Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Esports:
The Emergence and Maturation of Video Games from Leisure Activity into Profession and Event, Part 2

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This second special issue provides research insight and observation on the growing popularity of eSports. Our authors have shared research that can be quickly converted to insights for eSports tournaments, demographics, and insights on professional eSports athletes. We hope you enjoy this second special issue on eSports.

Just to get a sense of the stakes from a high-visibility eSports competition, a tournament known as The International resulted in the winning team netting a grand prize $9,139,002. Each member of the five-player team took home $1.87 million. That's pretty good. The wealth and popularity of these events are growing. Newzoo, a market research firm specializing in digital gaming, reports that there are 148 million "esports enthusiasts" around the globe and estimates that among millennial males, esports is matching virtual baseball and hockey in terms of viewership. With the new audience, comes new forms of viewership. Streaming services such as Twitch, Youtube Gaming, Hitbox and Mirrativ have become popular and profitable. Twitch is currently 84th on the Alexa ranking of the world's most popular web pages—one spot ahead of The New York Times' website. Twitch was purchased for 1 billion dollars by Amazon in 2014, and since then the audience has grown.

According to Newzoom the industry produced an estimated $493 million in revenue—a growth of 51.7% from 2015—and that number is projected to surpass $1 billion by 2019. This profitability is gaining traction with established sports franchises. The Philadelphia 76ers bought Team Apex and Team Dignitas; the Miami Heat are partnering with the eSports club Misfits. Other sports franchises are following suit. The Houston Rockets hired a director of eSports. The National Basketball Association seems keen to enter into the action, and has taken actions to create an NBA 2K eLeague.

As these games, and more "traditional" moba-style competitions, such as Starcraft, League of Legends and Dota 2 evolve, there may also be growing interest in a range of games, including mobile. As devices, games, and audiences evolve and grow, we are likely the seeing the beginning of something that will change our conception of audience, interaction, and entertainment.

In our opening article, Himmelstein, Liu, and Shapiro present their research on the mental skills of athletes in eSports. As an exploratory study, they share insights gathered on the mental skills that competitive gamers already possess and utilize, the mental obstacles or barriers competitive gamers encounter, and the role performance psychology may play in eSports. The authors present a literature review on eSports, sports, and sports psychology disciplines. Themes were identified and reviewed as gap analysis, which was used to inform an exploratory study. This qualitative study as

content analysis was conducted to gain knowledge, generate discussion regarding competitive video gamers' mental strengths and needs, and build a framework as a starting point for future research for the psychological study of eSports.

In article two, "Career Transitions of eSports Athletes: A Proposal for Research Framework," author Salo presents an exploration for understanding not only the eSports athletes' road to success but also the road away from success. They state that eSports athletes' careers involve many problems, such as career-entry difficulties, straining life habits, burnout, premature retirement, and post-career dilemmas. The author asks, "what will eSports athletes do after success in eSports?"

In article three, Davidovici-Nora provides presents a case study of the video game League of Legends in "e-Sport as leverage for growth strategy: The example of League of Legends." The author begins by presenting a history of League of Legends, which includes a description of the game's mechanics and features. The analysis expands to identify economic trends that helped LoL gain an early competitive advantage in eSports, then chronicles the evolution of the Free-toPlay (F2P) casual dynamics and of the e-Sport dynamics. The F2P components are operationalized to provide an analytical framework for understanding the growth of casual and competitive sides of the game into an eSport.

In article four, "Going Beyond Ambidexterity in the Media Industry: eSports as Pioneer of Ultradexterity," the authors, Scholz & Stein, examine eSports from the perspective of organizational psychology. Their research begins with an examination of how current organizational innovation and growth are predicated upon balancing two categories: exploitation and exploration, also known as organizational ambidexterity. They suggest that this description is insufficient to account for the current growth and success of eSports. The authors review the research literature of organizational ambidexterity, present a gap analysis, and propose a concept they define as "ultradexterity." This new concept is intended to describe how eSports is overcoming the trade-offs and limitations of organizational ambidexterity. They present design elements that separate the ultradexterity from ambidexterity as goal setting, market orientation, change orientation, resource allocation, attitude towards people, digitization,

These articles offer another step in the growing study of eSports. Game research has come along way, and I am grateful to be sharing this second special issue on eSports. The growing field of games research scholarship continues to push the IJGCMS to take on new content and exploration as gaming continues to redefine entertainment. This second issue on eSports reflects the diversity of game research, and evolves with new questions, applications, and methods, which have emerged with the growth of games research as an interdisciplinary field and the emergence of eSports as a global phenomenon.

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