

Draft of Methods Section of Prospectus for Dissertation Design

Part 1: Problem and Research Question

Pokémon is not the franchise that comes to mind first in a discussion of representational issues and rhetoric in video games. When we think of Pokémon, we think of Pikachu: a cutesy icon of what Joseph Nye referred to as Japan's soft power as recognizable and beloved as Hello Kitty. When we think of the topic of representational issues in video games, we often imagine grotesque displays of gender and race-based violence such as the assault of prostitutes in the Grand Theft Auto franchise or 1982's Custer's Revenge, in which the player character's primary goal is to rape an unnamed caricature of an indigenous Native American woman tied to a post, not of Pokémon's now over a thousand non-human characters with designs that range from vaguely plantlike to ice cream cones and literal garbage. In fact, when we think of Pokémon, we seldom think of the human characters at all, let alone the player character, a silent child protagonist that up until more recently was represented by an avatar with extremely limited customization features. We are even less likely to think about how and when those customization features began to include options for gender, race, or any other positionalities that the human player might embody, even features as seemingly cosmetic and inconsequential as hair and eye color or freckles. Pokémon is a beloved franchise with a set formula for the player as a 'good guy'/hero, but multiple iterations throughout the core franchise from 1996's release of Pokémon Red to the 2022 release of Legends of Arceus force the player to participate in colonialism. This dissertation will examine the intersections of postcolonial tension within the core games and how they have evolved toward and backwards from decolonized play over time. How is postcolonial rhetoric manifested in the Pokémon core franchise games from 1996 to 2022 and what do the

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embodied procedural rhetorics suggest to the player about colonization? How are these effects mediated by the franchise's player avatar customization options? What real world implications exist for fans and the actual humans represented in the game?

Pokémon is one of the highest grossing media franchises of all time, with the video games alone having sold more than 480 million units, with official translations into nine languages; in terms of overall video game sales, it is third in sales behind only the *Mario* franchise and *Tetris*, which are each more than a decade older than the first Pokémon release (The Pokémon Company). The overall reach of the games cannot be understated, nor can their unique positionality as a site of study for representational rhetorics and change in local and global societies over the past twenty-six years. Contemporary Japan exerts a significant soft power campaign to minimize its colonial past and the atrocities committed by Imperial Japan. Pokémon serves as a steward of this erasure. The international reach of this franchise could serve an opportunity to raise awareness of postcolonial issues and the global effects of colonialism outside of North America. This analysis presents an opportunity for the expansion of ethics and social responsibilities of Japanese Gaming Companies. Beginning with Said's *Orientalism* (1978), I endeavor to create a postcolonial analysis of select titles from the core games of the Pokémon franchise that highlights the orientalist and occidentalist rhetoric embedded in the sample games, how "othering" appears in the character customization options for the latter games, and how fans respond postcolonial rhetoric apparent to the player of the games in online discourse communities.

Part 2: Focused Literature Review

Much work has been done to support a postcolonial and otherwise critical reading of the Pokémon franchise. Bainbridge wrote of the franchise in the context of environmentalism, stating that: “Pokémon intertexts have produced transmedia storytelling that informs and reflects upon larger issues of environmentalism, biodiversity and materialism,” (Bainbridge, 2014). While Bainbridge’s analysis primarily focuses on the Pokémon film franchise in lieu of the games, the context of the franchise and environmentalism remains relevant to a postcolonial exploration of the franchise. Bainbridge further states:

“Pokémon thereby encourages reflection on the ways in which we represent, engage and contain nature. It offers ways of interacting with the natural world, not always uncritically, as demonstrated in the earlier examples from the Pokémon films. In the best tradition of vernacular theory, Pokémon therefore becomes a kind of theoretical petrie dish for testing and exploring ways of interacting with the environment and negotiating those interactions with the real, the representational, the material and the contingent,” (Bainbridge 402).

In this dissertation, I reframe those ‘real, representational, material, and contingent’ representations as not of the ecological physical environment, but rather, the humans in the environment, both as represented by the textual analysis of the game itself.

In the 2021 edited collection *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games*, authors and editors Malkowski and Russworm argue for the analysis of representation and identity in Games Studies as just as crucial as critical code studies, stating that

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“representation and identity are similarly complex systems that are always relevant to the ways in which... all technologies are constructed. Representation in game studies must be viewed as a system that functions as akin to—rather than as a distraction from—the discipline’s more celebrated, hardcore objects of study,” (p.3). The authors and editors argue for similar representational analyses of marginalized groups across a wide variety of games and the intersections of how these analyses reflect and impact the real world in the context of fan campaigns like #INeedDiverseGames.

As a massive transmedia franchise spanning twenty-six years of content, dozens of games, television releases, films, a trading card game, and more, there is no shortage of literature on Pokémon itself. The edited collection *Pikachu’s Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (2004) has aged poorly in some ways in the twenty years since its release in that Pokémon is still an enduring transmedia franchise. While Tobin and his fellow authors feared that the popularity of Pokémon would die off between the first talks towards the publication of the book 1999 and the publication date in 2004, the fall they predicted in the title and some of the included chapters never came. Merit to my analysis from this collection include Allison’s evaluation of kawaii culture, Iwabuchi’s analysis of Japaneseness through localization, and Katsuno and Maret’s contribution regarding the localization process behind Pokémon, and Bromley’s chapter on localization through narrative play, however.

Textual analysis of games and particularly of how marginalized groups are represented in them is in no way new. Schleiner (2001) and Kennedy (2002) each analyzed the depiction of women in games through textual analysis of the Tomb Raider franchise. These earlier examples of criticism focused on what Constanza-Chock (2020) would now refer to as the affordances and

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dysaffordances provided to the character representation, which has been evaluated as both empowering and depowering to women gamers, at times simultaneously, with earlier scholarship focused primarily on the dysaffordances of Lara Croft as a sex object. Additional work has been conducted by Englebrecht (2020) that compares the more recent Tomb Raider reboots to the earlier games suggests that the representation of femininity and what it means to be a female action hero have changed over time, evolving toward a more complex representation that has since been replicated in other games. These more complex representations are not necessarily 'better' or 'worse', more 'inclusive' or more 'exclusive', in terms of content, but instead yield fundamentally different possibilities for analysis, such as through the character's interpersonal relationships, which were not discussed in earlier games.

In his 2016 article *Playing Subaltern: Video Games and Postcolonialism*, Dr. Souvik Mukherjee describes the relative lack of postcolonial scholarship within Games Studies despite the field's recent turn towards analyzing race and gender within games. Mukherjee, instead, argues that to move the field forward now, what's necessary is to "examine how the different aspects of postcolonial thinking tie into each other in framing the perception, both external and self-reflexive, of the postcolonial subject," which he then applies specifically to instances of Indian gamers playing *Empire: Total War* and *East India Company* (p.506). Three more uses of textual analysis and/or discourse analysis via game traversal specific to Japanese games come from author Rachael Hutchinson and are conducted through a lens of postcolonial analysis.

A somewhat similar analysis is conducted by Salter and Stanfill (2022) about the realism of the character design used in the FIFA franchise and how the inequalities of real-world soccer are reflected in the games through the absence of female characters until relatively recently.

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A final piece of literature that may pertain in some ways to this project is Ogletree et al's 2004 analysis of how two audiences, one of college students and one of elementary school students, responded to the way gendered characters are represented in the Pokémon animation, with both audiences responding poorly to the gender-atypical and loosely queer coded trainer James, while the audience of college students also indicated that they found his female counterpart Jesse to be "sexy," perhaps akin to the early analyses of Lara Croft from Schleiner (2001) and Kennedy (2002). While this piece does not pertain directly to the games in my sample, it does provide a lens into how the wide audience of Pokémon responds to representation within the work of the franchise. Further extrapolation from this data may be useful in my proposed fan representations and fan responses chapter.

I intend to apply similar analyses to the marginalized groups represented in Pokémon, including the Ainu people, hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors and their descendants, who have become a marginalized group in Japan), and other racialized depictions. I do not anticipate precisely parallel findings to Englebrecht's (2020) reading of Tomb Raider suggesting a direct evolution toward complexity in representation from the older Pokémon games to more recent ones. Given that much of the literature about Tomb Raider relates specifically to Lara Croft as the player character and protagonist while the Pokémon franchise instead invites the player to create a silent protagonist avatar of themselves, representation and identity in these Pokémon games and the affordances and dysaffordances for and against it require a perhaps more nuanced discussion. I expect a broad spectrum of both moves toward and away from harmful representation with additional layers of complexity added in localization and translation. Fan discourse community conversations will then be used to further support or complicate my textual

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analysis. This partial literature review crafted for ENG 6005: Dissertation Design with Dr.

Stanfill in Fall 2024 will of course continue to be expanded upon.

Part III: Research Design

The primary method of research behind this analysis will be postcolonial textual analysis of the games via partial game traversal and full game traversal from a proposed sample of the games in their original language (Japanese) and, where available, through officially licensed copies of the games distributed for release in North America in English. Rationale for the selected sample and parameters for the textual analysis are outlined below. After the data collection and analysis of the games have concluded, an additional sample of fan response conversations will be scraped from the subreddit r/Pokémon and Archive of our Own in order to determine if there is overlap between my analysis and fan discourse around the sample games. Deliberate attention will be given the nature of decolonial nature of analysis necessary to complete this project authentically and will be informed by the work of Xiiem et al (2019), Trammell (2023), Kovach (2021), and Smith (2016).

The proposed games to be included in this study are *Pokémon Red* (1996), *Pokémon Crystal* (2001), *Pokémon Emerald* (2004), *Pokémon Platinum* (2008), *Pokémon Black 2* (2012), *Pokémon Y* (2013), *Pokémon UltraMoon* (2017), *Pokémon Shield* (2019), and *Pokémon Legends: Arceus* (2022). Selection criteria and process have been described below, while the methods used in each chapter are described in part two of this section.

Materials: Sample Selection

The core series of *Pokémon* games released from 1996 to 2022 includes 38 full-length game releases. Many of these games have remarkably similar content apart from ‘version

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specific' obtainable monster characters. *Pokémon* games are typically released in pairs and re-released with minimal differences in content to encourage players to trade Pokémon monster characters and replay the games. Of the 38 releases, two and sometimes three nearly identical games are included, often with later remakes of the same content re-releasing as older handheld game consoles were decommissioned. The initial 1996 release in Japan consisted of two titles for the handheld GameBoy console: *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Green*. These games had identical content, including plot and visual assets like maps and character sprites, with the caveat that not all 151 of the then-existing Pokémon were capturable in each game. A small list of 'version exclusive' monster characters existed specific to each. Two minimally revised follow-ups were released in 1998: one, a special edition of the game featuring a Pikachu as the player character's first companion (similar to the *Pokémon anime*) titled *Pokémon Yellow*, and the second, a revised version of *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Green* called *Pokémon Blue* that featured small glitch fixes and minor artistic updates. This 1998 version of *Pokémon Blue* is what would later be re-coded, translated, localized, and distributed internationally as *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue* for North American, European, and Oceanic release between 1998 and 2000. The content of these first games was further re-released in a 2004 remake for the GameBoy Advance called *Pokémon FireRed* and *Pokémon LeafGreen*, resulting in eight individual releases with roughly the same playable content and only minute differences.

The remix culture surrounding the core franchise thus poses both ample opportunities and challenges for conducting analysis of the games themselves as texts. In selecting the proposed sample below, care was taken to preemptively evaluate if minute release changes such as the ones described above could provide a meaningfully different postcolonial reading. The sample

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was also selected to include each of the extant Pokémon regions at least once without omission in order to ensure the maps of each Pokémon World Region could be analyzed. Further criteria included ensuring a variety of console releases with varying graphic capabilities over time were included in the sample in order to better scaffold the creation of arguments about the franchise as a whole. Additional considerations were also made regarding which consoles and game software/hardware remained functioning and commercially available as outlined below.

The 38 Pokémon releases that came out from 1996 to 2022 broadly encompassed six generations of handheld consoles. Some of the earliest consoles and games are now considerably difficult to locate or locate in proper working order. While the early handheld consoles themselves were powered by external, replaceable AA batteries, the earliest game cartridges released for the Nintendo GameBoy, GameBoyColor, and GameBoy Advance included coin-sized internal CR2025 batteries. While the internal specifications used by Nintendo in the creation of their game cartridges aren't publicly known, batteries of this variety have been found to have lifespans of approximately 8 to 10 years (Kalmykova et al.). This is consistent with reports of Pokémon fans replacing these batteries in order to prolong the lifespan of their game cartridges, as while the games remain partially usable, they no longer retain save functionality (Master Kirby; kenizl86). For the purposes of this study, however, this adds the complication that finding authentic, unaltered, but still functional copies of the early games is virtually impossible.

A glimmer of hope regarding accessing these materials exists in Nintendo's releases of the content for download or streaming via the Nintendo eShop. Unfortunately, not all Pokémon titles are available in this manner. Where available, each copy of the proposed sample used in the

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study come from authentic, branded copies of the game consoles and game cartridges or software procured in the United States or Japan as described in the chart below. Where gaps occur, I intend to support this project with additional emulated software.

At the time of this writing, I have procured a refurbished GameBoyColor and copy of the 1996 original Japanese release of *Pokémon Red*, which I plan to repair if necessary. I have also procured a Nintendo Virtual Console release of *Pokémon Crystal*. Most of the remaining samples of game cartridges were already in my possession, although some are limited to English language only. With the 3DS and Nintendo Switch games released from 2013 to present, it is instead possible to run multiple save files in different languages. These games, further, were released simultaneously in Japan and North America on both hard cartridge and as downloads direct to their given platforms.

The one sample piece I am still attempting to acquire is a functioning copy of *Pokémon Black 2* (2012). This game and each of the games from this generation are particularly challenging acquire as they have never been re-released either in hard media or for software download by Nintendo. This piece of media is essential to this project, however, as it is the only extant game release that explores the Unova Region.

A final piece of information supporting sample selection is data regarding estimated playtime to completion for the games, sourced from player data on HowLongtoBeat, is included in the aggregate chart below.

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Table of Game Media, Estimated Play-Time, and other Researcher Notes

Game and Release Date	Release Console	Pokémon Region and Real-World Analog	Estimated Main Plot Playthrough (from HowLongTo Beat)	Estimated Completionist Playthrough from HowLongToBeat)	Other Notes
Pokémon Red (1996)	Game Boy	Kanto (Kanto Region of Japan)	26.5 Hours	101 Hours	Full Playthrough necessary. ROM necessary, too – very challenging to find operational authentic copy in 2024
Pokémon Crystal (1998)	Game Boy Color	Johto (Kansai Region of Japan)	29.5 Hours	145 Hours	Own Virtual Console Edition on 3DS (English Only)
Pokémon Emerald (2004)	Game Boy Advance	Hoenn (Kyushu and Okinawa Regions of Japan)	31 Hours	216 Hours	Own Hard Media (English Only)
Pokémon Platinum (2008)	Nintendo DS	Sinnoh (Hokkaido Region of Japan)	35 Hours	219 Hours	Own Hard Media (English Only)
Pokémon Black 2 (2012)	Nintendo DS	Unova (New York City, USA)	34.5 Hours	184 Hours	Still Need
Pokémon Y (2013)	Nintendo 3DS	Kalos (Metropolitan France)	31 Hours	202 Hours	Own Hard Media (All Official Languages Available on All Copies)
Pokémon UltraMoon(2017)	Nintendo 3DS	Alola (Hawaii)	33 Hours	132 Hours	Own Hard Media (All Official Languages Available on All Copies)
Pokémon Legends: Arceus (2022)	Nintendo Switch	Hisui (Sinnoh)	25.5 Hours	79 Hours	Owned Hard Media (All Official Languages Available on All Copies); Full Playthrough necessary

Methods for Visual Analysis of Maps and Player Character Customization Fields

In the first chapter, a partial traversal of each of the ten games in order to reach the character customization fields and maps of the games will be conducted. This can be achieved within the first ten minutes of gameplay per game, although analysis will take substantially longer. Detailed notes will be taken discussing when different customization options like gender and race first appear and what options the player is given to select from. The maps will be analyzed in comparison between real-world maps from GoogleEarth. The methodology of this section was inspired in part by Mukherjee. While Mukherjee's article is not specific to Japaneseness or postcolonial analysis of Japanese games, it does contain a useful primer on the application of postcolonial theory to games. An additional useful discussion of cartography and ludic descriptions of colonial rhetoric may be useful for the discussion of mapping in the Pokemon transmedia franchise in my analysis.

My plan is to, using the Large Language Model Teachable Machine or a similar technology earmarked for public use, create an AI-assisted database using large samples of publicly available maps of the real world locations that the Pokémon maps content to map onto. I will then use TensorFlow to see how much or little these maps are accurate to their real-world components in an attempt to triangulate my visual analysis with machine-assisted analysis. These methods will be described in greater detail in future drafts.

Methods for Postcolonial Textual Analysis of Pokémon Legends: Arceus

In order to expand upon the findings in the first chapter, the second chapter will feature a full-game traversal of *Pokémon Legends: Arceus* in both Japanese and English. Traversal will be conducted from start to finish of the core plotline of the game, from the start of the game until

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the initial credit roll, ignoring post-game content or additional downloadable content for each release. This choice was made to provide a sensible limit to the traversal period.

Hutchinson (2016) discusses the representation of marginalized others in Japan in the context of Bandai's SoulCalibur franchise, particularly breaking down the differences in which western and eastern characters are represented through the lens of Orientalism and Occidentalism. This analysis is scaffolded through the works of Said (1978) and Bhabha (1994) and specifically uses visual cues within the game to allude to a real-world period in Japanese history and postcolonial rhetoric in the character designs and architecture in the graphics, similar to analysis that I have conducted and will continue to expand on regarding Pokémon Legends: Arceus in my dissertation. The author utilizes a markedly different approach to textual analysis in her 2017 article on nuclear discourse in Final Fantasy VII, which in lieu of character representation focuses on the representation of corporate nuclear shenanigans. A final contribution by this same author from 2021 focuses on an "observant playthrough" of Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, in which the author argues that the designers "encourage non-violent action and an anti-colonialist worldview," and describes the opportunities available to the player in both a traditional and non-violent playthrough of the open world game.

While each of these pieces engages in textual analysis, only the 2021 Hutchinson piece on Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild describes game traversal as a research method. This is not to suggest that the authors of the other pieces did not play the games described or that playing in the game was not relevant to the analysis, but rather, that until now the accepted procedures of textual analysis in Game Studies have perhaps not been as regimented as in other digital humanist areas. Traversal, too, was particularly important to the 2021 Hutchinson piece as

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the author was making an argument regarding what variety of playthrough the game designers encourage in an open world game with markedly more player agency options than the Pokémon games in my sample, which require a more linear JRPG playthrough style. This, however, does seem to be changing, as the most recent titles from 2022 (Pokémon Legends: Arceus and Pokémon Scarlet/Violet) have made a move toward a more open world style than prior releases, although the relative “openness” of this world is still limited by a linear plot structure.

Few of the above pieces describe detailed coding schemes for how data was collected and analyzed from the games, although many of the pieces are deeply rooted in theoretical scholarship, such as the 2016 Hutchinson piece on representation in *SoulCalibur*. Absent from many of these pieces are data on the release versions or translations/localizations used for analysis in each of the games or how changes in translation and localization may impact the representations or rhetoric of representations present in the games.

An additional table of proposed playthrough and average time commitment generated by fans from HowLongToBeat.com is provided below. This information was used to help determine a sizable labor load for partial and full traversal of the proposed sample, in conjunction with claims from Rachael Hutchinson with regard to her *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* Observant Traversal taking a full three months to complete. If the committee deems it necessary that multiple full traversals are necessary to complete a dissertation, additional titles can be selected from below.

Methods for Fan Response to Colonial Rhetoric

In order to investigate the reception of colonial rhetoric in the games among fans, a sample of online discourse featuring posts penned in the English language will be collected

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starting in Spring 2025 from r/Pokemon and Metacritic. No private identifying information such as usernames from individual player reviews will be stored in order to protect the anonymity of the users. An earlier dataset captured using the PRAW-Academic scraper as created by Mirek Stolee of the University of Central Florida was scrapped in November 2023. The dataset yielded two separate threads where the topic of *Ainu* was discussed on Reddit between the release of *Pokemon: Legends of Arceus* and the present in addition to 32 comments on those threads. The remaining two keywords, *indigenous* and *colony/colonization*, did not yield any results from the subreddit r/Pokemon. The intended study keywords for the Spring 2025 search have not yet been defined, however, will continue in the same vein of this research.

The nature of this work is such that I am conducting social media research that does not constitute the federal definition Human Subjects of research, although the social media posts interacted with from Reddit and Metacritic will, of course, be largely human-created. As such, it will be necessary for this project to receive Institutional Research Board review. I anticipate an expedited review for this project. I will apply and submit the HRP-255 form to the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board in Fall 2025, or earlier, depending on feedback from my committee.

Analysis

The intended external mentor has been identified as Rachael Hutchinson, cited above for her work in postcolonial analysis of *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. Given her work at the intersection of Japanese Games Studies and postcolonial analysis, her involvement is essential.

Given the nature of this work as requiring both academic-level proficiency in English and Japanese language, the researcher continues to strive for additional Japanese language

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proficiency in research. They are undergoing independent study of advanced-level Japanese language alongside faculty at the University of Central Florida and intend to pass the Japanese Language Proficiency Test Level 3 on Sunday, December 1st, 2024. Additional language study will be conducted at the Japan Center for Michigan Universities in summers 2025 and 2026, with the goal of ultimately surpassing Japanese Language Proficiency Test Level 1 in December of 2026 at the Miami, Florida testing location. In addition to ensuring this language proficiency is demonstrable in my dissertation research design section, this proficiency will also provide me the opportunity to write, translate, present and distribute facets of this work in Japanese.

Part IV: Significance

As described in the introduction of this piece, contemporary Japan exerts a significant soft power campaign to minimize its colonial past and the atrocities committed by Imperial Japan, and Pokémon serves as one of the many stewards of this erasure. The international reach of this franchise could serve an opportunity to raise awareness of indigenous issues and the global effects of colonialism outside of North America. This further presents an opportunity for the expansion of ethics and social responsibilities of Japanese Gaming Companies as discussed by Amano et al. In addition, the descriptive coding procedure outlined in the research design of this project could provide a useful example for future scholars of Game Studies. Few of the above pieces describe detailed coding schemes for how data was collected and analyzed from the games, although many of the pieces are deeply rooted in theoretical scholarship, such as the 2016 Hutchinson piece on representation in *SoulCalibur*. Absent from many of these pieces are data on the release versions or translations/localizations used for analysis in each of the games or how changes in translation and localization may impact the representations or rhetoric of

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representations present in the games. This is perhaps an exciting opportunity for expansion on prior work in postcolonial Japanese Games Studies, in particular. As daCosta, Malazita, and Fontolan (2022) write, references to Japanese language are largely omitted from western localizations of Pokémon so that western audiences will perceive that the product was made for them rather than imported (daCosta, 2022). Language alone, however, is often not the only thing lost in localization.

Part V: Organization

1. Introduction
 - a. Lit review
2. Mapping the Pokémon World and Player Character Customization
 - a. *Methods*
 - b. *Visual Analysis of Maps vs. Reality Across the 10 Games*
 - c. *Results*
3. Postcolonial Textual Analysis of the Games
 - a. Methods
 - b. Full Traversal of Arceus
 - c. Results
4. Fan Responses to Colonial Rhetoric
 - a. Methods
 - b. Results
5. Conclusion

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Part VI: Timeline

Below is my intended timeline for project completion from present until defense. The timeline below instead breaks down the time needed for remaining coursework, candidacy exams, sample collection, data interpretation, drafting, revising, defense format and review.

My last semester of coursework is Spring 2025, in which I will take Theories of Text and Technology with Dr. Bruce Janz and Social Media Research with Dr. Mel Stanfill. I will then begin candidacy exams in Summer 2025. During the Summer of 2025, I also intend to enroll in an intensive language abroad study at the Japan Center for Michigan Universities in Hikone, Japan, where I intend to improve my reading comprehension abilities necessary to complete Japanese-language data collection of the intended sample. This intensive language program provides 10 undergraduate credit hours and a year's worth of language coursework in just ten weeks, proctored between June 6th and August 6th, 2025. My goal is to complete my core and primary exams while still in the United States, and my specialized exam, over a long weekend while in Japan. My projected exam dates are therefore: Core Exam falling on the weekend of May 2nd, Primary Exam falling the weekend of May 30th, and Specialized Exam the weekend of June 27th, 2025. These dates provide the required turnaround time for faculty member response and feedback while also providing opportunity for my preparation despite the complications of the time zone and date differences due to my travels.

While in Hikone, I intend to pitch a Rhetoric of Japanese Multimedia course to the faculty of the Japan Center of Michigan Universities, with the hope of taking a group of University of Central Florida Students there in Summer 2026 for a Career/Culture Hybrid Program. I also hope to take and pass Level N-2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test at

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the July 2025 examination, date and location to be announced. I will then return to the United States and to Orlando in early August of 2025, in line with the dates of my 9-month faculty contract with the university, and begin dissertation hours during the Fall 2025 term. During this time, I will apply to the IRB with the HRP-255 form for expedited review of the intended social media sample for the fan response chapter.

Given that I will come into my first semester of dissertation hours with such solid preparation from Dr. Stanfill's Dissertation Design course with a partial draft of Prospectus completed, I intend to defend my prospectus by the end of Fall 2025. I hope to defend the Prospectus in early November to accommodate feedback turn around and necessary revisions prior to the end of the Fall 2025 term.

I will then conduct data collection and analysis during the Spring and Summer 2026 terms, while also using this timeframe to write and distribute the introductory components to the faculty committee (as desired). This duration has been intentionally scaffolded to facilitate playing each of the 10 games to completion in both Japanese and English, with also attention to the fact that I may return to Japan to teach the above referenced Rhetoric of Japanese Multimedia course at JCMU in Summer 2026 and will become eligible for TIP application during the Spring 2026 term and will likely be forced to spend some of my time preparing my faculty portfolio materials and teaching.

Provided that the data collection and analysis are complete by Fall of 2026, the body chapters of the dissertation will be written and distributed to faculty members for feedback in Fall 2026 and Spring 2027, with further time for revision through Spring 2027 and into Summer 2027. While I will complete the 15 necessary dissertation hours towards the degree requirements

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in Spring 2027 based on my projections of completing 3 hours per term beginning Fall 2025, I will remain eligible for continuous enrollment as needed through the end of Summer Term 2030. Careful attention will be paid to ensure that all degree requirements are completed long in advance of this date. Given the nature of my position with the university, I anticipate final revisions and edits taking place at latest in Spring 2028 if additional time is necessary. In this scenario, a final draft would be sent to the committee by early March, then sent to format review by mid-March with a tentative defense date in April 2028. Even with the April 2028 scenario, I will still graduate with more than two additional seven terms remaining before I hit Time to Degree. Neither the Commencement dates for Spring 2027 or 2028 have been published yet by the university.

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Part VII: Bibliography

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