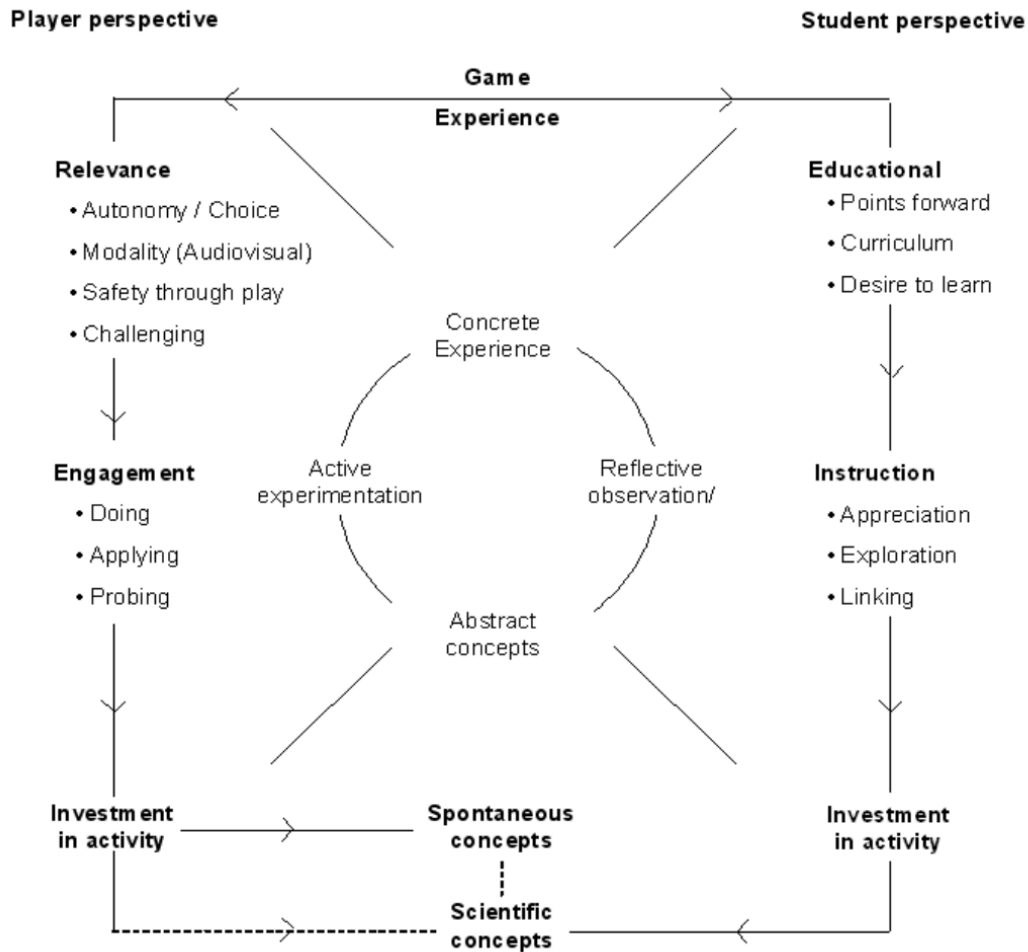
Figure 3.2 Kolb's learning model expanded for video game learning (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005).

As we can see in regards to the above figure, Egenfeldt-Nielsen has gone ahead and expanded upon Kolb's original learning model. Nielsen's modifications were made as to apply Kolb's learning model to video games. Egenfeldt-Nielsen has here divided the model into two parts; the player perspective and the student perspective with Kolb's learning model at the centre. The left side representing the player perspective looks to how the player perceives the game. The right hand side representing the student perspective shows according to Egnfeldt-Nielsen how the game experience is transformed from beyond the game's context. The model's first step is the game experience, here the game that is being played must build a sense of investment in the game and or universe the player inhabits, this needs to be seen as relevant to the player as to build investment towards the subject. I find that building relevance ought not to be a challenge given the current day refugee crisis' and world events as of 2023 & 24. This will, according to Egnfeldt-Nielsen, lead to the players developing some concepts representative of the concrete experience the player partakes in. In

accordance with the model this represents the "Spontaneous concepts", if we are to use video games to teach "Scientific concepts" the model requires concrete formal instruction in an educational context to as Egnfeldt puts it " to take the game beyond the informal learning (playing) (...)" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005), the game must be put up against a broader context "through the development of scientific concepts through appreciation and exploration of game experiences while linking these with other concepts", in essence the game must be put into an educational context that bases itself on relevance, concrete learning situations and where the concepts that the educator wishes to teach are taught before, during and after the playing of the videogames through instruction.

Elaborating on the concepts of scientific vs. spontaneous concepts; spontaneous concepts here refer to concepts that are experienced through playing without instruction, they are learned by the player without requiring any formal instruction, often taking place as an unconscious exercise, therefore being a non-systematic way of learning. As opposed to these spontaneous concepts, the scientific concept comes from a top-down approach according to Nielsen; requiring teaching and instructions. The scientific concepts makes the student able to reach a higher level of cognitive function "characterised by being systematic, general, abstract and organising." (Egenfeldt-Nielsen 2005). This is where the above model is of particular importance; as according to Nielsen (2005) & Dewey (1910) forcing scientific concepts on students that do not have the prerequisite knowledge base to handle the educational input put forth by schools, leads to students instead of achieving a higher understanding of scientific concepts such as in our case *historical empathy*, the player instead achieves what Nielsen (2004) and Vygotsky (1986) calls "parrot-like repetition", thereby not learning the concepts that schools wishes to teach. Moreover, we see this sentiment also supported by James Paul Gee, where as mentioned, Gee suggests that players are instructed in whichever competency aims are the goal of the game before playing, allowing the players to search them out on their own; though, furthermore giving the player a knowledge base to work off of when partaking in the game world. (Gee, 2014)

3.3 - Conversation

Following the students playing the game and before the formal interviews themselves, the students have been tasked with a worksheet in accordance with their curriculum. As part

of this worksheet their experiences in the game were also included and tied up to the wider topic of world conflicts. As the students worked with this worksheet I took the time to converse with a variety of students about their experiences. We did this as a way to incentivise them to reflect on the differing topics within the game and to connect their experiences with real world events. As according to Nielsen, making sure that the subject is relevant to the students is one of the steps required to fully develop scientific concepts. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

As part of the qualitative method Hennik et.al suggests several approaches, one of which being the selection of a focus group with a conversation being led by a trained moderator with focus on a single topic. In our case we could consider these talks as a form of miniature focus groups. Whereas Hennik et.al suggest a longer 60-90 minute conversation, we spent around 15 minutes on each group shuttling back and forth between the participants during the class. This was partly to allow the students to keep working on their assigned worksheets, but also to allow them time to reflect on the conversations we already had and to give time to come up with answers to questions posed where they were not fully certain. (Hennik, Hutter, Bailey, 2020) This method diverges from the in-depth interview in that it opens up for group discussion and participation, all participants may not agree with one another which helps raise the quality of answers whereupon the students may reflect, bring up points and counterpoints to their views of the events in the game. This also opens up for examples and confirmations from their fellow students. Lastly, following Hennik, Hutter, and Bailey; the students may also temper their more extreme views on a subject given that they need to think through their responses before commenting as another student may ask for examples or evidence that would support these claims. (Hennik, Hutter, Bailey, 2020)

3.4 Interview

As part of our empirical data collection I have decided to conduct an interview in which we primarily conducted said interviews one-on-one with students who have participated in the study, with one exception. The goal of the interviews were to gain insights into the students' beliefs and how they perceived video games in school, as well as to gauge their feelings and emotions surrounding the game experience. This will be our primary source of data as compared to the other methods, by utilising interviews effectively, we are granted

much deeper insight into the students' experiences. (Hennik, Hole, Bailey, 2020). Furthermore, as interviews are organic in nature they will allow for more flexibility during the process where the interviewer may ask follow-up questions, and the interviewee is given more latitude to share anecdotes and other experiences that may not be part of the original interview guide. This is why Hennik et.al suggests that the interview guide shouldn't be a strict guide on how exactly the interview should progress, but instead suggests a semi-structured interview guide which will allow for these spontaneous moments of reflection. Moreover, if done correctly they propose that the interview will feel more like a conversation for the interviewee than an interview. The purpose and the reasoning behind why we'd like to achieve such a situation is so that nominal barriers often associated with interviews or oral tests could come down. According to Hennik, Hutter & Bailey the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee also play a part in the responses throughout the interview, the interviewer and interviewee respond not only to the questions but also the identity, appearance and personality of one another. (Hennik, Hutter, Bailey, 2020) Which means in our case achieving this state is of even more importance, this is due to both the interviewers role as school faculty and the position of the interviewee as a year ten student who graduates lower secondary school that same year. The interview may feel and follow some of the same structure of an oral assessment. Hence to avoid this feeling of being asset throughout the interview, the goal becomes to achieve this dialogical state between interviewer and interviewee. That being said, Hennik et.al further cautions against the interview becoming a dialogue as the goal of an interview isn't for the interviewer to share their own opinions or experiences with the game, instead the role of the interviewer is to elicit the story shared by the interviewee. (Hennik, Hutter, Bailey, 2020)

The interview process has been heavily influenced by the writings of Hennik, Hutter and Bailey and their book "Qualitative Research Methods" submitted for publishing in 2020.

3.5 Observations

As part of the empirical evidence gathering we'll also be using the observational method as outlined by Hennik, Hutter and Bailey, where we'll be gauging and analysing the students' behaviour in how they talk and interact with the game. As according to Hennik et.al, observation, though it sounds like a simple task, involves an extensive checklist of tasks that the researcher must go through. Amongst these tasks are watching, listening, questioning

and recording behaviour seen in the observation target. One must also note the social setting and location where the study is being conducted as this pertains to the students' behaviour. Furthermore, as it is impossible to observe the entirety of a class and all their computer screens, one must also take note of who and what the observer should observe in the first place. (Hennik, Hutter, Bailey, 2020)

The goal of this observation is to observe the students in a classroom setting and seeing how they approach game based learning. How they talk about the game and how they approach different challenges where the approach may differ from student to student, perhaps sparking some discussion on how they chose to solve a certain issue. Some students may be of special interest to keep a closer eye on. Because of this, and because a class' experience with videogames may differ in a major way. Hence I will be marking these students out through the use of a questionnaire, once I have the corresponding data it would be of interest to compile a selection for the interview stage where some students are experienced video game players, some play every now and then and some have little video game experience on their free time. This would help vary the date and though the interview pool will be a smaller selection from the entire class, about eight to ten students; I hope to see that the varying degree of experience expresses itself in the game. An interesting notion would be to take note of students' prior academic performance and noting this in context of the game, hence marking out stronger and weaker students within the subject of history will allow for a variety of valuable data to not only the observations but also their answers and their motivation towards learning going forward with this project.

I expect that the students will not all be on the same starting line, hence I also plan on using a questionnaire at the start of the activity. The questioner's purpose is to chart their prior experience with video games as well as the student's motivation towards the subject. At the end of said questioner I plan on having a rough overview of students with prior gaming experience and their motivation towards the subject of social studies / history where those students of special interest to me would be the ones with a plethora of prior gaming experience but low motivation towards the subject.

3.6 Chapter summary

With the above in mind, I believe a summary of approaches and methods would be prudent as to sum up this chapter. First and foremost, this thesis has decided to conduct interviews and dialogs with students as to ascertain if we can utilise Egenfeldt-Nielsens extended learning model aimed towards video games, based off of Kolb's original learning model to teach historical scientific concepts. In this case this thesis will be looking at the subject through the lens of historical empathy. To accomplish this, I have decided to settle on a Norwegian year ten class. The thesis decided on choosing a year ten as this thesis believes that year ten students would be more cognitively developed and therefore more recipient towards the learning aspects of video games in class. This is not to say that other age groups wouldn't be able to learn through this way of teaching, as we have clearly seen in Barton & Lestviks book "*Teaching History for the Common Good*", even in year five, children have shown the capacity to learn and utilise historical empathy. Though this thesis believes that the finer points of the subject would be lost for younger age groups especially when also applying the video game factor. As Barton & Lestvik's research group focused on discussions, classroom teaching and assignments, the nature of the project took another approach with fewer '*entertainment factors*' if we may define video games in such a way. At least that's the consensus held prior to Egnfeldt-Nielsen's PhD thesis. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

The course of this teaching arrangement has been split into three main sections; first and foremost, the teacher responsible for teaching the class started with introducing the subject, in this case *the middle east*, the course used the following competency aims as its guidelines;

- *Discuss how the way we see the past, events and groups has had impact on and continues to impact people's actions and attitudes*
- *Explain the causes and consequences of terrorism and genocide, such as the Holocaust, and reflect on how extremist attitudes and extremist acts can be prevented*

- *Explain the causes and consequences of key historical and contemporary conflicts, and reflect on whether changes in certain conditions could have prevented the conflicts*

(UDIR, 2024)

In this case we tied the game with the Syrian civil war, though the game "This War of Mine" mainly focuses on the Siege of Sarajevo, there are several applicable elements in the game that makes it relevant as a teaching resource. Furthermore, as "Historical empathy" is as of the new national teaching plan considered a core element, (UDIR, 2024) the game provides a unique chance of attempting to develop empathy and understanding for refugees and those living in conditions as shown in the game. Hence why we chose to utilise "This War of Mine" as a medium for this course.

Once introduced to the subject, the teacher gave an introduction to different wars and conflicts relating to the middle east. The teacher also touched on historical empathy though did not explain in detail the scientific concept, instead we decided to put the theory as seen in chapter one, theory, to the test using Egenfeldt-Nielsens learning model. Following the traditional classroom teaching, we moved on to playing the game. The students played for several classes, we asked the students to additionally take note of events that they found especially harrowing or went against their traditional sense of morals. From which the students were able to give several examples and further mentioned how these events made them feel for the characters in the game. We will further discuss this point later in the main analysis section of this thesis.

This thesis has furthermore, decided to use interviews as its primary source of analysis. In lieu of this we have further conducted small mini-talks and pre-interview conversations with applicable students. These "mini-talks" were conducted during the playing stage of the experiment, where I conversed lightly with the students about any situations that may or may not have occurred during their playthrough. I tended to stick to situations that were the most common and that most players would have experienced at one point or other, and gauged their reactions from there. These conversations proved to be of interest as it gives us an insight into how the students think about the game outside of having fulfilled the entire premise of the game, before they've drawn their conclusions fully and as a

gauge as to what the students have noticed so far in the game.

Moving on, as the students started wrapping up their games the teacher in charge of the class gave the students assignments relating to the game, from what they saw, how they interpreted the game and how we can relate these experiences to the real life events both which the game is based upon, and also what we are seeing in the world today. I continued conversations with the students at this phase to see how they've changed their outlook on the game itself. Finally, once we finished this section of the teaching course, we decided to bring the students out for our interview, which will be the subject of our next chapter; both the interviews and the analysis therein.

Chapter 4: Analysis

For this part of the thesis, we will be looking for historical empathy by analysing the individual interviews of the participants who chose to partake in this study. As such we will be analysing the interviews to help us answer the research questions posed throughout this study. With this in mind this study has further taken great care to protect the participants' individual privacy, hence I will be using pseudonyms instead of their real names to maintain anonymity, in respect to current law and research ethics.

4.1 The basis for this thesis' analysis

One of the research questions that this study has focused on is whether or not it is prudent to use video games in order to teach scientific concepts in a classroom setting, and as part of history class specifically. As part of this we've looked at Kolb's learning model as expanded by Egnfeldt-Nielsen, which can once more be found below. This chapter has further been divided into two, where we tackle both Historical Empathy as Perspective Recognition as well as historical empathy as caring in lieu of the empirical data gathered from the interviews.

Clarification: This section may at times refer to a "we", though this paper was written by myself, I use the "we" here to indicate parts where myself and the teacher I worked with discussed or worked together during this project.
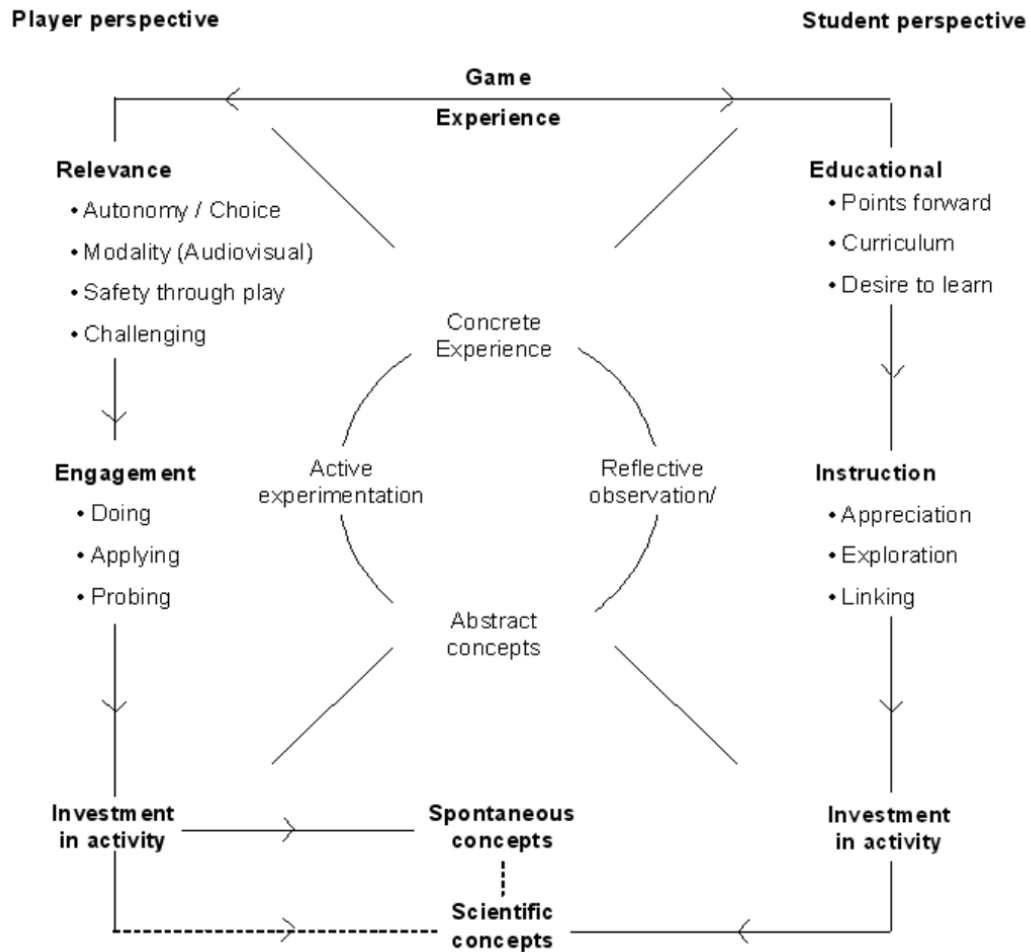
Figure. 4.1 (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

As can be seen in the model above there are two 'perspectives'; one representing the player perspective. Which in this case represents normal everyday playing without proper instruction from a teacher. Running counter to this is the student perspective which represents the structured learning approach from which a teacher is responsible for teaching a skill related to the curriculum.

This part of the study looks to analyse whether or not it is possible to apply this model in a way that the students can learn scientific concepts such as historical empathy. To do this I have conducted interviews with a selection of students, the interviews consisted of several questions mainly split into three sections. Two of which are of most interest to this study; the fourth being the introduction and contained questions aimed at exploring the students past experiences with video games. The other two sections were; "*Understanding the students'*

experiences", and "Learning through games". The aforementioned sections additionally correspond with the above model as shown previously in this thesis, and furthermore we can link these sections with different categories and subcategories of historical empathy and our understanding thereof.

The section underlining "Understanding the students' experiences" can be connected to both sides of the aforementioned model by Egnfeldt-Nielsen. We can through our analysis apply the answers to both sides of the game experience. As this thesis has gone over previously and as can be seen in the model, in order for a student to learn a scientific concept, it is important that the student to experience both the "student" and "player" experiences throughout the project While it is important that the student is given instruction that is in-line with the curriculum as constituted under the "Education" category, I further believe it is crucial for students to be given some autonomy as to make the experience 'relevant' to them as seen under "relevance" located under the player perspective.

These categories as well as ones pertaining to historical empathy will be explored throughout this section. With this in mind, I'll throughout this chapter post the research questions, the questions pertaining to said research question, and then analyse the answers the participants gave, how they connect to both historical empathy and the categories outlined by Egenfeldt-Nielsen model and finally I will supplement with observations and conversations I had with the students whilst they worked on tasks given by their teacher in regards to the game.

As historical empathy will be our benchmark for discovering if it is possible to learn scientific concepts through this method, I believe that before tackling if and if we haven't developed historical empathy, it would be prudent to include here the criteria we'll be using to identify historical empathy. This thesis has based itself upon the dual-domain definition of historical empathy revised by Endacott & Brooks in 2013 as well as Barton & Lestvik's findings from the 2004 study "Teaching history for the common good". Hence, we'll be looking for historical empathy through three criteria; Historical Perspective Taking,

Historical Contextualisation, and the Affective Connection. What makes up these three criteria we have already defined previously, I will therefore not repeat them here. Instead I find it necessary to further repeat Barton & Lestvik's concepts of "historical empathy as perspective recognition" as well as "empathy as caring" (Barton & Lestvik, 2004). In order for this study to identify if historical empathy has taken place, and to prove that video games are suitable means for teaching scientific historical concepts we must be able to identify that learning has taken place. This section will therefore be divided into two sections; one pertaining to historical empathy as perspective recognition and the other being empathy as caring, as outlined by Barton & Lestvik. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

4.1.2 Historical Empathy as Perspective Recognition as it pertains to the analysis

Historical empathy as perspective recognition is based upon several concepts, the three we are most interested in here are; "A sense of otherness", "Shared normalcy" and "Contextualisation" from Barton & Lestvik. As we have previously discussed these concepts, I will briefly reiterate them here and outline why they are of interest to this thesis as they act as a pointer that could tell us whether or not historical empathy has taken place.

We will first tackle the concept of "A sense of otherness", which as described by Barton & Lestvik acts as the stepping stone for empathy, in order to learn or acquire empathy one must at the ground level understand the otherness in other people different from one self. This is because according to Barton & Lestvik, one cannot understand the actions of others lest they have an understanding of how and why someone would act the way they do. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004). We'll see this expressed as part of the analysis through how the students that partook in this project responds to the interviews and if they are able to remove their own bias and understand that the characters may have different motivations from themselves.

Secondly, there is "Shared normalcy" another aspect in our analysis that bases itself on understanding that others' opinions, experiences and skills may differ from one's own, but that they are as valid and real as one's own opinions and lived experiences. This concept builds upon the previously discussed sense of otherness, and is by far the harder for a younger student to master. The concept of being able to view others' opinions as being as

valid as one's own tends to prove a greater challenge. Typically we see this in one of historical empathy's pitfalls, that of presentism. If when teaching about empathy the teacher responsible neglects one or another of the requirements set forth by Endacott & Brooks' revised model, we would see presentism creep into the students' understandings, whereupon they would apply one's own morals and understandings upon the past, resulting in historical bias. (Endacott & Brooks, 2014)

The final criteria we'll be using from Barton & Lestvik is historical contextualisation, shared also by Endacott & Brooks as one of the three prime factors required for developing historical empathy. Of course we could say the same about the other factors identified by Barton & Lestvik as they also fit within many of the requirements set forth by Endacott & Brooks. Specifically in this case that of historical contextualisation. As it has been set forth by Endacott & Brooks. In order for this project to explore historical context we have contextualised the game with a focus on past and modern day conflicts. In this case the teacher taught about conflicts using traditional classroom methods, videos and reading before introducing players to the video game. This is important here as according to Endacott & Brooks, in order to develop historical contextualisation the students should first explore the historical context through means such as textbook reading, documentaries, and other primary sources as the case may be. When all the above is set and done, we may expect that the student is ready and prepared to dive deeper into a person's feelings and understanding of the past. (Endacott & Brooks; Barton & Lestvik; 2014, 2004)

I will now go through some of the answers from the interviews conducted with the students. This first question comes from a boy in the 10th grade, their name has been anonymized and we'll be referring to the student as "Fredric" or "F". The interviewer will be designated as "I" or "Interviewer". These interviews were conducted in Norwegian so as to not affect the students' answers, the students being English Second Language learners (ESL) could for the purposes of this study limit their range of answers due to vocabulary or pronunciation difficulties. I have therefore transcribed their answers as closely to the original meaning as possible.

4.2: First research question: Are students more motivated towards learning history when applying Kolb's expanded learning model to video games in a classroom setting?

I: Do you believe there should be a balance between traditional classroom education and game based learning? Why or why not?

F: I believe it's about finding the right balance, it shouldn't be 50/50, but perhaps it should be one class where we work on the game in relation to the wider topic we're learning about.

I: Before you started working with the game, your teacher went through the theme of the game and gave some background for what you were going to learn, in your opinion did this work well?

F: Yes, I thought that way of teaching worked very well.

I: Do you believe that videogames is a good tool to help YOU learn?

F: Yes.

I: Could you give an example of a specific situation in which you learned something from a videogame, if so, what was it?

F: I think there are many games that I have learned at least something from. As an example, FIFA. There I have learned for example if I see a parry in the game, I might try it out in real life and see that it actually works in real life as well.

I: How do you think computer games could help you learn subjects such as history?

F: So, well… there has been research proving that boys learn differently to girls, boys learn more from physical activities than theoretical ones. Games is one way in which boys could learn more through the physical method.

I: By this do you mean that this is a way for boys to better activate their brain by putting theory into practice?

F: Yes.

I: How do you feel that video games help you think and solve problems?

F: Well, it opens for… well when we're doing maths for example, there's a lot of theoreticals and working on paper, however, when we're in the computer room and playing games, we activate our brain differently.

I: Do you think games would have helped you learn maths too?

F: I don't know if it would have worked as well with maths, though if there are some good maths games like there were during primary school, I do think that would have helped me a bit to learn maths better, yes.

(Frederick, 2024)

The students show here that they understand that videogames can be utilised as more than simple entertainment. While also identifying the entertainment aspect as a possible problematic aspect. The student Fredric also showcases that they furthermore already apply parts of Nielsens model unconsciously. The student showcases the "player" side of Nielsens model, from which they've experienced a concrete experience in the playing of the football game FIFA, from which the student moved on to apply the experiences they saw in the game into real life. Hitting both the "concrete experience" and "active experimentation" aspects of the model. Resulting in the student learning a new concept, that of how to parry. In addition the student found the method which the teacher used by introducing the subject and making the game a part of the curriculum to help with overall motivation and that this way of teaching was greatly beneficial. Interestingly enough, this was the same for all the students that partook in the interviews.

The student also mentions the different approaches to learning, one of which being physical learning. Interestingly when applied to the history genre of video games, we see that this too may result in learning through doing as suggested by Gee. (Gee, 2013) By seeing and listening to audiovisual stimuli from video games the students are encouraged to further apply concepts throughout the game as a way of learning. One such example can be seen in the strategy game genre in games such as Age of Empires. These games are built around a concept of rock-paper-scissors when it comes to their units. As an example, players are

encouraged to use pike units to deal with cavalry. The game doesn't elaborate further as part of its gameplay mechanics but you may often find an encyclopaedia from which the reasoning behind why spear units counter cavalry is noted. In this case, we could say that a curious student may wish to seek this knowledge to better understand this interaction. I mention this because it's an analogy to how students may learn through doing. Even if the student doesn't read further into the subject, their minds will make note of this interaction so that later the knowledge may be applied. This notion was further reinforced during an interview with two girls: Malin and Sarah, when asked their opinion on the use of the game as part of their curriculum;

> *S: I think the way the game has been used during this class was good, the way our teacher presented the game and all the other information was very good. I remember very much from the game since there was a well structured approach to the game and teaching too. Our teacher showed us pictures of the game and talked about it too.*

> *M: Yes, and it made the classes more interesting too. I already like social studies but knowing that we could get to spend some time playing also made the learning interactive and fun. We got to apply the stuff we learned kinda.*

> *(Sarah & Malin, 2024)*

The students were guided during their playthrough of this war of mine as to coincide with the learning perspective of the above module. Based on the answers the students gave, being that they were all positive towards this method of teaching, it would imply that motivation towards learning whilst doing it through video games, if done right, would help students be more motivated towards learning different school subjects.

4.3 Research Question 2: Can we identify historical empathy in the students by using Nielsens theoretical framework for teaching using video games?

In order to identify historical empathy we will need to assess through the interviews and other empirical data whether historical empathy is present through the definition we established in chapter two. As such I have divided this section into identifying different aspects of historical empathy. First we will apply the cognitive approach, perspective taking as emphasised by Berton & Lestvik, then we will be looking at empathy as caring and the affective connection to identify the emotional elements of historical empathy.

4.3.1 Identifying a sense of "otherness" in the participants

As stated above, we will first identify a sense of otherness as the very first criteria for establishing if the students have developed historical empathy, before continuing with the remaining categories, Shared Normalcy and history contextualisation. The reason for so doing is that both A sense of otherness and Shared Normalcy are concepts that build off one another, specifically; Shared Normalcy builds off of a sense of otherness as the 'next' step in the process. Hence why Barton & Lestvik chose to organise these concepts with "otherness" as the first step. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004)

The following is once again an excerpt from the interview with student "Frederick".

I: We played the game "This war of mine" in connection to your history studies, have you learned anything from this experience do you believe?

F: Yes, you get so compared with Ukraine. You understand some of how it is to live there, it isn't safe to walk around there. And, yes, we get to learn some of how it would be if something happened to us.

I: Did any of the characters react differently to situations in the game from what you would yourself?

F: Um, I mean I don't really know. I haven't been in a situation like this before, so I don't think I can really know how I would respond in such a situation.

I: Did the game give you a different perspective on how it was to be a refugee of war?

F: Yes, it isn't good to be a refugee, to live in these areas. I wish them well and want to help them, but we have to have the space and capacity to take them in too.

I: Is there anything you think you could do to better help these refugees? What would you do?

F: I don't know exactly, I'm not entirely sure what I as one person could do. Maybe raise awareness but I do not think that would change anything.

(Frederick, 2024)

It would seem here that the student recognised the concept of otherness, they recognised that the characters were different from themselves and that the characters held different lived experiences from themselves. The students here show that they have gained some insights into what it is like to be a refugee, and what it really means to flee from war. Their subject at the time being the middle east and where they in class discussed refugees and war. What makes the game a great resource in this case is its ability to let the player live through these situations, and as can be seen in the answers given above, the student shows their ability to understand situations outside of their own lived experiences.

Another instance of "otherness" which was discovered during the interview phase was with Sarah & Malin, who stumbled onto the moral system of the game. As one of their characters became afflicted with the "sad" debuff, debuff here refers to a negative effect in the game that applies a negative status condition to the characters in question.

I: Did you make up any thoughts on why Boris became sad after these events, was there anyone that was not affected by the stealing?

M: I mean, I think I can understand why he was sad. It did not feel right when we decided to do it either. So that he was saddened by the stealing I can understand.

S: Yeh…

Here we see the students reflect on how, whilst the circumstances of the "sadness" were justifiable, and though they didn't feel sad as per the dictionary definition of the word, they understood why a character would be inflicted by this condition and further reflected that if it weren't a game, they'd probably also feel saddened by stealing from the elderly (Sarah & Malin, 2024).

I: In the game, you have to make some difficult decisions, what was the hardest decision you had to make, how did this make you feel?

F: Well, there was this time we had to steal from this old couple, most people in our class decided to steal from them, instead of just letting them keep what little they had, because you both need food, one argument for stealing is that they've lived a long life and we're still young, we might need the food more.

I: And what did you decide to do?

F: Me and the one I played with, we both stole.

I: How did this make you feel?

F: It didn't feel good, but it was important to us too, we needed food.

I: the game is based on a real conflict, do you think others in a similar survival situation would have done the same?

F: Yes, I think others would have done the same in real life too, it's about food, if we can't eat, we won't survive, besides they've lived a long life already, people become desperate.

I: Can you understand why someone would choose to make such a choice?

F: I can imagine why, in a situation where it is about survival, I think many would do things they would later regret in order to survive. Right and wrong is sort of placed on hold when war comes.

In this follow up question we see that the player is faced with a moral dilemma, in which the student must choose if they're going to steal or not. In this case the student showcases what I would identify as a form of shared normalcy. The student understands the difficulties faced by the different characters in the game, and though they can feel for the people involved, we

see that the student further understands the moral dilemmas that people in these situations are forced to consider. Another student takes this a step further showcasing their understanding of the different way of thinking shaped by their understanding of a difference in historical values as can also be in this next excerpt:

Gunnar: One character became very depressed through the course of the game, he ended up committing suicide. Because of this there was only one character left, he didn't have the energy to continue on alone, so he also committed suicide. Because of this we can see that we'll experience something challenging.

I: That is very interesting, what did you think when they committed suicide.

G: I didn't understand at the start. I mean, these characters have been through a lot, then when I thought about it, and because it was those three and when you've been with them for a few days, you build a sort of bond with these characters, they rely on each other you know. It sort of reminds me of like when you watch a army movie, they build a different bond you know.

I: What did you think was going through these characters' heads at that time?

G: Maybe because they couldn't go on, they lost a friend. They were few.

I: One character became depressed, did the other one also become depressed at that time?

G: One character got the depressed status but the other one was only sad.

I: So the depressed character took their own life? What do you think went through the last ones head?

G: I don't know, I think maybe he had it worse than the one that committed suicide, because when there's two you still have one to lean on, however, once there's only one left, the last one might consider that its his fault.

(Gunnar, 2024)

Comment: We have already touched somewhat on what it means for a character to be depressed earlier in this study. Though to reiterate, a depressed character is quite similar to a "sad" character, though their actions are impaired and negative choices will have a stronger impact on these characters. However, suicide is listed as a worst possible outcome,

though characters may incite fights and other negative behaviour whilst sad, I believe the student in this case was wrong in regards to the characters state. The way in which the student described the character suggests a character with the "Broken" status condition. Their suicide would then provoke further negative points being given to the remaining characters, which then resulted in the remaining suicides.

It should be noted that the empathy part here is quite clear, and there is no question that the students are able to exhibit the empathetic aspect of historical empathy. What makes the student responses exhibit the historical part of historical empathy comes from how the students connect these feelings towards historical thinking. They understand that the characters' thinking is different from our own and that this stems from different lived historical events.

4.3.2 Identifying Shared Normalcy

Here we see a character commit suicide. When questioned if the students understand why they would do something like this, the students showcase that they have an understanding of the situation and the emotions that the characters are feeling. As shared normalcy requires the understanding that others thoughts and values can be considered equal to our own, there is a clear sign here that the student understands that the horrible events in the game - the loss of a friend and fellow survivor could end in depression and eventual suicide. These thoughts which are traditionally considered taboo, are through the game overcome by events, resulting in the eventual demise of these characters. The student shows shared normalcy here through understanding that these thoughts are not illogical, to the characters they make sense and are logical in nature. Gunnar also reflected that the chances of survival going from a group of three-four to one survivor would make survival in the context of the game, next to impossible. Because of this, suicide is not a completely illogical alternative, giving credence to the notion of shared normalcy, however grim this scenario might be.

I: Did you read the biographies of any of the characters in the game? Did this affect the choices you made?

F: Yes, like the one that was a chef from before, we used him a lot in the house, the one that was a scavenger, we used to scavenge a lot.

I: Did any of the characters die?

F: Yes.

I: Did you read the biography of the deceased?

F: Yes.

I: What did you think or feel when the person died?

F: No, I didn't feel anything, it didn't have much of an impact on me when they died. They were more of a resource than people.

I: Did you dig any deeper than the surface level of the characters' biographies?

F: No.

In this case the student did not delve further than required into the biographies of their characters, which resulted in a more objective oriented way of playing the game, though the student showcases through other parts of the interview that they cover several points in Barton & Lestviks proposal for empathy as caring, we see here that the student lacks the aspect of "caring for" the characters in the video game. Barton & Lestvik suggests that all these aspects alongside the cognitive process' of perspective taking are all required in order to achieve true historical empathy. Which in this case student F does not showcase. This may be because Frederick considers the game more as a game than a representation of historical events. This is exemplified by the student referring to the characters as resources. Furthermore, by not having delved deeper into the characters biographies, the player shows an inability to "get into" the characters heads. They therefore don't understand what motivates the character and how other characters would react to this sudden death.

That being said, out of this group of students, there were some who decided to dig deeper into said biographies.

The following is an excerpt from my interview with students Sarah and Malin, on how they handled the biographies and how they used the knowledge in the game.

M: Yes we read all their biographies, we learned about their different skills, we also read some about who they were and learned about the characters.

S: We also got a look at how they lived their lives before what happened. It kinda made you not want to use some of the characters like when they had to do some missions, you kind of felt bad for them but they had to do it since we needed to survive.

I: Did reading the biographies have an affect on the choices you made throughout the game?

S: Yes, because we knew what the characters were good at doing, so we could use them where they were best suited.

M: Their abilities also affected how we decided to give food to, like, we fed the one that was good at scavenging first, since they were going out into the world to get us more stuff. They had to survive that too and bring back more food.

In this case, Sarah and Malin decided to read all the biographies in the game, and we see later in the game that they also stumbled upon the same challenges as the other players pertaining to the old couple where the player is faced with a moral dilemma of stealing or not stealing. In the game such decisions are given moral values, based on the character's archetype the character will experience an emotion based on the events taken in the game. In this case the players chose to steal from the old couple, which resulted in the character Boris becoming sad or depressed. The students themselves agree that the action was an ethically difficult decision, and further understood why the character became sad.

> *M: When we were in a difficult situation we kinda had to think about how this would affect us now or later.*
>
> *S: Yes, like for example there was this one old couple that had food and I think medecin… we had to decide if we should take these things from them. We weren't quite sure what to do but in the end we decided to steal, because they were old and had lived long lives, whilst our characters were still young, so we thought that it would be better for us to have it so that we could live longer and maybe do more good since we were still young.*
>
> *M: Once we got home though we noticed that some of the characters became sad after stealing from the old couple.*
>
> *I: Who became sad, do you remember? And why do you think that is?*

S: I think Boris was one of the characters that became sad, I think it was because of the stealing…

M: We didn't take everything because we couldn't carry that much… when we came back to the house we had brought some food with us, since after stealing we had so much, and we had met someone earlier at another place that also wanted food, so we thought we could give them some. When we got there they were gone.

I: Did you make up any thoughts on why Boris became sad after these events, was there anyone that was not affected by the stealing?

M: I mean, I think I can understand why he was sad. It did not feel right when we decided to do it either. So that he was saddened by the stealing I can understand.

S: Yeh…

I: Were any of the other characters affected / unaffected?

S: I think Pavle and Roman were not sad afterwards.

I: Any thoughts on why that might have been?

S: I remember Roman had grown up on the streets and I think he was also a member of the bad guys, but he was kicked out. I think he had seen worse things.

M: Yes… and Pavle he just wanted to find his family, maybe he didn't think about that so much?

I: What did you think about their reactions, did their reaction differ from your own perspective?

M: I mean, I think if I was in a situation like that I would also have been saddened. I don't think I could have ignored something like that myself.

S: I agree, the entire thing was sad, so why they were not affected I can kind of understand Roman since he had experienced so much bad before in his life, but from what I remember when we played, it did not feel right and I don't think I could have done it in real life…

I: You mentioned that the old couple was gone, were they gone as in dead or had they left?

S: I think they were just gone.

I: Did you give any thought to if they had died because of your actions, how did you feel when they weren't there?

S: I hope they just left the house, but the man said his wife was sick, they might have died. It doesn't feel great to know that someone died because of what we did, but we had to do it, we needed the food more than they did, we are young and they were old, we had our entire lives in front of us.

Comment: According to the wiki page corresponding to the "quiet house", if the players steal any medication, food or bandages the game guarantees that the characters that explore the house and also has a chance to cause sadness in characters back at the shelter. The same goes for killing either the man or woman living in the house. (This war of mine wiki, 2024)

Comment #2: The game states that the old couple will hide when the characters try to steal from the house if they don't leave whilst prompted. I believe in this case the couple were still there though hiding, at least this was my experience from my own playthrough. Hence I doubt the couple dies following the events stated by the players. (This war of mine wiki, 2024)

The players show a great deal of understanding of how the characters' values are affected by their situation. Shared Normalcy specifies to understand a historical figure's feelings and perceptions may be as real as our own and that they are not a result of ignorance or delusions. It is clear here in the above excerpt that the players have an understanding on what goes through the heads of the characters. The interview suggests that these two students are more in-line with the way of thinking as exemplified by Bruno. Though they further underline that they understand why a character such as Roman would not be affected by these events as their biography alludes to a life of crime and violence from before the character joined the shelter. What is significant here is that the students take other lived experiences into consideration and do not throw away these perspectives only because they differ from their own ideas and moral viewpoint. By being able to differentiate from their own opinions which as mentioned falls more in line with Bruno, but still understand the context and lived experiences of another character, the players Malin and Sophie are able to display their understanding of the concept "Shared Normalcy".

These moral quandaries are scripted into the videogame, meaning that all who play will eventually be forced into the same situation, and will be given the same choice. Meaning that this is a dilemma great for analysing historical empathy, as there are a myriad of opportunities for the students to work on connecting these events to the thoughts and values of historical people and events.

For this study we have already gone over the definition of historical empathy that we will be using, that of Endacott and Brooks' revised model and Barton & Lestviks 2004 findings.

Endacott & Brooks' model is divided into three parts, as to encapsulate what is required to develop historical empathy; HPT, Contextualisation, and Affective Connection. What we're seeing here is Affective Connection, according to Endacott & Brooks by forming an affective connection to the past it will allow the student to view historical (or in this case fictional game-) characters as human beings and not just words or pixels, and by doing so allows the student to gleam a better understanding of the past that would just perspective taking alone. (Endacott & Brooks, 2013)

There is also the matter of caring about, in these interview segments, caring about refers to how students of history may care about the people and events that have happened in the past. (Barton & Lestvik, 2004) The students show that they care about these events even linking between the games and modern day conflicts, showing that they're able to reflect on both similarities and differences between these events. The students on several occasions bring up the refugee crisis that have permeated news and social media this last decade and how at least in one instance (See Fredericks interview) how we should contribute to assist those who need it the most.

4.3.3 Historical Contextualisation

We have previously talked about historical contextualisation, therefore I will only briefly sum it up here before we look at if and how the students have shown an understanding for historical contextualisation as part of their interviews. We have used Endacott & Brooks' definition of historical contextualisation with the addition of Barton & Lestviks book; Teaching History for the Common Good as a supporting framework (Endacott & Brooks; Barton & Lestvik, 2013; 2004). Endacott & Brooks have decided to quantify historical contextualisation as such: "temporal sense of difference that includes deep understanding of the social, political, and cultural norms of the time period under investigation as well as knowledge of the events leading up to the historical situation and other relevant events that are happening concurrently" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Something to take into consideration for this section is that in Hole's dissertation the students failed to achieve historical empathy as there was a distinct lack of historical contextualisation that would alongside the other prerequisite categories end up showing that the students had achieved historical empathy. Hole remarked that a stronger theoretical framework or a more structured approach was needed in order to allow the students to show historical contextualisation. (Hole, 2022)

Working using this definition we see by looking at the interviews that some students were able to make the connection that the Syrian conflict is a multifaceted conflict not just based on political differences but also cultural influences such as (though not explicitly mentioned) the Kurdish liberation movement and influence from both western and established middle eastern actors such as the Islamic State, The United States, and Turkey. The point here being that the students could identify the run-up to the Syrian civil war and further understood the implications of local and external actors in the lead up to the current day status-quo as seen in this excerpt from Malin & Sarah's interview;

> *I: Did knowing why the Syrian conflict is happening give you any new perspectives?*
>
> *M: Well, it did make it a bit easier to know why it is happening, we didn't know too much about it before, so knowing more did make it more easy to understand why it was all going on.*
>
> *S: I knew a little, but not too much, so I kind of understood how it happened after our teacher told us about it. I know it was more than just a political thing, I think the different cultures and interests from western countries also play a role.*
>
> *(Malin & Sarah, 2024)*

From the pool of interviews Malin & Sarah were the only ones that made this connection, as historical contextualisation relies on understanding historical events based on attitudes, values and beliefs (Barton & Lestvik, 2004). Based on this criteria, these two students were as mentioned, the only ones to make that connection. Based on Hole's research, it became clear to us that the game in and of itself wasn't enough to establish historical contextualisation as Hole himself wrote that "The game's fictive representation of the past and it's lack of story and explicit historical contextualisation makes it difficult for students at this level to put words to events in the game" (Hole, 2022). We expected this difficulty when starting this project, though based upon the interview answers I received, it seems a stronger focus on this point is still needed going forward.

4.3.4 Multiplicity of Historical Perspectives

The following cognitive experience refers to how if the students understand that the characters in the game may have different personalities and thoughts than what the players themselves. A particularly insightful topic pertaining to this game, as the characters are scripted to have their own backgrounds and morals. Of the participants in this study, most were able to appreciate this sentiment that the characters had their own thoughts and personalities. Though we have already looked at and discussed parts of the interview with Sarah and Malin, I believe the following excerpt to be relevant to discuss this subject.

I: Did you make up any thoughts on why Boris became sad after these events, was there anyone that was not affected by the stealing?

M: I mean, I think I can understand why he was sad. It did not feel right when we decided to do it either. So that he was saddened by the stealing I can understand.

S: Yeh…

I: Were any of the other characters affected / unaffected?

S: I think Pavle and Roman were not sad afterwards.

I: Any thoughts on why that might have been?

S: I remember Roman had grown up on the streets and I think he was also a member of the bad guys, but he was kicked out. I think he had seen worse things.

M: Yes… and Pavle he just wanted to find his family, maybe he didn't think about that so much?

As we can see in the above interview excerpt, Sarah and Malin are able to identify that Roman's experiences growing up as a street urchin and Pavle's personal quest meant that their personalities weren't as affected by the stealing so much so that they instead were more worried about themselves, standing in stark contrast to Bruno's thoughts and personality wherein he was one of the characters saddened by the stealing. Furthermore, the two establish that there was a difference between the perspectives of Roman and Boris, understanding that this difference in perspective stemmed from their differing history and their experiences.

4.4 Research Question 2: Empathy as Caring

4.4.1 Caring about

In this section we're looking to identify if the students can be considered to have "Cared about" the game and curriculum they have played and learned about, and how these events pertain to their history education. According to Barton & Lestvik most history educators take for granted that students will derive greater learning from topics in history that interest them, than subjects that are of lesser interest. This sentiment that learning is tied to one's interests and that if the subject piques interest in the student, the student will therefore be more invested in the subject and by extension derive greater learning from the subject, plays right into video games' strengths as a relevant tool that many students already use on a daily basis. (Medietilsynet, 2022) In addition, from the interviews we can see that the subject of conflicts, specifically Syria and the civil war, is of interest to the students. Especially so as this is both an ongoing conflict as of time of writing and the resulting refugee crisis have had real world implications for the students, making these events relevant to the students.

4.4.2 Caring That

As discussed previously, "caring that" refers to the player or in this case that the student cares that something; a particular event has happened. Syria, which was the focus during our original curriculum, which was then tied to the events shown in this war of mine. The goal according to the teacher was to teach the students to think empathically. As we have seen through these interviews the students cared that these events had taken place and as seen in Barton & Lestviks study, the subject of what is just played a large part in the students' reactions to the game. In the following excerpt from the interview we see that the students focused a lot on what it was like to be a refugee:

S: You learned somewhat what it is like to be a refugee.

I: Did you learn anything else?

M: You learned about how you or in this case the refugees have to go out and find food, and also how you have to keep warm.

S: We already had quite a bit of instruction before playing the game, so we really got to see what the words and what the events in the history books really mean. You have to fight for food to survive and all.

I: Did the game give you a different perspective on what it means to be a refugee?

S: I already knew that it was difficult to be a refugee, but I never really saw or experienced how difficult it would be before playing the game.

M: Yes, because we see what it's like in the game.

I: Did knowing why the Syrian conflict is happening give you any new perspectives?

M: Well, it did make it a bit easier to know why it is happening, we didn't know too much about it before, so knowing more did make it more easy to understand why it was all going on.

S: I knew a little, but not too much, so I kind of understood how it happened after our teacher told us about it. I know it was more than just a political thing, I think the different cultures and interests from western countries also play a role.

I: Did this make you care more or less about what's been happening in Syria?

M: It was kind of the same, I mean, it is a horrible situation and I don't think I can fully understand how they feel… I guess I can understand a little of the struggle they go through more, and understand a bit of how they feel…

S: It is kind of far away for me to try to understand but I did feel like I got a better understanding of what it is like down there.

(Interview, Sarah & Malin, 2024)

As seen from this excerpt the students were given a new perspective on what it meant to be a refugee, and we see that they care that these events are taking place, the students further acknowledge that the events we have been talking about as part of the curriculum and the events in the game, are alien to them. Though by being able to recognise the otherness in this situation, the students Sarah and Malin do show that even though these experiences may appear alien, they still care that they happen.

I highlight this interview as well to show that the sentiment regarding refugees and living in difficult situations seemed to be a common occurrence in the interview subjects. If Caring That refers to the student being able to recognise that an event took place, and caring that relies on the students having a strong moral response to the events portrayed, then most students would showcase this response in this study to some degree.

4.4.3 Caring For

Another instance of Barton & Lestviks categories in historical empathy as emotions is Caring For which we also see throughout these interviews. Specifically, all the students interviewed expressed remorse and regret towards the older couple in the videogame, though they understood that the actions they took, in stealing from this old couple was a necessary evil in order for their own characters to live, they nevertheless understood that this action was regrettable. When asked if they would have done the same in real life too, the students became visibly uncomfortable, but held to their original sentiment that though the action of stealing would bring about greater heartache, they would nevertheless do the same as it pertained to their survival. Utilitarianism seemed to be a common approach amongst all the students who partook in the interviews. Furthermore, the students show that they care about modernday events which were part of their curriculum, we've already talked about the Syrian conflict in this thesis, however, I believe it is worth mentioning how the students all reflected on the situation faced by people living there today and as the teacher drew contrasting lines between the game and Syria, the students expressed a feeling of regret towards the conditions these people are living through. That being said, not every student "cared for" the events in the game, nor did they show another form of caring for relating to the curriculum. As an example I've included parts from the interview with Sarah & Malin as an exemplar of students "caring for", as well as from the interview with Frederick who shows a lesser regard for the characters;

> *I: Did you give any thought to if they had died because of your actions, how did you feel when they weren't there?*

> *S: I hope they just left the house, but the man said his wife was sick, they might have died. It doesn't feel great to know that someone died because of what we did, but we had to do it, we needed the food more than they did, we are young and they were old, we had our entire lives in front of us.*

As we can see here, the student shows a great deal of worry for the old couple, though as we see throughout this interview, S & M continually defend their actions by mentioning the age difference between the characters. Something I believe to be a sign of them wanting affirmation for the actions taken in the game, which is further reinforced from how the students reflected on not being able to do the same in real life.

As a counter to the above, we see that student Frederick on the other hand does not care in the same way as the above interview excerpt.

> *I: What did you think or feel when the person died?*
>
> *F: No, I didn't feel anything, it didn't have much of an impact on me when they died. They were more of a resource than people.*
>
> *I: Did you dig any deeper than the surface level of the characters' biographies?*
>
> *F: No.*

Frederick displays no interest in the characters whatsoever, and though he reflected some on the stealing from the old couple, he wasn't interested in building a connection to the characters that he was piloting.

The students further actively reflected on the notion of the war in Ukraine, refugees and how the game reflects the lives of those living in areas with widespread conflict. As we see in Barton & Lestviks study (2004), the students reacted to injustice and suffering by actively wanting to do something about this. In Fredricks case though he wants to do something to help, though reflects on whether taking in all the refugees would be at all possible. Regardless, this instance shows how the students hold a desire to help fight injustice and accommodate those affected by modern day conflicts.

4.4.4 Caring To

Caring To refers to the student learning of a historical event and relies on the student wanting to change their own attitudes, beliefs and thoughts based upon what they have learned in order to make an impact and to elicit actual change. In the following interview segment which we've referred to previously, you will see that a student comes perilously close to changing something about themselves in order to bring about change.

> *I: Did the game give you a different perspective on how it was to be a refugee of war?*
>
> *F: Yes, it isn't good to be a refugee, to live in these areas. I wish them well and want to help them, but we have to have the space and capacity to take them in too.*
>
> *I: Is there anything you think you could do to better help these refugees? What would you do?*
>
> *F: I don't know exactly, I'm not entirely sure what I as one person could do. Maybe raise awareness but I do not think that would change anything.*
>
> (Interview Frederic, 2024)

Frederic portrayed a desire of caring to change himself in order to help those refugees living through situations similar to the one portrayed in the game. One might say that we don't fall short of the student "caring to", as the student clearly displayed a *desire* to change, which would be enough as the desire to change is present, even though the student doesn't have a concrete idea on how to do so.

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the thesis first tackled the basis on which this analysis is based, the first parts were dedicated to how Nielsens theoretical framework for video game learning applies to this analysis and explains how the different aspects of the model may be applied to understanding and uncovering historical empathy. The following parts of this chapter were mainly divided into two; corresponding to historical empathy as perspective recognition and

historical empathy as caring. Based on the importance of this concept in relation to the stated goal of this thesis, the parts relating to historical empathy constituted a lengthier part of this thesis. The interviews uncovered that while there are degrees of historical empathy throughout the different answers, identifying the concept in its entirety proved difficult, as will be discussed in the following chapter. As for motivation, based on the responses in the interview, the students found that they enjoyed the teaching method, but agreed that while learning through games was a motivating factor, they nevertheless preferred a minority split where the main learning outcome took place during traditional classroom lectures.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The analysis chapter above sought to analyse the responses from the students that partook in this study in order to establish whether or not we could identify historical empathy in the students that played This War of Mine. This is because the premise of this thesis hinges on the development of historical empathy; a scientific concept, through the application of Egenfeldt-Nielsen theoretical framework on the use of video games in schools, where we've aimed to see if by using a video game such as This War of Mine if we will be able to create a curriculum that teaches historical empathy.

5.1 Analysis results

The question that remains is whether or not what we have identified as historical empathy suggests that the students have learned this scientific concept, or if the students instead are touching the rim of historical empathy; touching some if not most of the prerequisite criteria but not following through completely; that is to say whether the students

have in actuality learned what goes into the concept of historical empathy. Based upon the data collected during our analysis the short answer would be no for the majority of the participating students. I believe one group of students have showcased historical empathy. That is, I believe that this thesis has identified all the required primers that would suggest that these students have developed or at least touched upon historical empathy. Based upon their responses to the interview it may be considered that pretty much every group of students had a different experience with the game, experienced different interactions and most importantly, established, to differing degrees an affective connection to the characters in the game. That is to say, some students connected to the characters in the game, whereas others did not; as can be seen with Sarah & Malin versus Frederick. Sarah & Malin both managed to connect to the characters and their situation, whereas Frederick viewed the game in a more utilitarian way; the characters not representing humans or lived experiences, but instead resources to be utilised. Another factor to take into account, and that appeared frequently as part of the interview section is that of moral questions. The morality of some of the actions in the game are meant to be difficult for the player to choose between. The result of which was that several times, the students had to contend with their own morals, the morals of the characters, and which action would best lead them to survive. You can see this clearly in the matter of the old couple, especially when some students chose to steal, but then returned a few nights later in order to return with some food for the couple. As the student stated, they did not have enough food at the time, hence why they stole, but upon coming into more resources they chose to return in order to replace some of what they stole.

A question which was part of the interview guide pertained to "how if at all have the student changed their views on the subject of refugees." As we; that is me and their teacher, chose to relate the game to the modern day conflict in Syria, we wanted to see if through the course of this curriculum, if the students would draw upon the experiences of the game and the curriculum to then apply these experiences into their own way of thinking. The result here varied from student to student based on how the students to varying degrees interacted with the game. What we can glean from the interviews suggests varying degrees of change in their perspectives, as most students held to their views not being changed all that much, though they learned of new challenges and difficulties they were not aware of before partaking in this project. Showing that the students did manage to take on and incorporate different perspectives based on the experiences made by playing the game.

As mentioned previously both as part of the introduction and in the analysis, this project aimed to help fill the hole which Hole (2022) identified as part of his dissertation, that a stronger theoretical framework was needed in order to teach historical empathy; and more specifically, historical contextualisation. Through this project, this thesis ran into some of the same problems as Hole, where even though we spent more time focusing on events and factors that led to the Syrian civil war, we nevertheless saw only one group; two students, showcase historical contextualisation. It should be noted that this does not mean that the other students did not in fact garner a greater understanding of attitudes, values or events that lead to the conflict; instead they gained further insight into some or parts of these events, though could not connect this towards a greater whole. Leading to only some students being able to garner sufficient historical contextualisation, which is nevertheless a step in the right direction.

5.2 Discussion on the application of Nielsens theoretical framework and their results.

What can be seen from the analysis is that a few of the students were able to tick all the boxes set forth by Endacott & Brooks, and Barton & Lestvik (Endacott & Brooks; Barton & Lestvik, 2013; 2004). I'll once again post the model below as we discuss the different points and how we employed them and which results were found as a result in this thesis.
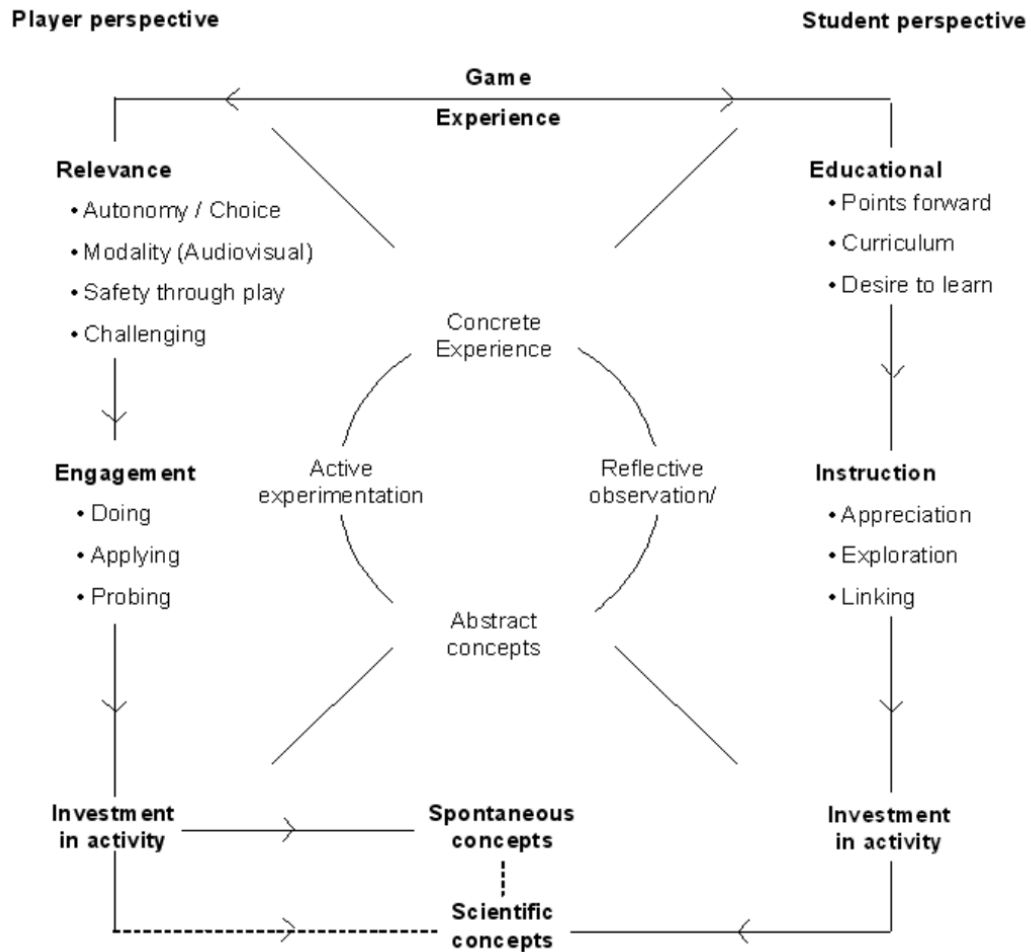
Figure 5.1 (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

This project was part of a larger curriculum focusing on the middle east. As part of this curriculum all year 10 classes visited the subject of the Syrian civil war, though our class spent more time doing so. The curriculum we planned can be found in an abbreviated version below;

Class as divided into one hour sessions	Topic
#1	Introduce the topic "*Conflicts in the Middle East*" - *Tasks related to Israel-Palestine*
#2	PowerPoint presentation on the Syrian Conflict - *Text on the Roman & Ottoman empires*
#3	Introduce the Syrian Conflict - *PowerPoint*

	on the Middle East (Contains Syria)
#4	Introduce "This War of Mine"
#5	Play the game
#6	Game
#7	Game
#8	Game
#9	Worksheet related to This War of Mine
#10	As above / Oral evaluations

Tabel 5.2

Before we put this project in motion, I started by looking into both the "*Student Perspective*" and "*Player Perspective*" of Nielsens model. This was to assist in preparing the project's theory and application of the project, making sure that both the game and the curriculum would be viable for developing scientific concepts. Firstly, in order to apply this model, the teacher or party responsible needs to look closer at the different subcategories and see how their curriculum may help achieve these sub-goals in such a manner that they become part of the larger whole. Though the curriculum that we developed made sure that the project was strictly following these categories, I believe that should we have not included parts of the model, we would have seen a very different result. As such it is important to keep the entirety of the model in mind whilst attempting to develop an educational use of a video game.

5.2.2 *Educational*

I will here start by going through the different categories in Nielsens theoretical framework starting with the educational part of the module. We agreed, that is me and the teacher responsible; that the teacher would first teach about the subject, connecting the experience the players would soon be given to the curriculum to make playing the game as relevant to the students as possible. We further looked at current global events in which the students were already invested in, in order to encourage students to take an active part in their own learning process. According to Egenfeldt-Nielsen it is crucial that the students see the

videogame as relevant to what they are learning if they are to become invested in the topic which will further lead to learning some concepts related to the experiences they make in the game. Nielsen further notes that in order for the students to learn scientific concepts the game that they're playing needs to be "pointed in an educational direction" which would imply that the game allows for scientific concepts through instruction. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) In our case as previously discussed we have been using the game "This War of Mine", which has been actively studied by researchers for years now, and there is no lack of previous master thesis' that have looked at historical empathy in this video game, as we have covered previously in this thesis. It is therefore reasonable for us to use the model developed by Nielsen in this study as the game already points towards a scientific concept; historical empathy. However, in our case we are more interested in applying this model to learn if scientific concepts can be planned and taught using this more interactive and relevant method.

What we saw in this study was that the students overwhelmingly supported the use of video games as part of their teaching activities. One of the interview questions pertaining to the balance between traditional classroom education and videogames shows that the students don't just see videogames as a form of distraction, but a useful tool in their teacher's belt.

> *F: It's about finding a balance, it shouldn't be 50/50, but maybe it should be a class where we work with the game in conjunction with the other stuff we're learning.*

> *I: Before you started working on the game, your teacher went through the premise of the game and gave you background on why you were working with the game, how did you feel that went?*

> *F: I think that went quite well, this way of doing it was very structured and easy to follow along, I think doing it like this with like a 70/30 focus, where 30% of the time you play would work very well.*

> *(Frederick, 2024)*

> *H: I like this way of teaching, I thought that it was good to have some variety in how we learn about history, in general I would like to see more like this.*

I: Before you started working on the game, your teacher went through the premise of the game and gave you background on why you were working with the game, how did you feel that went?

H: As I said, I liked it, I feel that I learned a lot.

I: any thoughts on how educators should split this teaching method.

H: Hmm… I don't know, I think we need some classroom learning too, I think it should be the majority, but I would like to more often go play games too.

(Hannah, 2024)

One of the greatest criticisms levelled against the concept of video games as a part of the educational system is the concern that they are a tool for fun, and entertainment. Second, games that are suitable for educational purposes are limited and without experience, a teacher would have a hard time applying educational purposes to these games. Without this experience or theoretical background, the use of video games in class would have little to none of the desired effects. This preconception is also held by the students that partook in this study, both Sarah & Malin agreed that video games could be a distraction from learning. (Sarah & Malin 2024) What we saw during the playing phase was that while there were some students who did indeed see this as an opportunity for entertainment, joking around and not really delving into the games mechanics. There needs therefore to be a desire to learn also instilled in the students when utilising such an approach as video games in the classroom.

5.2.3 Instruction

According to Nielsen video games in schools are at a disadvantage when it comes to their relevance in the classroom. Given that Nielsens PhD Thesis is about twenty years old now there have certainly been some changes in how students perceive video games and games in a classroom environment, however, I believe that the outstanding issue of games as entertainment still persists amongst many students. This was further confirmed during my

interviews with the students used to conduct the research in this paper, where they themselves point out the dangers of video games as entertainment and not a valid learning instrument. This may have something to do with how students perceive school work and how video games are so far removed from what students are used to doing that they do not apply the same relevance to this way of learning. This is partly the reason I chose the class that I did, as this class was already experienced in using videogames as a learning supplement given that their primary-teacher also wrote their degree on the subject of video game learning.

5.2.4 Investment in activity & Relevance

As part of Nielsens learning model, investment in the activity that the students are working on is greatly important for them to develop scientific concepts. As we have seen in through the analysis and from Barton & Lestvik's categories for empathy as caring, this is another experience that we see flagged several times as important. In this study we noted that most if not all the subjects were engaged in this way of learning. This is also noted in the interview section, where the students themselves expressed great interest in both the subject and the game.

As part of the players perspective, relevance is greatly important for the student. Again we see this represented in Barton & Lestviks categories for developing historical empathy. What relevance means for a student may vary, though in this case we have interpreted relevance to mean relevance to the player, that is how is the game relevant for the student and their learning. We were aided by modern day events to emphasise why the game was relevant to the students. As of time of writing, the Syria conflict which was our lens and also part of the curriculum, is still ongoing, furthermore, there is currently another war in Europe and we also have the Israel-Palestine conflict breathing life into an already tense situation. This is to say that the world today is experiencing more conflict than the students have experienced before. The game becomes a representation of how people today are struggling through these conflicts and therefore to understand these conflicts and experiences of the people living these events, the game becomes a relevant representation to help them understand. By tying the curriculum with modern day events, showing the players why the curriculum is relevant, we are building on one of the core tenets of Nielsen's model, which is to relate the relevance to the students as early as possible, by so doing the students will engage with the video games to a larger degree as proven by Nielsn. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

5.2.5 Engagement:

As part of "engagement" the model uses the under categories;

- Doing
- Applying
- Probing

(Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005)

This War of Mine engages the players in them attempting to survive the war torn streets of a fictional town, based upon the siege of Sarajevo. Here we concern ourselves with both the game mechanics and how specifically these under categories relate to historical empathy. As with most games, This War of Mine engages players through interaction with the game world where the players go through all the above mentioned sub-categories; Doing, applying and probing. As this is a commercial game the categories above are built in to the games mechanics. The players are encouraged to probe around the map clearing obstacles to access more of their safehouse, to gather more loot and as the game goes on, the player learns more of how the game operates, thereby the player is encouraged to explore (probe) the game world and different mechanics so that the player may then apply said mechanics and experiences gained through the game. Resulting in the player setting a goal that they then complete (doing). As you look closer at this gameplay loop, according to Gee, humans need to imagine or simulate an experience in a way that prepares the player or student for the actions they need and want to take so that they may accomplish a set goal. (Gee, 2013) How this relates to the game becomes apparent when we look at the situation the player finds themselves in. As the player finds themselves in an unfamiliar environment surrounded by a city under siege. Here the student must, according to Gee, draw upon their previous experiences and interactions with war and sieges. That is to say, though none of the students have formally experienced war, they need to draw upon other experiences such as other games, media and stories they have heard. By doing so, the students may then start simulating what actions they should take. They build and use these simulations to prepare themselves for actions they need to take in order to survive, and we see this play out in several of the interviews, especially pertaining to the old couple. (Gee, 2013) Which brings us to the last and final research question:

5.3 Having used Nielsen's expanded version of Kolb's learning model, can we identify historical empathy in the students?

5.3.1 Student perspectives

I mentioned above that I believe we have seen parts of the requirements for historical empathy developed in some if not most of the students that partook in this study. Based on the analysis of this thesis that would seem to be true. There were some students that were close to historical empathy but lacked one or two prerequisites, such as with Frederick, who comes close but doesn't fulfil the requirements set forth by neither Barton & Lestvik nor Ednacott & Brooks, as he does not show historical contextualisation and his understanding of the characters does not line up with viewing them as having different lived experiences, instead focusing on the characters as resources to be managed. Frederick here further missed that as the game goes on their biographies would be updated, which would allow the player more insight into the characters state of mind, as when the character goes into a breakdown, there will be a new entry pertaining to the characters state of mind.

Sarah & Malin were the only ones to really tick all the required boxes representing historical empathy. As these two were able to understand the context in which the different events pertaining to Syria take place and were able to understand how the characters in the game would have different ideas from their own based on their own lived experiences as was shown in their biographies. Resulting in these two students being the only ones that really showed any historical empathy throughout this project.

5.3.2 Researchers perspective:

As this project draws to a close, I have made myself some thoughts on using Nielsens model and working with historical scientific concepts. I have found that Nielsens expanded theoretical framework has been of great help planning and preparing this project, as it has laid out an excellent framework from which to work with. There have had to be some adjustments made to the curriculum in order to accommodate the model, though I found that there were

areas of applying this model that were more difficult than others. I found that perhaps paradoxically enough, the player perspective was the hardest to plan for. While the student perspective represents the instructed learning process, making sure that the player perspective part of the game and project as a whole would lead to the desired outcome for this project was the most challenging.

The categories of Relevance, Engagement and Investment in activity which represented the players perspective would give the players a lot of autonomy in how they completed the game, this proved to be a challenge as every player is different and we cannot ensure that they will visit the different locations of interest or that they will take the time to understand the situation in the game. Some players; myself included, derive enjoyment from accomplishing the objective of a game as quickly as possible, which means that story elements are not the greatest concern for these players, instead there is a desire to accomplish the game and finish quickly that motivates these players. Some are powergamers, using knowledge from a previous playthrough that their characters and newer players don't know and bypassing vital story elements because they know how to acquire weapons or a lot of food, thereby diminishing the learning opportunity the game provides. I mention this because accounting for how students play a game further impacts how and what they learn through the experience. As we saw with Frederic who I would consider one of those who aim to accomplish the game objective above story elements, which was probably the reason he saw the characters as resources rather than individuals with their own stories.

Having said that, I found the project to be a great assistance in teaching empathy in general, the historical element was harder for most to connect though I saw some students able to connect the dots between what was historical and relevant towards their historical learning in this project. The model and the project in general shows great promise in how we can utilise games as a method for teaching concepts as part of a wider historical curriculum.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This project has looked into whether or not it is possible to teach scientific concepts, in this case historical empathy, through video games by applying the theoretical framework put forward by Egnfeldt-Nielsen. The thesis has utilised a qualitative approach looking at a year 10 class, here we have looked at how the students have worked with and reflected over the events in the game and how they may connect these experiences to historical empathy. This thesis has then categorised their experiences into the categories developed by Barton & Lestvik, as well as Endacott & Brooks, to detect historical empathy in the students. The main question that this thesis has attempted to answer is to prove the title: "Teaching historical scientific concepts such as historical empathy through This War of Mine: An attempt at adapting Egenfeldt-Nielsen's theoretical framework of video game learning to the Norwegian school." By so doing we have created three research questions that we have also attempted to answer; the questions being

- Are students more motivated towards learning history when applying Egenfeldt-Nielsen theoretical framework to video games in a classroom setting?

- Having used Nielsen's expanded version of Kolb's learning model, can we identify historical empathy in the students?

Based on our interviews as well as observations made during the actual playthrough it is clear that the students enjoyed this method of teaching, furthermore, we see that students understand the difference between education and entertainment, that is to say by their own approximation, students prefer traditional classroom education with the addition of games to a limited degree. The historical attributes of this project came from understanding how the characters in the game dealt with living in a war-torn environment, seeing the destruction as part of the visual stimuli, and connecting these experiences to historical events. While we used the Syrian civil war as our backdrop during this project, it would have been just as easy if not easier to use this approach when teaching about the second world war; Warsaw and Berlin during the reconstruction or the first and final days of the war are two examples that come to mind when considering settings in which the game could be used to spark reflection and historical thought in the students.

My original hypothesis was that the students would overwhelmingly prefer video game based learning over the traditional approach. It was therefore a surprise to see the students themselves suggesting that video games should be used in moderation and not as the main focus for historical instruction.

As for the main question of this thesis, can we use the theoretical framework put forth by Egnfeldt-Nielsen to create an educational model from which we can teach historical scientific concepts and concepts in general? The result of this thesis is that we can use Nielsens theoretical framework to construct an educational curriculum that teaches historical empathy to some degree. That is to say that we have identified historical empathy in the students that partook in this study, though that may not necessarily be because of the curriculum in its entirety, instead it should be noted that there have been many studies focusing on this exact combination of "This War of Mine" and historical empathy, only in the last two years we have; Hole, Aakre and Nygård (2022) all of whom have looked at this exact combination of This War of Mine and historical empathy though through different lenses. This thesis based itself on their research and gas according to Hole (2022), further research into This War of Mine should look to create a stronger framework from which to utilise game. That is what this thesis has looked to accomplish as we attempt to draw upon Nielsens theoretical framework to create a frame from which we can teach historical scientific concepts; in this case Historical Empathy. Furthermore, it has become clear that the game is already well positioned to teach historical empathy requiring only instruction from a teacher and a frame from which to work. As such, when concluding this thesis, it is clear that it is possible to teach historical empathy through instruction and using "This War of Mine". Though there are difficulties along the way, the nature of video games and the different types of players much like how in a classroom there are those who learn in different ways and speeds, some slower, some are ahead and for some the pace of the class is just perfect, so is video game learning also dependent on the different players "styles".

This thesis has attempted to see if it is possible to use Nielsens model to teach scientific concepts, as this project comes to an end, it is not entirely clear that we have managed to do so using the approaches outlined in this thesis. The greatest hurdle for this project to overcome was that of historical contextualisation as pointed out by Hole (2022). Based on the responses from the students it is clear that this project was only partially successful in doing so. However, I still have great faith in attempting to find a theoretical

framework that would prove effective, perhaps Nielsens model may still be effective; while it is true that I would only consider one group to have shown historical empathy (Sarah & Malin), it is nevertheless clear that the participating students showed great promise and took great strides towards historical empathy, showing many of the underlying concepts of historical empathy that were outlined in chapter two.

This thesis focused on teaching year 10 students though I believe by adapting this model further and implementing adjustments where necessary using video games to teach historical empathy is possible on many levels, both at upper secondary school as well as at the elementary; as we have seen in earlier research from Barton & Lestvik (2004). The use of video games as a form of education and for creating a deeper understanding of scientific concepts is therefore not just plausible but also actionable where there is the time and opportunity to implement this sort of curriculum. The difficulties lie somewhat in the findings of Wagner's study, where one of the major difficulties in using film and video games was the temporal aspect. (Wagner, D.-A., 2018) I believe that a greater deal of time should be spent on this type of learning as video games offer a unique perspective into historical context. Furthermore, as I pointed out as part of the introduction; video games are more relevant than ever to the upcoming generations, making games a tool that students already have experience with and could help motivate students to learn. I hope that this dissertation can lead others to take a deeper interest in finding ways in which we can structure a curriculum that would allow for teaching not just historical concepts but also other concepts through structured means in the classroom using video games.

6.1 Further research

Following the conclusion of this thesis, the question that I am left with is whether the model may be applied to other historical scientific concepts such as the concepts of; continuity and change, the ethical dimension of history and cause & consequence? I have high hopes for future research into this topic as the possibilities of using video games as a medium for teaching historical concepts is vast, this thesis focused primarily on using This War of Mine, though other video games could offer new and exciting opportunities such as using the game series Civilisations, Age of Empires or Assassins Creed; three game series that have already been mentioned in this thesis. They all offer interesting perspectives into

historical events and show great potential for teaching other concepts.It should further be considered that Nielsens model is by no way the definitive framework for the use of games in class, as the frame is a *theoretical framework*, that is to say a proposal for how such research may be conducted. Future research should feel free to use Nielsens model and should further be willing to expand on and change parts of Nielsens model to fit the modern school and the level of the students in question in an attempt to teach other scientific historical concepts such as the ones mentioned above.

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Appendix

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet
Spill i historieundervisningen, hvordan kan spill bidra for å skape engasjement og historisk empati?

Formålet med prosjektet
Dette er et spørsmål til deg om du vil delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å
- Utforske hvordan spill sammen med undervisning i klasserommet kan bidra for å skape engasjement for historiefaget, prosjektet ser også på om spill har et godt utgangspunkt for å undervise i historisk empati.
- Dette forskningsprosjektet er en del av min masteroppgave i historiedidaktikk.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du får denne forespørselen fordi
- Du går i en klasse som har tidligere brukt og skal bruke spill som del av undervisningen, hele klassen får utdelt dette skrivet. De som ønsker å delta i prosjektet kan bli bedt med ut av klasserommet etter undervisningsopplegget er gjennomført for å høre om deres erfaringer med spill i undervisningen, dette kan skje enten en-og-en eller i grupper etter deres ønsker.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Universitetet i Stavanger - Fakultet for Humaniora er ansvarlig for personopplysningene som behandles i prosjektet.
- Alle opplysningene vil bli behandlet av meg, Thomas A. Øverlie, transkribert og anonymisert hvorav det vil være umulig å gjenkjenne deltakerne i etterkant.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Beskriv:
- Dersom du godkjenner at ditt barn deltar kan de bli bedt med ut på et grupperom etter undervisningsopplegget er ferdig hvor jeg ønsker å gjennomføre et intervju med noen spørsmål jeg håper du kan svare på.
- Jeg kommer til å invitere mellom syv til ti stykker til å delta på disse intervjuene.
- Ingen personopplysninger vil bli samlet på under intervjuet. Jeg kommer til å gjøre lydopptak som slettes umiddelbart etter at transkriberingen er ferdig.
- Dersom det skulle være ønskelig kan jeg etter ønsket dele intervjuguide med foresatte før evt. intervju gjennomføres.

Kort om personvern
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler personopplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Du kan lese mer om personvern under*.

Utdypende om personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

- All opplysning vil bare være tilgjengelig for meg selv (Thomas A. Øverlie) hvorvidt jeg i lys av min stilling som lærer på skolen også har undertegnet taushetsplikt.
- Ingen navn eller personopplysninger vil bli registrert, lydopptak vil være registrert på egen enhet separat markert med tall for å indikere rekkefølge på intervjuene.
- I etterkant av publikasjon vil deltakere ikke kunne kjenne igjen hvem som har deltatt. Alt arbeidet anonymiseres og transkriberes før sletting.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Stavanger har personvern tjenestene ved Sikt – Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør, vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- å be om innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Vi vil gi deg en begrunnelse hvis vi mener at du ikke kan identifiseres, eller at rettighetene ikke kan utøves.

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?
Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes ca. 21 Dec.
Opplysningene vil da også anonymiseres og slettes.

Spørsmål
Hvis du har spørsmål eller vil utøve dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Masterveileder: Markus Mindrebø: (e-post: markus.e.mindrebo@uis.no)
- Student: Thomas. A. Øverlie, 97850285 (e-post: thomas.andreassen.overlie@stavangerskolen.no)
- Vårt personvernombud: Marianne Trå, 51831517 (e-post: personvernombudet@uis.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Sikts vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt på e-post: personverntjenester@sikt.no, eller på telefon: 73 98 40 40.

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet Spill i historieundervisningen, hvordan kan spill bidra for å skape engasjement og historisk empati?, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju enkelt eller i grupper

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

Signatur:

Vedlegg 2: Interview guide

Introduksjon:

Spiller du spill på fritiden?

Hvor mye tid vil du si du bruker på spill ila. en dag?

Har du noen erfaring med historiske spill fra før?

I spillet dere spillet i undervisningen, hvor langt kom du/dere?

Forståelse av elevenes oppfatninger:

Er det bekymringer eller ulemper du forbinder med bruk av dataspill i timen?

Vi har spilt dette spillet i forbindelse med undervisningen, har du/dere lært noe av denne erfaringen, syns du/dere selv?

I spillet tar du flere valg, hva var det vanskeligste valget du måtte ta i spillet? Hvordan følte du deg her?

Hva syns du/dere om måten spillet utforsket temaet om krig?

Utforske engasjement:

Hvordan føler du deg når du spiller dataspill? Hva holder deg engasjert i et spill?

Læring gjennom spill:

Kan du huske en bestemt situasjon der du lærte noe av et videospill? Hva var det?

Hvordan tror du dataspill kan hjelpe deg med å lære fag som historie? Isåfall hvordan?

Spilldesign og læring:

Tror du dataspill er et godt verktøy for at du skal lære?

Leste dere biografien til karakterene i spillet? Hadde dette en betydning for valgene dere tok?

Kritisk tenkning og problemløsning:

I spillet "This War of Mine" har du måttet løse en utfordrende oppgave eller ta vanskelige beslutninger i spillet? Hvordan gikk du frem?

Samarbeid og sosiale ferdigheter:

Hvordan føler du at spill hjelper deg med å tenke og løse problemer?

Balansen mellom spill og tradisjonell læring:

Tror du det bør være en balanse mellom tradisjonell klasseromsundervisning og spillbasert læring? Hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke?

Personlige preferanser:

Har du noen favorittspill som du føler at du har lært noe fra? Hva var det du lærte?

Avsluttende tanker:

Hvis det er én ting du ønsker at lærerne dine skal vite om spill i klasserommet, hva ville det være?

Vedlegg 3: Godkjenning fra Sikt

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer	**Vurderingstype**	**Dato**
234261	Standard	26.03.2024

Tittel
Spill i historieundervisningen, blir elever som spiller på fritiden mer motivert av spill i undervisningen enn elever som ikke spiller, evt. Hvorfor?

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Universitetet i Stavanger / Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for kultur- og språkvitenskap

Prosjektansvarlig
Markus Eldegard Mindrebø

Student
Thomas Andreassen Øverlie

Prosjektperiode
15.03.2024 - 10.04.2024

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 10.04.2024.

Meldeskjema 🔗

Kommentar
OM VURDERINGEN
Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket. Vi har nå vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene.

FORELDRE SAMTYKKER FOR BARN
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra foresatte til behandlingen av personopplysninger om barna.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt og hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettspørreskjema, videosamtale el.).

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: https://sikt.no/melde-endringar-i-meldeskjema

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. I langvarige prosjekter vil vi ta kontakt hvert annet år for å minne om at eventuelle endringer må meldes.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

b2e10a108

Vedlegg 4: En kort introduksjon til prosjektet.

Enkelte deler er svartet ut for å bevare elevenes anonymitet.

Hei, dere har nå fått tildelt et samtykkeskjema i forbindelse med et masterprosjekt som skjer her på ███████████. Jeg legger ved dette som en kort introduksjon til hvem jeg er og hva jeg arbeider med, slik at dere slipper alle de tunge formuleringene i selve samtykke-skjemaet.

Mitt navn er Thomas A. Øverlie, jeg arbeider som lærer på ███████████ og skriver nå til sommeren en mastergrad i Historiedidaktikk; altså studiet mitt fokuserer på hvordan man underviser i faget historie (samfunnsfag). Studien skal se på hvordan bruken av spill kan brukes for å skape refleksjon og engasjement for læring av historie-vitenskapelige konsepter som historisk empati.

Dere får dette samtykkeskjemaet ettersom jeg ønsker å drive noen korte intervjuer i grupper eller en-til-en med elevene, jeg kommer til å ta lydopptak av selve samtalen slik at jeg kan i etterkant transkribere dette og anonymisere samtalen. Det vil si at etter jeg har transkribert samtalen kommer jeg til å fjerne alle opplysninger som kan brukes for å identifisere elevene deres. Opptaket blir deretter slettet. For å kunne gjøre dette må jeg ha en godkjenning av at dette er greit for dere.

Dersom dere har noen spørsmål er det bare å ta kontakt med kontaktlærer ████, som jeg har utarbeidet dette opplegget med, eller meg selv på: thomas.andreassen.overlie@stavangerskolen.no alt. også på vigilo.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Thomas A. Øverlie

Vedlegg 5: Oppgaver til "This War of Mine"

Diskuter spørsmålene i gruppa, og skriv inn svarene.

Den som er eldst, skriver inn svarene.
Den som er yngst passer på tiden.
Den som har kortest vei til skolen, er viddevakt.

1) Hvordan overlever man i spillet, og hvordan tror du dette samsvarer med virkeligheten?

2) Kan en rettferdiggjøre å ta liv, og i hvilke situasjoner synes du at det kan rettferdiggjøres?

3) I løpet av spillet blir dere nødt til å ha ta noen vanskelige valg. Reflekter rundt hva som er det riktige å gjøre i disse situasjonene når man er i en krigssone:
   - Å stjele for å overleve, gjerne fra noen som trenger det like mye som deg.
   - Å gi mat eller utstyr til noen som trenger det, selv om du har svært lite selv.
   - Å drepe.
   - Å utsette seg selv for fare for å beskytte eller forsvare fremmede.

4) Kjønnsroller: De ulike rollene i spillet har ulike kjønn. Påvirket dette hvordan dere behandlet karakterene, og hvilke oppgaver de fikk?

5) Hvordan tror dere mennesker som vokser opp i krigssoner blir påvirket av det? Hva skjer med måten man ser på samfunnet, samt lov og orden?

Vedlegg 6: Kolb's Læringsmodell utvidet av Egenfeldt-Nielsen
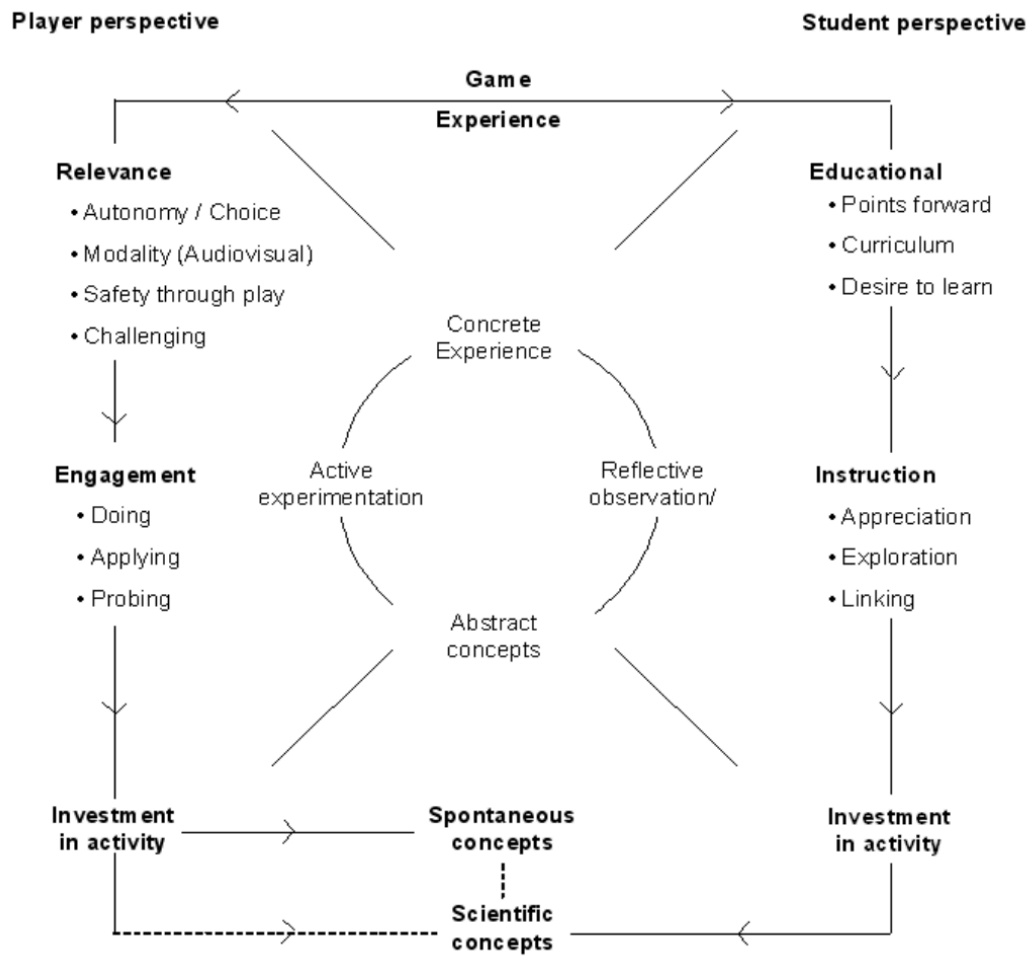
Vedlegg 7: Endacott & Brooks sin model for historisk empati