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THE WAY WE ENGAGE WITH STORIES
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ABOUT EXPERIENCING STORYWORLDS

Master's thesis in the scope of the Interuniversity Master's in Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology supervised by Professor Doctor Óscar Filipe Coelho Neves Gonçalves and presented to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra

July 2023

Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra

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An exploratory study about experiencing storyworlds

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Summary

We constantly encounter narratives in our everyday lives and seek these storyworlds for many reasons. This qualitative study explores how people engage with stories through two main approaches: looking at the everyday story experience and how storytelling can influence these experiences. Story experiences were observed in the context of a short film and a video game (future narrative), while also focusing on the phenomenon of narrative transportation.

The results indicate that curiosity lies at the core of story investment: What will happen? How this situation will be solved? The narrative's ability to keep this curiosity alive seems to be the focal point of story enjoyment and an important aspect of experiencing narrative transportation. Another important aspect of experiencing storyworlds was the moment in someone's life, which seemed to play a major role in the narrative choice and what makes people remember those stories even years after experiencing that narrative for the first time. Features of the narrative also seem to impact the experience of a storyworld, being part of a genre appreciated by the consumer and being aesthetically pleasing are examples of this occurrence.

Furthermore, it seems that different ways of storytelling provide different experiences. Interactive storytelling (future narrative) provides a kind of experience with the storyworld where the viewer has agency over the narrative's events and can, to some extent, conduct the plot in the direction that they want to see and experience in that storyworld.

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Introduction

In the *Arabian Nights*, the king Šāhriyār marries a woman every night and kills them in the morning. Šahrāzād marries Šāhriyār, but her fate is different from the other women the king wedded. On her wedding night, she instructs her younger sister, Dīnārzād, to ask her to tell a story. With Dīnārzād's request, Šahrāzād starts her tales, which intrigues the king to the point of letting her live and finish the story (Livro das Mil e Uma Noites, ca. 1250-1350/2005). Through storytelling, Šahrāzād escapes her imminent death and tells her stories during a thousand and one nights. In less extreme situations, all of us have been in Šāhriyār's place, so intrigued by a story that our mind keeps wandering back to it, but what makes those stories so intriguing? What gives them the power to have such an impact on us?

We are constantly in contact with stories. Watching series, reading books, or even listening to a friend complaining about their work, stories are part of our everyday lives and experiences. Gonçalves (2000) points out that it is through our ability to narrate the dramas of our existence that we build new meanings and ways of existence. Narratives allow us to explore multiple realities and complex plots of knowledge. Through language and narrative organization, we can construct knowledge from our experiences that are, by nature, chaotic. When we produce a narrative, we transform reality.

The word narrative can be understood in many ways (Genette, 1972/1980; Reis, 2018), leading to difficulties in finding a consensus about what a narrative is. In the context of literature, Genette (1972/1980) defines the function of narrative as "simply to tell a story and therefore 'report' facts (real or fictive)" (p.161) and discriminates three aspects of the narrative reality: (1) story, the narrative content; (2) narrative, the narrative discourse; and (3) narrating, the act of producing a narrative. This approach brings the idea of narrative as *storytelling*.

Damasio (2011) refers to the importance of storytelling: "The problem of how to make all this wisdom understandable, transmissible, persuasive, enforceable – in a word, of how to make it stick – was faced and a solution found. Storytelling was the solution – storytelling is something the brains do, naturally and implicitly." (The Consequences of a Reflective Self Section). In the context of fiction writing Brasil (2019) also highlights the connection between knowledge and storytelling by framing the fictionist as a curious being that needs a lot of lived experience since one narrative can contain information

about many different topics (e.g. sociology, engineering, astronomy). But how does a writer use his knowledge to craft a narrative? Which are the main elements of a story?

When talking about the story as the narrative content three elements must be considered: characters, action, and spaces. *Characters* are the representation of a human (or humanized) figure that, in a narrative action, contributes to the development of a story and the projection of meanings to that story. *Action* is the set of events that are lived by the characters in determined spaces. *Space* is a narrative category in the context of a story, where it constitutes the scenery of the events that integrate the action (Reis, 2018).

Characters, actions and spaces can be considered the core elements of a story, but, as Genette (1972/1980) points out, the story is just one of the pieces of the narrative reality. When engaging with a narrative world, we are not interacting exclusively with its story, but also with the way it's told and who is telling it. Another factor important to our experience with narrative worlds is the context in which we get in contact with those stories. How do we choose what we are going to consume? Which kinds of stories do we usually consume? How are we going to consume that story? Where are we when consuming that story? Are we alone?

Engaging with narratives

When referring to our daily contact with storyworld, it is important to consider not only what people are consuming, but the way they are consuming and getting in contact with those narratives.

The amount of narrative content available to the public is outstanding and, as Wadfogel (2017) points out, digitalization provided a fertile space for the growth of a golden age of music, movies, books and television. It allowed an increase in media products and new ways consumers can access them (e.g. videos-on-demand, subscriptions to online platforms). Content that previously would not be widely accessible, or even produced, is now available to the average person. In the myriad of possible stories available for the average person, how do we choose the titles we engage with?

Choosing a story

Mar et al. (2011) points out that our choices of fiction are a product of aspects related to emotions, such as our current emotional states, the emotions that we think will arise after we consume that media and our personal goals related to felt emotion. This is also reflected by Bentley and Murray (2016) regarding the rewatching of videos, they found that participants frequently rewatched a specific video content that would result in a desired mood. However, it is important to consider that other factors can influence our

story choice, an example is brought by Beck (2007) by reflecting upon how positive word of mouth can influence book sales.

Beck (2007) references two types of buyers: influentials and imitators. The influentials are the ones who are intrinsically motivated to buy the book and the imitators are the ones who buy the book because they were informed about it by one or more influentials. This word of mouth can take different forms, from reviews, personal recommendations or even just seeing someone reading the book. Even though the act of buying a book doesn't mean that the buyer will read it (e.g. give it as a gift, leave it on the shelf), the fact that word of mouth can lead someone to want to consume a story shows how we can be influenced to engage with a specific story.

Individual preferences can also influence how we will choose a story: would I rather read a book or watch a movie? In my everyday life, do I usually watch a comedy sitcom or read a murder mystery book? Furthermore, it is important to consider if we are going to experience that story alone. For example, when we watch a movie with friends or family, do we always pick a movie that we would watch alone? This kind of situation can be seen in Bentley and Murray (2016), where the most common motivation for rewatching video content is to show it to others. We can enjoy the movie, but were we going to watch that movie if our friend didn't show it to us?

Experiencing new worlds

We can experience stories in many ways, and different kinds of media promote different ways for us to engage with them. Literature allows the participation of the reader by promoting the creation of mental images of the story in addition to the reader controlling the time they spend in that storyworld (i.e. "go at their own pace"). Movies, on the other hand, provide the viewer with those images and a time frame in which they will experience that story (i.e. duration of the movie). Literature can provide an in-depth exploration of characters and feelings, while film presents those same thoughts and feelings through observed expressions and behaviors, this visual presentation can be even more impactful than words (Mar et al., 2011; Green et al., 2008). Each media has its own strengths and weaknesses, making experiencing each of them unique.

One particularly interesting way of storytelling is what Bode (2013) called *Future Narratives*. These kinds of narratives represent a fundamental rupture from the traditional narratives in the sense that the former is concerned with past events, while the latter is rooted in the idea that "every 'now' contains a multitude of possible continuations" (Bode, 2013, p.1).

Future narratives operate under *nodal situations* (nodes), in which a situation allows one or more continuations. What will happen is uncertain and "by allowing the reader/player to enter situations that fork into different branches and to actually *experience* that 'what happens next' may well depend upon us, upon our decisions, our actions, our values and motivations" (Bode, 2013, p.1).

There are a lot of ways that we can experience fiction, but there is one central aspect common to narrative engagement: emotions. Mar et al. (2011) call the emotions evoked by entering a story's world *Narrative Emotions*, which can be split into five kinds: (1) emotions of sympathy; (2) emotions of identification; (3) emotions of empathy; (4) relived emotions; (5) remembered emotions. These emotions can be further categorized as derived from engagement with characters (sympathy, identification and empathy) and from our memories (relived and remembered). It is important to note that these emotions engage in complex interactions and can occur simultaneously.

After the end

The experiences we had while engaged with a fictional story don't end at the last page of a book or the end credits of a movie. The emotions we experience while engaged with a storyworld can change our cognitive processing and lead to personal transformation (Mar et al., 2011). When reading fiction, we are allowed a safe space to project ourselves in those narratives, which provides opportunities for us to grow emotionally through our experiences in storyworlds. These "travels" into narrative worlds can even help us with our own difficulties (Mar & Oatley, 2008).

Traveling to narrative worlds

All of us have experienced the phenomenon of traveling to a narrative world by reading a good book or watching an interesting movie. Gerrig (1993) refers to this phenomenon as transportation and compares it with a literal experience of being transported:

1. Someone ("the traveler") is transported

2. by some means of transportation

3. as a result of performing certain actions.

4. The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin

5. which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible.

6. The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey.

(pp. 10-11)

The phenomenon of *transportation* is the feeling of being lost in a narrative world to the point of becoming completely immersed in a story and leaving the real world behind (Green, 2008). Transportation can be conceptualized as a "distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings" (Green & Brock, 2000, p.701), having in its core cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and mental imagery (Green et al. 2008).

Transportation is assumed to take place across different types of media (e.g. videos, books) that provides a mean of transmitting stories (fictional or nonfictional) and is related to media enjoyment. This phenomenon is also associated with changes in an individual's life by promoting changes in attitudes and beliefs, which should persist over time (Green, 2008).

Being transported

Like a traveler that goes to a foreign country, the reader is transported to new places, people and cultures. As good travelers, the reader is open to these new realities (Gerrig, 1993) and is less critical of the narrative they are consuming (Green, 2008).

To reach a narrative world, the traveler must have means of transportation, these vehicles can be movies, books, series, or any other kind of media. As Gerrig (1993) states "the only a priori requirement for a means of transportation is that it serves as an invitation to the traveler to abandon the here and now" (p.12). Therefore, the traveler is not a passive figure, to engage with storyworlds they perform certain actions and, through the performance of narratives by using their own experiences (facts and emotions), they construct the world and bridge the gaps in the text (Gerrig, 1993).

When transported, the traveler is far from their world of origin, the distance between them can seem close (e.g. series Modern Family) or far away (e.g. book Lord of the Rings), but, in both cases, we can't affect the course of action of that world (Gerrig, 1993). However, future narratives seem to break that rule by allowing the traveler to experience more than one outcome from a situation (Bode, 2013), which makes this kind of storytelling an interesting way of looking at transportation and the phenomenon of *Anomalous Replotting*, where the "reader is actively thinking about what could have happened to change an outcome" (Gerrig, 1993, p. 175).

The traveler also loses contact with their original world when transported and there is a dissociation between what the reader knows or believes in the "real world" and in the storyworld. When transported into a narrative world, the traveler is partially isolated from their reality and, when they come back, they are changed by the journey

(Gerrig, 1993), an idea that can be seen clearly by the impact stories have in our lives (Mar et al., 2011; Mar & Oatley, 2008) and how transportation seems to have an important role in promoting changes of attitudes and beliefs of travelers (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, 2008).

In summary, when transported, the traveler "gets away" from the real world to engage with narrative worlds, which are constructed not only by the narrative itself, but also by the traveler's experiences. While in those new worlds, the traveler gets in contact with new realities that have the power to change their attitudes and beliefs.

Going into narrative worlds

Being transported is a pleasurable experience that is usually sought and is tightly linked to media enjoyment. While traveling through narrative worlds we are distant from our own world and, consequently, we leave our worries behind and are temporarily relieved from negative states (Green et al., 2004), a point also brought up by Mar et al. (2011) by referring that people seek stories that lead them to a desirable mood.

Transportation also allows us to explore and experiment with other possible selves. A narrative provides a way for us to simulate alternative realities, personalities and actions without real consequences to us (Green et al., 2004). Mar and Oatley (2008) go a step further by stating that the function of fiction is abstraction and simulation of social experiences. The simulation in literature has two functions: (1) allow the understanding of other minds that, otherwise, might be inaccessible; and (2) assist in the comprehension of social complexes. In a literary narrative, the information is brought to the reader by letting them have firsthand experiences of situations, environments and times that would be difficult, or even impossible, for them to experience themselves.

When travelers are transported, they are deeply involved with the storyworld, which often leads to a loss of track of time and failure in noticing events happening around them. They are focused on the narrative instead of the self. In this context, transportation is psychologically similar to flow, but flow is a more general term since an individual might experience it in a range of activities (Green, 2004; Green et al., 2008). Another more general term that can be associated with transportation is absorption, which represents a dispositional tendency to become immersed in experiences (Green, 2008; Green et al. 2008).

Paths to narrative worlds

Even though transportation can occur by any narrative means, it seems to be enhanced by characteristics of the narrative vehicle, individual differences and personal

experiences. For example, high-quality narratives (i.e. narratives with bestseller status and included in the literary canon) (Green & Brock, 2000) and returning to narrative worlds (Green et al., 2008) can promote an easier transportation.

Individual characteristics also seem to influence transportation. Green's et al. (2011) participants with a higher need of cognition (i.e. dispositional tendency to engage and enjoy effortful cognitive activity) were more transported into the literary stimulus while participants with a low need of cognition were more transported into a film stimulus, both of which told the same story.

The extent to which individuals become deeply transported into stories ("transportability") also impacts transportation (Green, 2008). Mar et al. (2009) found that higher transportability is associated with empathy, which might indicate that our capacity to project ourselves in a story may assist in projecting ourselves into another's mind to infer their mental state. Transportation also seems to help develop an individual's natural tendency toward empathy and perspective thinking (Green et al., 2004).

Furthermore, while traveling through narrative worlds, we get in contact with people we find there (Green & Brock, 2000), and these characters also play an important role in transportation. While deep in a narrative world, we start to develop a connection with the characters that we constantly meet (Green et al., 2004). Transportation seems to be a key aspect of identification with characters, a process that involves the adoption of the character's goals, emotions and behaviors to the point that the traveler leaves their world behind (Green et al., 2004; Green, 2008).

Exploring story engagement

There are many ways to study story engagement, but one that allows a particularly in-depth exploration is qualitative research, which "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.10), which makes the qualitative approach ideal for an exploration of the everyday experience.

The qualitative researcher uses a variety of empirical materials (e.g. interviews, case studies, etc.) that describe moments and meanings in someone's life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), and one of these materials that is widely used in human and social sciences are the semi-structured interviews. This method of interviewing is beneficial because, while it provides the interviewer the possibility to focus on the aspects that they perceive as important, it still allows the interviewee to elaborate on what they see as

important (Brinkmann, 2018). The semi-structured interview can be a great asset in exploratory research.

Elaborating semi-structured interviews

The phenomenological perspective is widely spread in qualitative research (Brinkmann, 2018) and can be a starting point for an exploratory study. In this approach, the researcher is interested in describing the experience of a person in the way they experience it. The structure provided by the phenomenological interview is not necessarily a rigid script about what to ask, but it serves as a guide to the interviewer in the process of questioning (Bevan 2014).

Bevan (2014) provides a guide to the elaboration of a phenomenological interview, in which its structure is split into 3 phases: (1) contextualization, where the "researcher must consider the context and biography from which the experience gains meaning" (Bevan, 2014, p.139); (2) apprehending the phenomena, where there is a "direct focus on the experience the researcher is interested in"(Bevan, 2014, p.140) and the experience is explored in more detail; and (3) clarifying the phenomenon, where there is a "use of elements of experience, or experience as a whole, while exploring the phenomenon itself" (Bevan, 2014, p.141).

Bevan's (2014) method focuses on describing and thematizing experiences systematically and provides an explicit and theoretical-based approach to phenomenological interviewing. The non-restrictive structure of this method allows the researchers to explore the experience actively and methodologically,

Analyzing interviews

Phenomenological interviews can provide important insight about our engagement with stories, but they will only provide information about how the interviewee experience that phenomenon (Bevan, 2014). In other words, the only information the researcher will have access to is one individual's experience, which cannot be assumed to represent the way that other people experience that same phenomenon. This aspect of the phenomenological interview raises the question of how it is possible to use the content of an individual's experiences to reach a more general characterization of the narrative experience.

A thematic analysis of the content of multiple phenomenological interviews can be an interesting starting point. This qualitative approach can be seen as a fundamental method in qualitative analysis and consist of the identification, analysis and report of patterns (themes) present in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A thematic analysis has great value in its flexibility, possibility of summarizing key features of a lot of data and can highlight similarities and differences in data sets. In other words, thematic analysis is a great tool for qualitative analysis, but it still has limitations, one of them being the fact that it has limited interpretative power other than description if the research topics don't have an existing theoretical framework that can support the claims that are made (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a limitation that makes a purely thematic analysis not ideal in an exploratory study.

Grounded Theory can provide an interesting approach. The "procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a well-integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.5).

Corbin and Strauss (1990) present the canons and procedures to be followed by the grounded theory researchers: (1) data collection and analysis are interrelated processes; (2) concepts are the basic unit of analysis; (3) categories must be developed and related; (4) sampling in grounded theory proceeds on theoretical grounds; (5) analysis makes use of constant comparison; (6) patterns and variations must be accounted for; (7) process must be built into the theory; (8) writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing ground theory; (9) hypothesis about relationships among categories should be developed and verified as much as possible during the research process; (10) a grounded theorist need not work alone; and (11) broader structural conditions must be analyzed, however microscopic the research. It is through the familiarization and enforcement of those canons and procedures that the researcher is allowed to safely conduct a grounded theory study.

Regarding the analysis of the data of a grounded theory study, the fundamental analytic process used by the researcher is coding. Coding can be presented in three basic types: open, axial and selective (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Open coding is "the interpretative process by which data are broken down analytically" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.12), Axial coding is where "categories are related to their sub-categories, and the relationship is tested against data" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.13). Selective coding is "the process by which all categories are unified around a 'core' category, and categories that need further explication are filled in with descriptive detail" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.14), being the core category the central phenomenon under study.

Considering the complexity of the study of story engagement, the present study intends to contribute to the construction of knowledge about our engagement with stories

by embracing this diversity of ways the narrative experience can manifest itself in daily life using a mostly qualitative experiment design.

The aim of the present study was to explore the phenomenological experience of transportation of the average person in their daily lives, in addition to promoting a space to explore what they seek in those experiences and how they interact with different ways of storytelling. In other words, the everyday characteristics of story engagement will be explored and the elements that are used to tell those stories will be discussed.

Methods

The present study consisted of two sessions performed on two different days and includes interviews regarding the way people engaged with stories.

Participants

A convenience sample of 14 participants (4 males) with an average age of 25 years (SD = 8.35, range=19-49) went through the experiment, all native Portuguese speakers (7 Brazilians and 7 Portuguese).

Materials

The materials used were: (1) a Consent form; (2) the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) (adapted from Bradley & Lang, 1994); (3) a Story Preference Questionnaire (SPQ); (4) 3 semi-structured interviews about engagement with stories, one about the phenomenological experience of transportation and two about specific story experiences (Annexes A, B and C); (5) a short-film, *Out of Sight (*虞雅婷, 2010); (6) a future narrative, the game *Life is Strange: True Colors* (Deck Nine, 2021); which was played on a (7) Nintendo Switch OLED (Nintendo, 2021), and (8) headphones.

Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM)

The SAM is a picture-oriented instrument and assesses emotional responses (pleasure, arousal and dominance) associated with an object or event (Bradley & Lang, 1994). A paper-pencil version of SAM accompanied by a numerical scale from 1 to 9 was used.

Story Preference Questionnaire (SPQ)

The SPQ was developed for the present study and contains questions about the participant's contact with stories in their everyday lives (e.g. time spent with stories, the kind of media that usually consume, etc.). It also contains questions about the participant's demographic characteristics (e.g. age, nationality, etc.).

Semi-structured Interviews

The structures of the interviews (Annexes A, B and C) contained the main guidelines for the interview process. The phenomenological interview about transportation was elaborated through Bevan's (2014) method of phenomenological interview. The story experience interviews were structured around the characterization of the phenomenon of transportation (Green, 2008) and elements of a story (Reis, 2018).

Out of Sight

*Out of Sight (*虞雅婷, 2010) is a 5-minute animated movie available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/). This short film follows a blind little girl that gets her purse stolen and loses her service dog. During the film, she uses her imagination to navigate the city until she finds her missing dog.

Life is Strange: True Colors

Life is Strange: True Colors (Deck Nine, 2021) is part of the franchise *Life is Strange*, a series of narrative adventures that follows a hero with some kind of supernatural powers (Square Enix, 2021a). The game is story-based and features the player's choices, which have consequences for the characters (Deck Nine, 2021)

The story follows Alex Chen, a girl that has the supernatural ability to absorb and manipulate strong emotions (Square Enix, 2021b) and the player assumes control of Alex when she meets her brother, Gabe Chen, after an 8-years separation.

The game has 5 chapters in total, but just the beginning of the first one ("Side A") was used. In this portion of the game, the player follows Alex's arrival at Haven Springs, a small city in the mountains where Gabe is currently living and where she is moving to, featuring Alex's first interactions with her brother and the city's residents.

Procedures

In the first session, the participant answered the SPQ as a structured interview, which was directly followed by the phenomenological interview. After the phenomenological interview, the participant watched *Out of Sight (*虞雅婷, 2010) and the story experience interview was performed. In the second session, the participant went through a 40-45 minutes playtime of *Life is Strange: True Colors* (Deck Nine, 2021). After the playtime, the story experience interview was performed.

The participants were not given any instructions before their contact with the stories, and they answered the SAM (adapted from Bradley & Lang, 1994) before and after both story presentations (pre and post test). The answer provided to the last section

of the SPQ (describing 3 stories they liked and what they liked about them), the phenomenological interview and the story-experience interviews were recorded.

Interview Analysis

All the recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed. There were two approaches to the analysis of the interviews: (1) a thematic analysis for the last section of the SPQ; and (2) the grounded theory method for the semi-structured interviews.

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis of the last section of the SPQ was done according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-phase guide of thematic analysis.

Coherency of media consumption and thematic analysis. The themes found in the thematic analysis were also observed in the context of the consistency between the participant's choice of stories that they liked and their media and genre preferences (obtained through the SPQ). The titles were classified as consistent or inconsistent with the current media consumption of the participants (the ones the participants reported as frequently or always consumed in their daily lives).

Grounded theory

In accordance with grounded theory methodology, the interview's structure was adapted to include interesting aspects found in previous interviews and the data collection stopped after the researcher considered that the interviews were not eliciting aspects that weren't explored previously (*conceptual saturation*) (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

The analysis was conducted based on Corbin and Strauss (2014) and Corbin and Strauss (1990), which also indicated the procedures to conduct open, axial and selective coding. The generation of memos, the use of comparative analysis and strategies that promote the generation of new perspectives (e.g. Wicker, 1985) were an essential part of the analysis process.

Results

Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM)

The results obtained in the SAM are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1.

Results of dimensions of the SAM of the pre and post test of both narrative stimuli

Dimension	Pre-test		Post-test		Statistics	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	p
Out of Sight						
Pleasure	7.71	1.14	7.64	1.60	.19	.85
Arousal	2.79	1.81	2.50	2.47	.74	.47
Dominance	5.64	1.08	5.43	1.28	1.14	.27
Life is Strange: True Colors						
Pleasure	7.36	1.50	6.79	1.48	1.66	.12
Arousal	2.93	1.94	3	2.08	−.15	.87
Dominance	5.50	1.29	5.93	1.44	−2.12	.05*

Note. Statistics = paired sample t-test.

Story Preference Questionnaire (SPQ)

Story consumption

The average time consumption of stories by the sample was 11.28 (SD=9.52) hours per week. The kinds of media most consumed by the sample were series (N=7), books (N=6) and movies (N=6). Regarding genres, the most consumed by the sample were mystery (N=8), comedy (N=8), suspense (N=6) and police procedural (N=6). The remaining genres and media had N≤4 participants regularly consuming them.

Media and genre preferences

The consistency of the participant's current preferences (media and genre) and the three titles chosen by them are presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2.

Number of participants per level of consistency of media and genre

Level of consistency	Media	Genre
Completely consistent	5	5
Highly consistent	4	7
Somewhat consistent	3	2
Not consistent	2	0

Note. The consistency of the participant's choice of titles and their current preferences was considered: *completely consistent* for all titles consistency, *highly consistent* for two

titles consistency, *somewhat consistent* for one title consistency, and *not consistent* for no title consistency.

Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis of the interviews allowed the observation of three main characteristics that lead people to like a story: (1) features of the narrative; (2) the narrative itself; and (3) one's own life story (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1.

Themes associated with liking a story.
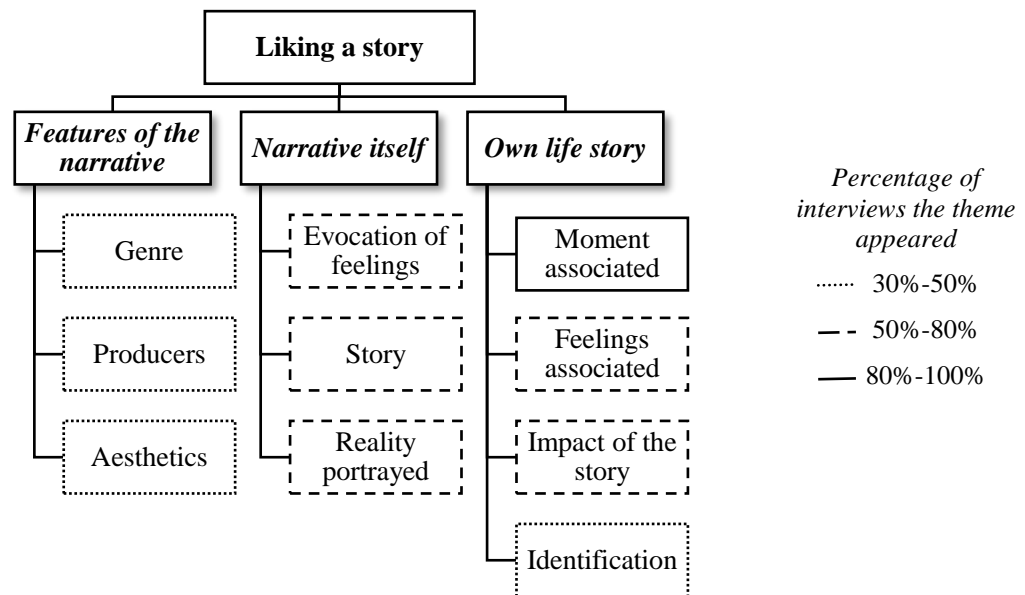
Features of the narrative. Is the theme that refers to characteristics of the narrative that contribute to someone liking a story.

Genre. Participants frequently referred to common genre conventions as the elements they liked in a story. This manifested itself in quotes like "I like because it's comedy" (Participant 3, P3) (see annex D for all original quotes and translations) and "I really like epic movies" (P7)

Producers. Something that occurred when participants described stories they liked was indicating who was involved in the craftsmanship of the narrative (e.g. actors, authors, directors). Examples of this occurrence are "(…) [author]'s writing style, for me, is piercing" (P12) and "I watched because I like, because of [director]" (P13)

Aesthetics. Participants often referred to aesthetic aspects of the stories they liked, such as visual elements "what also makes me like the game a lot are the beautiful graphics" (P1) and writing style "it is very well written" (P2)

Narrative itself. Is a theme that reflects what people are interested in a narrative when they are consuming it, ranging from what they experience emotionally to the story elements they are interested in.

Evocation of feelings. Participants often reported liking the story because of what it makes them feel. It can be an emotional response like "the most touching part was when (…)" (P6) or "(…) is so heartwarming, it is so sweet and sad" (P12). It can also be feelings such as "we start to get really curios" (P10) or "it is like I am there" (P5)

Story. Refers to the narrative content (i.e. characters, spaces and actions) and everything related to them that is perceived as interesting. Examples of quotes that refer to the narrative content are: "I think it is an incredible game to play, all the story, all the setting and the characters are super interesting" (P5) and "I think the characterization of the character is interesting" (P14)

Reality Portrayed. One aspect frequently brought up by the participants is how those stories portrayed a specific reality. It can be by showing a new reality that they wouldn't have access such as "the cultural differences of now and that period" (P7), or by showing one's own reality "where I live, I saw similar situations" (P9). Other realities often brought up are ones that don't reflect our own world "again I liked the story because it is super different from our reality" (P13).

Own life story. The participant's life story was, by far, the most recurrent theme associated with liking a story, appearing in all but one interview.

Moment associated. Most of the participants reported associating the story they liked with a moment in their lives. Usually, these moments were related to the participant's childhood like "It was a big part of my childhood and teenage years" (P14), or to an important moment of their lives like "I listened to it in a very impactful moment of my life (…) leaving an intense situation" (P2)

Feelings associated. Many participants associated a story with a specific feeling, this could manifest itself in the form of the remembered feelings associated with the story "I think that I like more because of a matter of affection, more than the content itself" (P3) or "it brings a warmth near Christmas" (P1). This could also be seen in the context of remembering people with whom they shared the story experience "it has that element of nostalgia of my parents reading for me when I was little" (P13)

Impact of the story. Many participants reported how those stories impacted their lives by awakening interests "I believe that I started liking science fiction through this

movie" (P14) or impacting their worldview "I think that gave me a completely new perspective about how a person can deal with that [situation]" (P7)

Identification. An aspect that was also brought up was identification with aspects of the story, such as characters "I identified a lot with the main character when I was a child" (P10) and situations "but it is something they talked about, things that I know, that I also went through" (P9)

Noteworthy

When participants were asked to name three titles they liked, many of them had a difficult time selecting stories, the pattern observed revealed that, in many cases, they used 2 strategies: (1) stories that they recently consumed and liked; and (2) stories that marked their lives. Most of the inconsistencies found between the kind of narratives they currently consumed and the ones they named were related to the theme *Own Life Story*.

Furthermore, when a story was produced in more than one media format (e.g. a book and a movie) the participants were asked to indicate to which one they were referring. In many cases, participants indicated the two kinds of media the story was presented, those titles were mostly related to the theme *Story Itself*. However, when one media would be selected, they were often related to the theme *Own Life Story*.
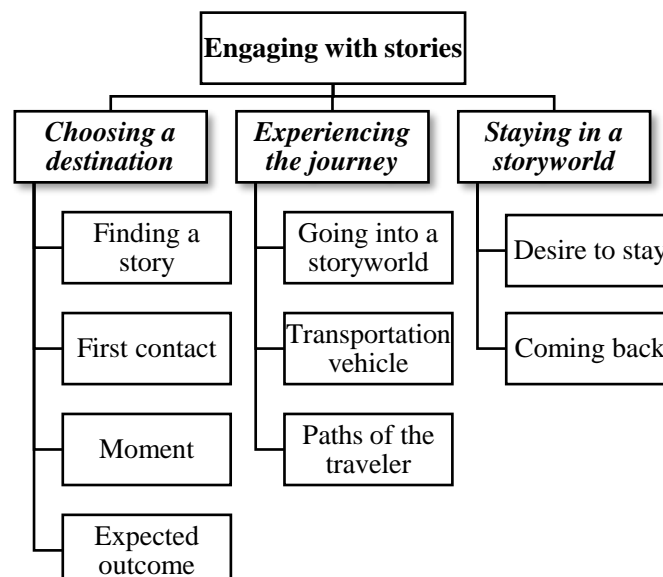
Phenomenological interview

Grounded theory analysis

The phenomenological interview's coding revealed three main categories associated with engaging with stories: (1) choosing a destination; (2) experiencing the journey; and (3) staying in a storyworld (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2

Main categories and sub-categories associated with enjoying a story.

   Choosing a destination. The first step in consuming a story is choosing it. This seems like a simple task, but it is far from it, many participants described choosing stories as a complex experience and often reported not knowing how they choose.

   Finding a story. The ways participants found stories ranged from the disposition of the stories in a store or a streaming platform (e.g. the highlights) to recommendations via social media or personal interactions. Looking for a story of a specific genre was the main guideline for story choice, appearing in the great majority of interviews. Some of the participants even reported coming across stories they liked and deciding to engage with them, leading to familiarity being often associated with story choice. Reviews and recommendations also played a relevant role in story choice, but it's interesting to note that the role of recommendation was not always brought up by the participants spontaneously, but in the context of questions such as how they chose the last movie they saw.

   First contact. The way the participants looked at the story also played a big role in its selection by containing topics of interest, being written by an author they liked or even just looking interesting. The advice of "don't judge a book by its cover" was often ignored by the participants, which reported looking at the covers and titles as a main point of the first attraction to a narrative. The idea of "the first impression matter" was proved correct since the great majority of participants looked at the synopsis, trailers and first moments of contact with a narrative as decisive for their choice. This aspect was considered strong enough by some participants that it made them feel compelled to reach the end of a narrative even in cases they perceive a decay in the story's quality.

   Moment. One thing often taken into consideration when choosing a story was the moment. Depending on the moment of the participant's life, they would choose a different kind of story or media. For example, a participant that traveled a lot choose her last book because it had a series of short stories that they could easily read while on public transportation. The goal of the story consumption also was relevant to the story choice, participants often referred to consuming fiction to get out of the real world, "pass the time" or "relax". This was often related to what they "needed" in the moment and their current emotional and mental state.

   Expected outcome. The outcome of the story experience was also an important aspect related to its choice, this appeared in two main ways: evoking emotion and learning about something they are interested in. Many participants reported choosing a story to evoke emotions, it could be by reacting emotionally to the story (e.g. "make me

laugh"), evoking a desired mood (e.g. "motivates me") and, in the case of a story they already liked, evoke emotions related to their own memories of contact with the narrative (e.g. going back to a "comforting place"). Learning is often referenced as an expected outcome of a story experience, this manifested itself by referring to topics and realities of interest being part of a storyworld. Interestingly, participants seemed to value more new realities and perspectives than ones they could relate to when choosing a story.

Experiencing the journey. Experiencing an interesting story often came associated with specific feelings and sensations. These experiences had features shared by the great majority of participants, varying only by what led them into this state.

Going into a storyworld. Experiencing an interesting story was often described as a pleasurable experience that was constantly associated with the evocation of strong emotions. Losing track of time and consuming a long story in a small period of time also appeared in a few interviews. The idea of experiencing the story as it happened to them was also present, having some participants even saying they feel like they are part of the storyworld while in contact with the narrative. The great majority of participants described experiencing an interesting narrative as having their whole attention focused on the storyworld and leaving their own world behind, sometimes they even referred to this experience as a way to escape their own worries. However, it was also common for participants to associate situations of the story with their own lives, even helping some of them in seeing new solutions for problems they are experiencing.

Transportation vehicle. Around half of the participants reported being more easily led to storyworld through a specific kind of media. The great majority of these participants were the ones who preferred books, often describing imagery and imagination as a focal point of their preference since it allowed them to construct the world themselves. Another interesting factor was that many of these participants reported not watching films, usually doing so with others. Sharing the experience of watching films was an activity often reported throughout the whole sample.

Paths of the traveler. Many factors play a role in how deeply someone dives in storyworld, one that was recurrently brought up by the participants was characteristics of the story such as genre conventions, which could lead to a less or more engaging experience depending on the genre the story belonged to. The perceived quality of the craftsmanship of the story (e.g. writing, visual art) and identification with situations and characters also played a relevant role in leading people to be invested in a storyworld. The mental state of the participant was also relevant in some cases (e.g. having a difficult

time following the story of a book when they are busy). Unexpectedly, the physical space (e.g. movie theater) and context (e.g. going to the movie theater with friends) of the story experience were rarely brought up.

Staying in a storyworld. Enjoying a story leads to the desire to stay in that world with its characters.

Desire to stay. The great majority of the participants said that what motivates them to continue a story is curiosity: what will happen? How will the characters solve this problem? For some people, a strong start is all it took to keep them interested in the storyworld, for others, there was a constant need for new events to maintain their interest. The feelings resulting from being in a storyworld and its characters also contributed to the desire to stay in that world. Unexpectedly, identification played a minor role in this context, appearing in less than half of the interviews.

Coming back. Many participants reported liking to revisit storyworlds. This desire was usually accompanied by the feelings evoked by those stories, which can be split into two kinds: (1) the emotions evoked by the narrative itself; and (2) remembering the moments of their lives and people with whom they shared the story experience. The revisitation of these storyworlds was also associated with observing the story through new lenses by seeing things that weren't noticed before or looking at situations in a new light after gaining life experiences.

Short film interview

All the participants were naive to the short film *Out of Sight*. Overall, the participant's experience with the video was described as positive. Even though there wasn't an objective measure for transportation, the interviews seemed to indicate that most of the participants were invested in *Out of Sight*'s story.

First impressions

When asked about their first impressions of the short film, most of the participants brought up topics of: (1) noticing a character's trait (blindness); and (2) positive view of the video (e.g. cute, calming). Other aspects that appeared, even if not as often, were the comparison of the film to other media they liked (i.e. referring to movies or studios) and how the storyworld was presented.

Grounded theory analysis

The short film interview's coding revealed two main categories: (1) following the path; and (2) engaging with characters (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3

Main categories and sub-categories associated with visiting Out of Sight
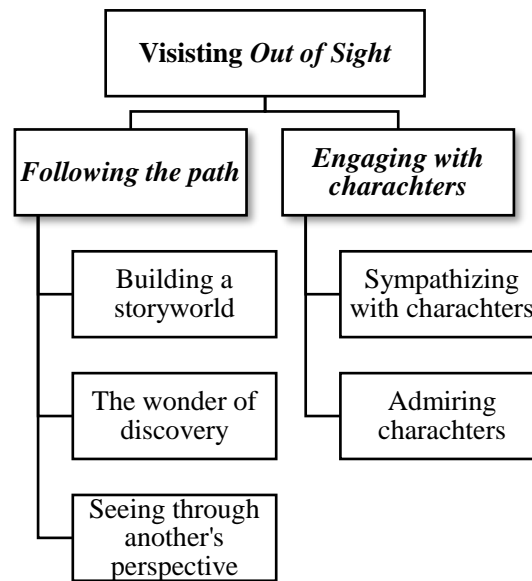
Following the path. The main aspect of *Out of Sight* was how the little girl found her way to her dog. Her adaptation to the adverse situation of being a blind child alone in the streets was the focal point of the interviews.

Building a storyworld. The aesthetics of *Out of Sight* were frequently brought up by the participants as the representation of the girl's own world. Many participants referred to how they discovered the world together with the protagonist, often pointing out their appreciation for the world revealing itself to them when the girl felt the stimuli around her (e.g. smelling a bakery, listening to the sounds of the street). The way the world was presented would frequently be associated with curiosity, with questions such as "what is happening?" and "what will happen next?"

The wonder of discovery. Furthermore, almost all participants reported not noticing that the girl was blind at the beginning of the short film. This realization was impactful enough to be the first thing brought up in the interview by around half of the participants. The hypothetical scenario of knowing about the girl's blindness beforehand was brought up in a few interviews, in all but one of these cases the participants reported that they would be less engaged with the movie if they had previous knowledge about her blindness since they would lose the feelings of curiosity about what is happening.

Seeing through another's perspective. The participant that reported probably being more engaged with the story if they knew about the girl's blindness explained that this would make the story more impactful since it would allow them to concentrate on the perspective of a blind girl instead of being confused about what was happening. Many participants referenced the aspect of seeing a blind person's perspective by appreciating

how the short film showed the protagonist's perception of the world, often referencing her imagination and creativity.

Engaging with characters. *Out of Sight* focus on one character: the little girl. The film represents her journey through adversity and finding a way to deal with a difficult situation. She is mostly alone on the screen and the participants seemed to enjoy following her.

Sympathizing with characters. When looking at the beginning of *Out of Sight,* many participants reported feeling concerned for the girl's situation. They often referred to her being lost without her dog as concerning, but it is important to note that most of the participants referred to feeling happier and calmer by watching the film, which was a consequence of how the protagonist dealt with the situation.

Admiring a character. Participants often described the protagonist as brave and creative, referring to how she used her imagination to overcome a difficult situation. Almost all participants expressed admiration for how she overcame her fears and found a way to her dog. The protagonist's attitudes and her relationship with her dog were the two main points that led participants to identify themselves with the story.

Game interview

Of the 14 participants, 4 of were familiar with the franchise *Life is Strange* and 2 of them had previous contact with *Life is Strange: True Colors*, but they reported not knowing much about its main plotlines and story-relevant choices. The interview's content seemed to indicate that many of the participants were invested in the story.

Overall, *Side A*'s story seemed to captivate the participant's attention, leading to curiosity about the story even if they didn't want to continue playing. The only relevant difficulty reported by the participants was by people that were not familiar with video games and got confused about what they had to do to progress in the story. In two of these cases, help was provided by the experimenter after being directly asked by the participant. The only other moment the experimenter intervened in the participant's experience was during a cutscene at the beginning of the game (first "Zen Moment"), after it became clear that the participant didn't notice that they had to press a button to end the scene.

First impressions

When asked about their first impressions of the game, the most recurrent topics brought up by the participants were: (1) curiosity about the protagonist's backstory; (2) appreciation of the art of the game (i.e. the setting); and (3) the gameplay (i.e. choosing).

Grounded theory analysis

The main categories that emerged from the game interview's coding were: (1) choosing the path; (2) interactions; and (3) experiencing a storyworld (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4

Main categories and subcategories associated with visiting Life is Strange: True Colors
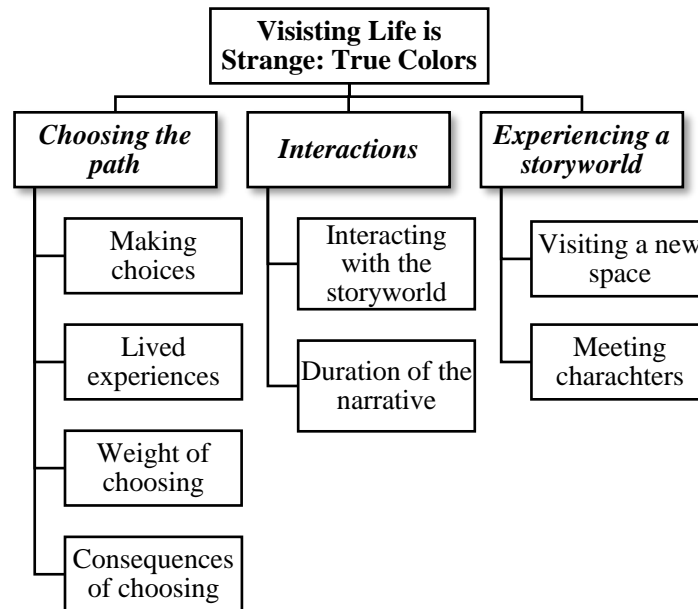
Choosing the path. One of the defining features of the franchise *Life is Strange* is the impact of the player's choice in the plot. A seemingly simple decision can have dire consequences in the overarching plot of the game, and many of the participants reported feeling the weight of this responsibility while playing *Life is Strange: True Colors*.

Making choices. The great majority of the participants reported that they made their choices based on what they would do if they were faced with the situations Alex was going through. Some participants tried to put themselves in Alex's shoes and choose based on how they thought she would behave, however, it is important to note that a couple of factors influenced the participant's perception of Alex. Most of the participants reported being curious about Alex's past, which was implied to be troubled, and her powers. This mystery surrounding the main character led to the participants not being sure about her background and personality, resulting in them making choices that were perceived as reflecting what they would do in those situations.

Lived experiences. Furthermore, since it was difficult to fully understand Alex's character traits, a few participants reported identifying with her through their own choices. One's own life experiences were also a relevant aspect in the process of making choices, often by identifying themselves with Alex or situations and people she had contact with. It is also interesting to note that a few participants expressed a desire to have

more than two options of action, often suggesting different ways to deal with situations that were not allowed by the game.

Weight of choosing. Choosing how Alex interacts with the world had different weights for different participants. For example, while one participant felt anxious about making the wrong choice, another felt challenged to make the right one. Some participants felt in control of the story by choosing actions that "tells the story I want to tell", while others would prefer to see the story as a movie where they didn't interact with the storyworld. Even with those differences, there was a consensus regarding the participant's choices and their impact on Alex's relationships and the future of the story: they mattered. Considering this perceived weight of choosing, many participants described their decision-making as looking for good outcomes for the main character.

Consequences of choosing. However, it is important to note that many of the consequences of the participant's choices weren't seen by them during their time with the game, which seemed to have an impact on the experience. Participants often reported feeling compelled to continue the story to see the outcome of their choices, a few of them even feeling sad that they weren't able to see these consequences in their time with the game. This was reinforced by the fact that in all the cases the participants wished to change their choices their reason relied on an undesired consequence of a decision.

Interactions. *Life is Strange: True Colors* relies on the player's choices to tell its story, some of them are obvious like the mandatory interactions the player must perform to progress in the plot, but others can be easily missed if the player doesn't engage with some aspects of the storyworld.

Interacting with the storyworld. Participants who were more experienced gamers had an easier time navigating the storyworld, these participants often explored content that was not essential to progress in the game and, consequently, had access to pieces of information about the story that weren't known by other participants. For example, one participant that explored Alex's cellphone discovered a major plotline by looking at her social media and used this information to guide their choice in a plot-relevant decision.

Duration of the narrative. The idea of exploration and interaction with the storyworld was an aspect that confused some participants that were not used to the video game media. Some of those participants had a difficult time figuring out what they had to do to advance in the story and, since the story progression depends on the player's actions, these difficulties resulted in feelings of boredom and frustration. However, participants who didn't have a hard time progressing in the story also pointed to feelings

of boredom, which resulted from the story-heavy gameplay, generating an experience that was not as interactive as they wished. It is important to note that the participants that wished for more interactivity were mostly the ones that were used to more dynamic games (e.g. race games, first-person shooters, sports games).

Experiencing the storyworld. Participants described the story they played as ordinary, like it could be the life of someone they know and often identified themselves with the situations Alex faced. However, even with the predictability of the story, participants said it was an easy story to like and the main aspect brought up about their experience with the game was its setting, interaction with the characters and curiosity about Alex.

Visiting a new space. Most of the e participants reported appreciating the setting of the story (i.e. Have Springs). They often pointed out its artistic beauty and positive feelings associated with the scenery (e.g. calming, relaxing). A few participants also highlighted how a city like Haven Springs might be a good place for Alex to restart her life, considering her troubled past and wish to have a fresh start. Some participants also identified with the city, referring to their own hometown and how they remembered people from there.

Meeting characters. Most of the participants reported feeling curious about the characters they met, especially about Alex's past and her power. Almost all of the participants described having their interest picked by a character through the first impression they had about them (e.g. what they liked, how they acted), many of them having a good first impression of characters that were welcoming to Alex.

Discussion

Engagement with stories can happen in many ways and the present study was able to explore the experience of storyworlds by approaching two of its main aspects: (1) how people engaged with narratives in their everyday lives; and (2) how people experienced these narratives.

Engaging with narratives

There are many elements that come into play when engaging with a narrative, and the way these elements emerge in someone's life is crucial to their experience with a storyworld. In this context, there are two core characteristics associated with story engagement that are relevant when looking at someone's investment in a storyworld: (1) the narrative; (2) the moment of someone's life in which that narrative appeared. These elements are complementary to each other and interact in complex ways.

The narrative

What makes an interesting story? The answer to this question will be different depending on who is being asked, but, even with the myriad of possible answers, the aspect that was constant throughout the sample was curiosity. This curiosity can appear in many ways. It can arise from reading a synopsis with a perceived distinctive plot (i.e. something the participant has never seen before), from seeing someone talking about a book on social media, and even from seeing a story that portrays something the participant is interested in learning more about.

Curiosity as a fundamental piece of our engagement with narratives can also be seen in both story experience interviews. In *Out of Sight*, participants were invested in the little girl's story through the creative and distinct construction of the world, where the question of "what happens next?" was constantly asked. The realization that the girl was blind was also a major aspect of the short film experience, having most of the participants appreciating her journey and seeing the perspective of a blind child. In *Life is Strange: True Colors*, the participants were curious about Alex's past, her power, and how their choices will change her future, some of them even felt sad that they wouldn't be able to finish the story and see the outcome of their decisions.

However, a great initial curiosity isn't the only piece that builds our experience with storyworlds. The way the story is told has a great influence on how it is experienced. For example, participants that preferred to read books referenced how this kind of media allowed them a deeper experience by allowing them to build the world themselves. Genre conventions were also a major factor that drown participants in a story or made them lose interest.

Aesthetic features also can't be ignored when considering how invested in a storyworld someone is, many participants often referenced aesthetic aspects of *Out of Sight* and *Life is Strange: True Colors* as positive aspects of the experience. Features such as visual presentation and someone's art style were also often referred to by participants as reasons for them liking a specific story in the context of the SPQ interview. The rhythm of the narrative was also an important aspect for many participants that reported the need for contact action to maintain their attention in a story. The aspect of rhythm was also seen in the context of the *Life is Strange: True Colors* story experience interview.

The unfamiliarity of some participants with the video game media greatly impacted their experience with the story. Since some of them had difficulties figuring out what they had to do to progress in the game, they took longer than other participants to

progress in the story, leading to a slower-paced narrative. Furthermore, the fact that a game was used seemed to create a prospect of great interaction among participants that were used to playing video games. The ones that didn't play story games (e.g. race games, first-person shooters, and sports games) often reported wishing for a more dynamic gameplay and that the pacing of the narrative was too slow for them. In this context, the game seemed to be seen as too interactive for some participants, while not interactive enough for others, resulting in feelings of boredom in both cases.

In summary, curiosity is the first aspect that brought participants into a storyworld, but the way the narrative is crafted is what maintains that curiosity alive and leads participants to wish to stay in a storyworld. However, there is an inconsistency in this idea: what about people that like to rewatch the same movies many times? They already know everything that will happen, why rewatch it? These questions reflect the second aspect of story engagement: the moment of the participants' lives.

Moment of contact

When engaging with a story, the participants are experiencing something in their lives, which can deeply influence their experience with storyworlds. This can be clearly seen in the last part of the SPQ through the fact that one of the most common reasons for the participants liking a story was related to when that story came into their lives and the way it impacted them, which made those stories memorable.

Revisiting storyworlds was a behavior observed in most of the interviews, a pattern also observed by Bentley and Murray (2016). This was often associated with the moment participants were currently living by wishing to remember their first experiences with those storyworlds or to look at them through the lenses of their new experiences.

When looking for a story to consume, participants often had a goal in mind. It could be going into a storyworld to get away from their everyday worries, to learn about some reality inaccessible to them, or to feel some emotion. Therefore, depending on the participant's perceived mental state, they would choose to engage with different kinds of narratives that better fit their mood and/or circumstances.

Experiencing storyworlds

The present study aimed to look at story engagement in two contexts: (1) how people experienced an interesting story (i.e. being transported); and (2) how they experienced different kinds of narratives and ways of storytelling (i.e. *Out of Sight* and *Life is Strange: True Colors*).

Experiencing transportation

The participant's descriptions of experiencing an interesting story reflected the phenomenon of transportation: a pleasurable experience (Green et al., 2004), where they leave the real world and go into a storyworld (Gerrig, 1993; Green, 2008) and have their attention focused on the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000). Green et al. (2008) described the experience of transportation as having in its core emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and mental imagery, which were present throughout the sample.

One of the main limitations of the present study was the fact that there was no accurate way to measure the participant's level of transportation in the story experience interviews. Green and Brock (2000) developed a scale to measure transportation, but no measure of this phenomenon was found for Portuguese speakers. However, emotions are an important part of the narrative experience (Mar et al., 2011) and transportation (Green & Brock, 2000; Green et al., 2008), which led to the use of the SAM (adapted from Bradley & Lang, 1994) and verbal information provided by the participants to estimate the participant's level of transportation.

Overall, it seemed that the participants were interested in both storyworlds presented to them (i.e. short film and video game). *Out of Sight* was appreciated by most of the participants, while *Life is Strange: True Colors* provided a boring and confusing experience to some participants, leading them to not appreciate the experience with the game. However, while the short film was more widely liked, the participants that were transported into the game had a more immersive experience.

It is also important to point out that even if the SAM (adapted from Bradley & Lang, 1994) didn't indicate group significant emotional changes as a consequence of *Out of Sight*, many participants reported feeling calmer and more relaxed after watching the short film.

Storytelling

Even though it is impossible to directly compare the experience of *Out of Sight* and *Life is Strange: True Colors* considering the fundamental differences between their artistic direction, duration, and storytelling techniques, it is possible to say that participants seemed to interact differently with traditional narratives and future narratives.

In both story experiences participants reported sympathizing with the main characters, but while in *Out of Sight they* weren't able to do anything to help the little girl, in *Life is Strange: True Colors* they could change the plot's direction and seek the best outcome for Alex through their choices. The participants recognized that their actions

would have consequences, which was also reflected in SAM (adapted from Bradley & Lang, 1994), where they felt more dominant after playing the game.

Limitations

The exploratory nature of the present study allowed an overview of many factors surrounding the experience of storyworlds, however, some of the factors that would be relevant to these experiences were overshadowed. A great example of this occurrence was the fact that the context in which the story is consumed (e.g. where they consume the story) was rarely brought up.

Other important factors to consider about how stories are consumed are the participant's living situation and the kinds of narratives they like to consume. Participants were mostly young university students who didn't live with their families, which probably resulted in a more individualized view of story engagement, since they are used to engaging with stories alone in their everyday lives. The kind of stories the participants liked to consume also should play a relevant role in story engagement, since genre and media conventions were a significant aspect of the story experience. The present study didn't approach in depth what people liked about story genres and media, mostly addressing its relevance for the experience of storyworlds.

It is also worth noting that most of the research surrounding the transportation phenomenon seems to mostly refer to the experience of being transported, only briefly addressing characteristics of storytelling and how people engaged with those stories in their everyday lives, which were the major focus of the present study. In this context, it is difficult to further compare the results presented here with previous research.

Future directions

The present study addressed many aspects of the story experience, but they should be further explored in the context of more quantitative studies to better understand how the average person engages with stories, especially regarding different contexts of story consumption and personal preferences.

Regarding the study of future narratives, if not directed to people used to playing video games like *Life is Strange: True Colors*, it might be important to select a stimulus with a gameplay that doesn't rely on people interacting with the storyworld other than making the choices that will guide the future of the story. Just choosing what will happen in a more common setting for participants (e.g. in a book) should decrease two limitations found in the present study: (1) difficulties regarding how to advance in the story; and (2) wish for more interactivity in the context of a video game.

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Annex A – Initial guidelines of the phenomenological interview

Pergunta de abertura
Fale-me sobre a experiência de escolher uma história
Possíveis Perguntas de Seguimento
Como é que normalmente escolheria uma história?
Como escolheu a última história que consumiu?
Como é a experiência de se envolver com uma história interessante?
Como é a experiência de se envolver com uma história que já conhece e gosta?
Depois de escolher a história, o que lhe dá motivação para continuar envolvido(a) com esse conteúdo?
Pergunta de Finalização
Tem algum aspecto que acontece quando se envolve com histórias que ainda não foi falado?

Annex B - Initial guidelines of the short-film

Pergunta de Abertura
Quais são as suas primeiras impressões?
Possíveis Perguntas de Seguimento
Como se sentiu enquanto assistia ao filme?
Como foi a sua experiência com o filme?
Essa experiência mudou a forma como se estava a sentir?
Como se sentiu em relação aos acontecimentos da história?
O que é que mais lhe chamou a atenção nesse filme?
Poderia descrever-me a sua parte favorita do filme?
Quais são as suas impressões sobre a protagonista?
Quais os aspectos da protagonista que o fizeram sentir dessa forma?
O que é que achou da ambientação do filme?
Identificou-se com alguma parte da história ou personagem? Qual?
Quais foram os seus pensamentos no final do filme?
Pergunta de Finalização
Existe alguma coisa, seja uma sensação ou percepção, que tenha experienciado durante o filme e que ainda não foi falada?

Annex C – Initial guidelines of the game interview

Pergunta de Abertura
Quais são as suas primeiras impressões?
Possíveis Perguntas de Seguimento
Como é que se sentiu enquanto jogava?
Como é que foi a sua experiência com o jogo?
Essa experiência mudou a forma como se estava a sentir?
Sentiu alguma dificuldade com os comandos ou com algum aspecto operacional do jogo? Acha que isso influenciou a sua experiência?
Como se sentiu em relação aos acontecimentos da história?
Sentiu que as escolhas que fez influenciaram a história?
Como é que acha que as suas escolhas vão impactar no futuro do jogo?
Gostaria de ter feito alguma escolha diferente?
O que mais chamou a sua atenção no seu tempo de jogo?
Poderia descrever-me a sua parte favorita da sua experiência com o jogo?
Quais são as suas impressões sobre a Alex (protagonista)?
Encontrou alguns personagens na cidade, algum deles se destacou para si?
Quais aspectos da Alex (ou outro personagem) o/a fizeram sentir dessa forma?
O que é que achou de Haven Springs?
Identificou-se com alguma parte da história ou personagens? Qual?
Quais foram os seus pensamentos no final do seu tempo de jogo?
Pergunta de Finalização
Existe alguma coisa, seja uma sensação ou percepção, que tenha experienciado durante o seu tempo de jogo e que ainda não foi falada?

Annex D – Original quotes and their translation

Participant	Translated quote	Original quote
P3	"I like because it's comedy"	"Eu gosto porque é comédia"
P7	"I really like epic movies"	"eu gosto muito de filmes épicos"
P12	"[author]'s writing style, for me, is piercing"	"o estilo de escrita do [autor], que pra mim é cortante"
P13	"I watched because I like, because of [director]"	"eu vi porque curto, por causa do [diretor]"
P1	"what also makes me like the game a lot are the beautiful graphics"	"o que me faz gostar muito do jogo são os gráficos lindíssimos"
P2	"very well written"	"Muito bem escrita"
P6	"the most touching part was when (…)"	"a partem ais tocante é quando (...)"
P12	"(…) that is so heartwarming, it is so sweet and sad"	" (...) e é tão *heartwarming,* é tão doce e é tão triste"
P10	"we start to get really curious"	"a gente vai ficando bastante curioso"
P5	"it is like I am there"	"parece que tou ali"
P5	"I think it's an incredible game to play, all the story, all the setting and characters are super interesting"	"Eu acho que é um jogo incrível de se jogar, toda a história, todo o ambiente e as personagens são super interessantes"
P14	"I think the characterization of the character interesting"	"eu acho interessante a caracterização do personagem"
P7	"the cultural differences of now and that period"	"essa diferença cultural do agora e daquela época"
P9	"where I live, I saw similar situations"	"da onde eu moro, eu vi algumas situações semelhantes"
P13	"again, I liked the story because it's super different from our reality"	"gostei mais uma vez da história por ser super diferente da nossa realidade"

P14	"It was a big part of my childhood and teenage years"	"Fez bastante parte da minha infância e da minha adolescência"
P2	"I listened to it in a very impactful moment of my life (…) leaving a tense situation"	"Ouvi num momento muito impactante da minha vida (...) saindo de uma situação intensa"
P3	"I think that I like the most because of a matter of affection, more than the content itself"	"Eu acho que eu gosto mais por uma questão afetiva do que propriamente conteúdo"
P1	"it brings a warmth near Christmas"	"traz algum quentinho na altura do natal"
P13	"it has that element of nostalgia of my parents reading for me when I was little"	"tem aquela componente nostalgia de os meus pais me lerem quando eu era pequenina"
P14	"I believe that I started liking science fiction through this movie"	"eu acredito que passei a gostar de ficção cientifica através desse filme"
P7	"I think that gave me a completely new perspective about how a person can deal with that [situation]"	"eu acho que ali deu uma perspectiva completamente diferente de como uma pessoa pode lidar com isso"
P10	"I identified a lot with the main character when I was a child"	"eu me identificava muito quando eu era criança com o personagem principal
P9	"but it's something they talked about, things that I know, that I also went through"	"mas é algo que eles falaram, coisas que eu sei, que eu também passei"