



## Explore the Map

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**Abstract** This chapter explores the importance of navigating the terrain of social interactions, being open to new experiences, and avoiding the traps of going through the linear motions of the well-worn pathways of life. The rewards for choosing to explore the boundaries of the territory will also be discussed as well as how to minimize interpersonal risk by being able to recognize potential the dangers are and how to react to them. Examples from various games, along with Face-Work and Affect Theory, will be creating an understanding that being open to new experiences means viewing emotion as the pallet that influences a person's views of the world and creates a roadmap of how to be a more open person.

**Keywords** Face-Work · Affect Theory · Emotional development · Social interactionism · Interpersonal communication

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Those lucky individuals who owned a Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and had a subscription to Nintendo Power at the end of 1989 were rewarded with both the game “Dragon Warrior I” and a guide to help play “Dragon Warrior I” (Oxford, 2018). This rare moment of generosity by Nintendo promoted not only the role-playing genre on the NES, but embedded in the minds of video game players the value of a game guide and, most importantly, the need for maps in complex gaming environments. The gaming ecosystem was evolving beyond the linear nature of side-scrollers to interactive play that demanded that the players be aware of their situation and how to navigate through the various digital worlds. A single folded sheet of glossy paper could be the difference between saving the kingdom or becoming lost in the World of Alefgard (the Kingdom that acts as the primary location for “Dragon Warrior I”).

The map was more than a way to orient a location within the field of play. Alefgard’s map provided the knowledge of which enemies a player would face at a given site within the game, the coordinates of the critical treasures needed to beat the game, and the waypoints to hit during the various quests within the game. This safety net allows players to be open in their gameplay as they can find the right pathway back to the comfort of the known. This simple tool allowed the player to make the right connections between the gaming terrain and the end goals. They could see how to finish the game and earn their final reward.

A map of this quality is like Linus’ blanket from Peanuts. It provides comfort to the nervous soul. Each decision a player makes has been tried, examined, and completed by experts. They can explain what actions the player need to take to get the best armor in the game or how to beat the final boss of the game. Maps like the one found in the “Dragon Warrior I” guide would be helpful to have in the real world, but such a simple tool doesn’t exist. Interactions in the realworld are much harder to navigate. Interactions, unlike the Kingdom of Alefgard, that are not finite in nature. These newer experiences that a person faces on a daily basis do not fit neatly onto a carefully designed map to show how to transverse these various social and cultural decisions making it easy to fall into the traps of going through the linear motions of the well-worn pathways of life and rarely making changes.

It is known, therefore it is safe.

Players also know that the biggest rewards are often outside the realm of the known. There are few opportunities to gain treasure or wealth in the various towns and villages of Alefgard. Valuable materials on a map are there

for people brave enough to explore beyond the safety of the town walls and go into the unknown of the wild. People will only find true rewards by facing their fears and visit the wilderness surrounding the civilized area of the kingdom. Rewards come to those in the game that have access to a good map of the area and the ability to read the dangers along the way and know how to negotiate those potential harms. The same can be true in the real world. A useful guide that can help navigate this balance is one that incorporates social awareness with the ability to perform an emotional self-diagnostic. This type of manual or map uses emotions as the legend to translate how feelings influence our world views. This type of map can help developing a new pathway toward openness to experiences and others.

The purpose of this chapter is to create a version of these beautiful infographics that have long been available for video games for our daily lives. One that can help us to navigate one of life's biggest challenges: to create a balance between the risk of social failures and the reward of social acceptance. Put another way, to balance the emotional well-being of ourselves and others.

This balancing act is a typical battle that a person goes through on a daily basis. Buddhists describe this battle to maintain a sense of emotional well-being as the "second arrow" (De Silva, 1990). The metaphor goes along the lines of a person is walking through the woods and is shot by an arrow. The archer lines up a second shot. The first arrow can be thought of as the social failure a person experiences. The incoming second arrow is the emotional response to that failure. By avoiding that second arrow, a person avoids the emotional trauma of reliving the social failure. Only by avoiding those second arrows can a person enjoy the rewards associated with being accepted by others in society. A person can avoid these traumas by having a guide that helps to show them the way.

On the following pages, two theories are outlined which will create the foundations for the creation of such a map. One that provides landmarks to aim toward (building off the discussion from Chapter 2 in this volume) and the knowledge of how to avoid the barriers along the way. A personal map allows an individual to move forward with the knowledge that they can feel comfortable with the terrain and know how to avoid the barriers that can prevent the successful completion of their goals. In a game, the map can lead to cool armor and treasure. In the real world, a mental model can lead to a life where the person is more open to try new experiences.

## BUILDING YOUR MAP VIA AFFECT THEORY

Creating a personal “map” (much like the maps in video games) can help to develop one’s openness to new experiences by providing a base from which to develop a sense of self-worth and level of self-awareness. Put another way, it creates a starting point to grow from.

Affect theory (Tomkins, 1991) is one social theory that can help explain this development. This theory states that there are multiple tiers of affects or emotions that a person can experience. A person can view their feelings almost like a pallet with the ability to craft an understanding of how their experiences will influence their view of the world. Each emotion that a person experiences will tend to shade their view of the world. All of this shading creates an emotion-based mental map of how a person should interact with others. A person that understands the mental map metaphor will be more apt to take a step back and control their more basic emotions for the purpose of understanding their relationship to the overall environment in which they are living (Damasio, 2004) and attempt to take control of more decisions during the course of their everyday existence (Bortolan, 2011). This awareness of feelings or affects is vital as it is part of a person’s ability to perform the socially acceptable biological and neurological reactions to a given stimulus (Tomkins, 1991). One example that shows a socially acceptable biological and neurological reaction is laughing at a joke. One example that shows a non-socially acceptable biological and neurological reaction is laughing at a funeral. The former situation is a time and place that laughter would be allowed and normal. The latter situation would be considered taboo to laugh. A person dealing with the spectrum of various emotions and affects often needs a good model for processing this information.

To illustrate how to affect theory works in our daily lives, let’s turn to an example from the video game *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (Nintendo) and the relationship between the main character (Link) and his ability to navigate a foreign terrain.

### *Affect Theory and Breath of the Wild*

Link wakes up at a location he doesn’t recognize after being in a 100-year coma. His memories are gone, and he has no sense of why he is there (even though the player would know if they are familiar with the series or have played previous games in the series). He must depend on the Sheikah Slate

to act as his map of this strange environment. The Sheikah Slate also serves as a sensor to find the temples that improve the health (via Spirit Orbs) or gear of Link. Spicy peppers and mushrooms can be found via the Slate when he has found one in the past and taken its picture, thus giving him the ingredient he needs for the meals and potions of protections. This tool also can act as a form of security by alerting Link when Guardians are nearby, one of the biggest threats in the game. All of these elements that the Slate tracks in the virtuality of the game can relate to real-world interactions.

Humans tend to use stimuli to make sense of the world much like the Slate's ability to ping elements on the map helps the player make sense of the gaming environment. Emotions tend to color and filter reactions to those stimuli. These reactions can impact a person's ability to understand their world.<sup>1</sup>

In *Breath of the Wild*, knowing where raw meat, spicy peppers, Hyrule Bass, and a cooking fire can help a player create a Spicy Meat and Seafood Fry dish, which will get Link a warm doublet from the Old Man and protection from the cold. In the real world, knowing how to make or buy a meal can reduce the chances of being angry due to hunger pains. A player or person is practicing the basics of self-care by attempting to take care of their basic needs.

### Feeling Bubbles

The idea of using recipes to take care of the needs of the individual directly relates to one of the core components that makes up the affect theory. People go through “feeling bubbles” (i.e., emotional connections to specific times; Wetherell, 2014) throughout the course of a given year that is related to the cultural and social moments (e.g., New Year's Eve celebrations and the grief experienced during September 11). People who know the cultural and social terrain during a given feeling bubble and are able to seek and find the resources to practice the basics of self-care related during a given feeling bubble (e.g., if one is an alcoholic, a person might want to know which parties and social gatherings will be alcohol-free during New Year's Eve). A player practices similar aspects of self-care in *Breath of the Wild*.

<sup>1</sup>For example, being “hangry,” or being angry due to hunger, is a classic example of emotions coloring a person's view of the world.

One example is when the Blood Moon appears. It is the time where all of the enemies that Link has defeated in the past 28 days of game time are reincarnated, forcing Link to battle these demons again. Players can sense the tension and fear this bubble causes as the game designer invokes a sense of being afraid through effective music that leaves a player feeling on edge and animation reminding the player the horrors that are coming back from the dead. Knowing where a player is on the map can prevent the player from being surprised by the enemies that are now rising from the ground. Using a journal or other tracking device can help Link find the best time to go to an inn and avoid the horror that is the Blood Moon.

Players that use these practices in the game can apply them to the real world to deal with the feeling bubbles and the awareness of the affect a person feels during these feeling bubbles. Self-awareness is the key to best deal with a time of stress and uncertainty (Callan, Terry, & Schweitzer, 2007). Even without a perfect map or guide, a person can attempt to be prepared and aware of their emotional state.

### *Affect Theory and Minecraft*

A more apt representation and simulation of how to map out the social and cultural terrain using affect theory might be from *Minecraft* (Mojang). *Minecraft* is a more open-world experience than *Breath of the Wild* as the player is responsible for maintaining and creating most of the elements that appear within the world of *Minecraft*. The *Minecraft* terrain, and therefore the map, can be changed at a moment's notice based on the destructive or creative nature of the person playing the game. This control of the map by the player speaks to the level of agency a person has in the two games (Frasca, 2010). Players are given a quasi-open world with a finite number of quests and actions they can take to complete the final goal designed by the creators of *Breath of the Wild* to beat Calamity Ganon/Dark Beast Ganon and save Hyrule. The players of *Minecraft* are not limited by any narrative structure created by the game designers as it seems there's not an overarching plot or narrative flow, but rather shared social experience that occurs among those that play *Minecraft* (Schifter & Cipollone, 2013). It is this distinction that can help a person create an emotion-based mental map of their world.

The first step needed for development of these type of maps is understanding the tools needed to create the map. In *Minecraft*, a player needs the right crafting recipe to produce a map, which is eight papers and one

compass placed on the crafting table. The real-world counterpart to this could be talking to professionals, reading academic work, or building a support group of people that are going through similar experiences.

The second step is exploring the terrain to filling in the blanks of the terrain. A player uses the game control to fill in the blanks on the map in *Minecraft* to see all of the geographical components of the terrain. A person in the real world can use journaling or use other documenting tools to see how their emotions change based on stimuli experience by the person every day.

The last step in this process is to analyze the terrain. Creating a map room can provide this perceptive in the game. Talking to a professional about the experiences from the journal can help in the real world.

Both maps are colored by the landscape and the person's interpretation of what the landscape means (e.g., "Will I be attacked by Creepers if I go to those blocks in the middle of the map?" or "Will seeing this person make me feel too anxious or scared?"). Both maps require a keen level of insight to understand how to navigate with the least amount of harm and possibly the most sense of fulfillment possible given the nature of the terrain.

## FACE-WORK

Erving Goffman (1985) developed the theory of Face-work as a means of understanding how a person maintains a consistent series of social interactions within a community. These actions are called "maintaining one's face." A classic example of maintaining face in society would be waving to every passing car as a person is driving to maintain the impression that a person is a friendly member of a given community. Maintaining one's face allows that person to be more confident with themselves and more self-assured that they can exist successfully in a given community. One of the critical aspects of Face-work theory that relates to video game mapping is the concept of how a person performs dignity (i.e., the ability of an individual to present their physical and emotional state in social interactions while maintaining their face; Brown & Levinson, 1978) in the real world. These rituals can be as simple as offering food to one member of a community and performing polite small talk (Bucar, 2012) to an individual showing solidarity with others in that individual's community (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). Dignity is vital as the act of dignity provides a vantage point that an individual can use to view the rest of the social terrain.

A map is useless if a person can not see where they are in relationship to the rest of the terrain. Any type of emotional mental map or model is equally meaningless if the person cannot maintain some sense of who they are. Dignity provides a person that grounding.

The ground can be shaky in the real world as any emotional mental model must deal with the dynamic social environment that a person is likely to face on a daily basis. A person must recognize that they will be dealing with people whose moods and behaviors will change based on their own “feeling bubbles” (Wetherell, 2014), past experiences (Schein, 2003), or any number of social, psychological or cultural stimuli that can influence the behaviors of the individual on a daily basis. Any model must be prepared for these dramatic changes. Creating such a mental model is illustrated through visiting new planets in *No Man’s Sky* (Hello Games).

### *Face-Work and No Man’s Sky*

*No Man’s Sky* (Hello Games) provides an example of applying a map to a dynamic landscape. The game engine uses a procedural generation model for creating all of the in-game elements, which means that no two players will have the same map playing the game. There are possibly millions of different variations of monsters, planets, and spaceships that a player will experience over the course of the game (Alexandra, 2016). This layer of complexity also means that it is impossible for there to be a guide that can help a player find new terrain or determine the threats and rewards they will face throughout the course of playing the game. This kind of map is the most similar to the one we experience in our daily lives.

Just like in the real world, a player in this game must study the movements and rituals of the different creatures they will face during the course of the game to determine if those creatures are a threat, harmless, or helpful. The reading of the actions of this computer-generated being begins to provide a foundation for a player to judge the non-verbal mode of communication that other people have in the real world and determine how those people will react to a person’s actions and intents.

Advantageously, *No Man’s Sky* is also training its players in performing Face-work is when a player goes through the Atlas Path. Atlas Path is one of the side quests that a person can choose to follow in order to understand the mythology of the game. Beyond the functional component of the Atlas Path adding more directions to go on the Galactic Map, the Atlas Path trains a player to understand the influence of societal institution as part



of social interactions. Monoliths are placed throughout the map, and the players must learn how to interact and exist with the locations to advance their view and knowledge of the world. Each monolith within the game reveals another part of the underlying story of the game when the player finds those points and interacts with them. A person that is able to find and map these points in the universe is able to understand their place within the game. This mapping is not unlike how a person maps social and societal actions that a person might take on a daily basis.

## MENTAL MAPPING THE WORLD

Mapping the vital parts of life, much like mapping out the environment of a video game world, involves having a clear understanding of the terrain that is being mapped out. In *Breath of the Wild*, a crafted map that a player can find online can be used to show the player all of the shrines in Hyrule and the pathways that they can use to reach those places. Away from the gaming environment, a person that reaches out to professionals can use those professional's guidance to create mental models and map out the important "feeling bubbles" of their lives. Discussing these "feeling bubbles" with psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other mental health professionals can help lay out the mental landscape of an individual.

Another core component of map creation is that the map must have a clear legend that explains what all of the symbols and signs mean within the cartographic artifact. A good player's map in *Minecraft* will use symbols to show where to find resources. A great player's map will allow the player to tell a story within the landscape. Real-world models must denote what the different "feeling bubbles" mean to a person based on past experiences, memories associated with those "feeling bubbles," and professional guidance on how to deal with those events. The legend represents not only the geography of the land and the barriers that make up the geography, but also the resources that the geography has to offer.

When the world becomes too much, we must seek out the resources that can help.

The final component of map creation in both video games and mental health is the need to ground the map in the reality of the world. Some of the best maps present the aesthetics of the game onto the paper (e.g., the paper map gave with the "Dragon Warrior I" was an excellent example of maintaining the branding of the game with their font selection and maintaining the gaming experience with the graphic layout of the map).

Other great diagrams make the pathways clear between the points of civilization and show the boundaries of the wild world where only the brave dare to travel.

This realism of the world presented on an easily accessible resource can make all the difference in surviving the chaos of the realm. Professionals that can show the critical area to discover in the field and the explorers of the domain can point out the changes that are needed on the map to reflect the reality of the world. Professionals in this example are played by psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other mental health professionals, while the explorers are either those that have experience stress and other issues in society and share those experiences with psychological professionals or those that journal their issues and reflect on those experiences later. This type of mapping of the real world is necessary as a means of not trying to sugarcoat the struggles we all experience or minimizing the pain we can all experience from time-to-time.

The world can be made a better place with one more safety blanket in your hand.

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