Worksheet A. Themes of Cases regareding Undertale in the Creators' YouTube Channels

Carlos Eiene – Insaneintherainmusic

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
- Driven by fan's reactions and gratitude in fandom
- Arranging to put own spin on existing music (jazzing up originals or other covers)
- Inspired by someone else's covers to play game
- Listened for connections to other music (allusions; i.e. "Sing, Sing, Sing" in "Napstablook"
- Desire to tell a story through videos, both musically and visually

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
- Arranged music similar to jazz "real book" and performed in traditional jazz form
- Improvisation required video and audio recording simultaneously
- Used music technology to create and adjust instruments (MIDI and sequencing of drums; surgical fixes on piano)
- Challenged self musically (7/4 time)
- Dorm living caused complications when recording
- Included own gameplay in videos
- Created album after YouTube videos (higher quality sound, redoing music, working directly with composer)

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
- Typical K-12 education (Orff in elementary; band in junior high and high school; jazz; guitar class
- Lack of VGM in school

B: Formal
- Lessons: Piano (age 12-14); tenor sax (age 15-16)
- Community jazz big band in Seattle area

C: Informal
- Self-taught many instruments
- Transcription was a self-learning process
- Trial and error/experimentations lead to learning

D: Online
- Sought out resources online to learn music before turning to transcription
- Editing modeled after other YouTube creators
- Watched a lot of tutorials
- Reached out to veterans to ask questions and eventually, became the one people asked.

E: Mentoring
- Created lead sheets for download of arrangements

Samantha Ballard – Samantha Ballard

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music online?
- YouTube was a venue to play VGM, as opposed to classical, which was more professional and institutional
- *Undertale* creation was done in balance with other music so she would not get bored

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
- Technology choices got more sophisticated as higher quality was desired (this mirrored buying new harps as well)

- One-take videos took more time to prepare than multitracks because of the necessity to not mess up for a whole piece
- Setting up the recording studio was labor intensive and her least favorite part of YouTube video creation

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?

A: School

- Typical K-12 education (elementary general music, band, and university harp study)
- Music technology course in college taught her how to place microphones and basics of software (Reaper)

B: Formal

- Lessons: Piano (age 4-17); Saxophone (age 12-13), Harp lessons (15-17; university study)

C: Informal

- Musical practice became a form of self-learning
- Asked others for advice on more sophisticated software

D: Online

- Used free online software to create arrangements

E: Mentoring

- Officially licensed music and sold it on sheetmusicplus.com

Ro Panuganti – Ro Panuganti

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?

- Video games provided musically interesting material that was easy to learn, yet complex with smaller melodies, motives and fills that lend itself to his instrument.
- Initially, didn't want to jump on the band wagon, but eventually decided to cover it because he loved the music.
- Covering allowed him to recreate a rock-inspired version of the story in the video game.
- Was inspired by other cover artists and became interested in the music and game.

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?

- Approached arrangement like he was in a garage band: Jamming, recording, and then memorizing his best recording by committing it to memory and muscle memory
- Collaboration allowed him to play off of his collaborators. He would listen to their work, add to it, and back and forth. He liked this to the reaction one would have in a live performance
- Opted for scene switching with one video feed at a time and rarely used PIP to have control over the viewers' attention
- Technology choices got more sophisticated as higher quality was desired (and new techniques were mostly learned by observing others on YouTube)

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?

A: School

- Basic elementary school music
- Concert Band (Trumpet, 6th grade); Jazz band (guitar, 12th grade)

B: Formal

- Lessons: Guitar (from Grade 8-12); Piano (4 years as child)
- Guitar lessons provided basic rock knowledge and music theory which were applied to VGM

C: Informal

- Growing up, music was a lone pursuit as no family members were musical
- Consumption of a lot of media to memorize, practice, and mimic

D: Online
- Listening to others on YouTube led to experimentation and efficiency
- Modeled video editing after other YouTube cover artists' videos

E: Mentoring

Doug Perry - Dougdrumultimaperry

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
- Interacted with composer as a VGM fan, then fell in love with game and music
- Need to be connected to game before playing the music
- Branding complication because channel is half classical, half VGM
- Desire to connect classical artists with VGM and vice versa
- Uses VGM to practice practical musical skills
- Tried to embody emotions while performing a musical story
- YouTube creation was an alternative when more financially beneficial music was not available

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
- Much of arrangement and video performance was improvisatory
- Used humor to create videos, particularly for April Fool's Day
- Constantly tried to balance VGM and YouTube with classical and paid gigs
- Visual layout of panels used to direct audience attention
- Applied musical conventions he liked from other genres to his creation (JPOP and jazz)

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?

A: School
- Started in jazz and then went to classical
- Three music degrees, including an artist diploma from Yale
- Music technology courses were available, but not as helpful as he wished to record, produce, and market

B: Formal
- Private lessons in percussion and piano

C: Informal
- Listened to soundtrack, played it by ear, and then transcribed it
- Musical exploration as a child led to learning and curiosity, facilitated by father being a music educator
- Learned from cousin who was a video professional

D: Online
- Watching YouTube covers inspired trying new thigns
- Asked others online for help by sending private messages on Facebook
- Forums were a catalyst to experimenting with technology and music online

E: Mentoring
- Published arrangements for others to use through Materia Collective, available on sheetmusicplus.com
- VGM and YouTube recruited a student to study at university with Perry
- Facilitated collaboration through massive collaboration with Materia Collective

TeraCMusic

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
• YouTube served as a way to keep making music after high school   • YouTube creators should stay up-to-date so they can release music that is relevant to fans   • Fan feedback served as motivation   • Context and choices in games are important to musical meaning and experiences
Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
• Created mashups of video game music   • Editing was the least enjoyable process for creating videos   • Collaboration gives the creator access to other instruments and musical ideas   • Collaboration sometimes felt like peer pressure   • Layered harmonies by playing by ear and adding until happy   • YouTube served as a place to explore styles of music and creativity
Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
• All school courses helped creator improve musical knowledge   • School courses helped build confidence and apply to covers   • School projects provided opportunity to arrange VGM
B: Formal
C: Informal
• YouTube is an archive that shows a progression of informal learning styles   • Game play provided a first experience into consuming music to learn and then perform   • Learned technology through experimentation and practice, which led to breakthroughs   • Creator believed that schools have limits in teaching production, and it is better to learn by one's self
D: Online
• Creator downloaded MIDI files, adjusted them, and then play or sang along to record   • Sought out feedback from other cover artists to workshop drafts   • YouTube archived musical growth
E: Mentoring

Thomas – *Sky Tenkitsune*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
• Desire to play music people like, but also focus on self-enjoyment   • The vibe of music sucked them into the game's fandom   • YouTube was an afterthought to audio-only platforms   • "Voices" of the characters provided atmosphere for remixes   • Believed VGM kickstarted EGM as a genre
Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
• Work was intensive, all-consuming, and approximately three days per song   • Combined original melodies with cover music
Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
• Worked on school audio team, which inspired DJ career   • School requirements made it difficult to pursue music

B: Formal
•
C: Informal
• Mother taught piano and music theory at home
• Self-taught guitar, bass, and other piano
• Covers provided attention to get original work out to audiences
• Consumed music on loop to memorize, imagine, and then put into a DAW
• Studying game music helped improve song writing/composition
D: Online
• Self-taught how to use FL Studio through watching YouTube tutorials
• Record label reached out to recruit creator
• Used online forums as an affinity space to get involved in fandom
E: Mentoring
• Derivative works were created on their music
• Shared work and invited derivative works, but only with attribution

Amie Waters – *Amie Waters*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music online?
• Gameplay was highly emotional, and those emotions were used to create arrangements
• Ambiance was created through music to let the creator emote and the listener to experience her emotions
• VGM cover creation was a logical way to make money; YouTube was part of a diverse financial portfolio
• Extensive covering of *Undertale* led to burn out
• Human connection was at the center of this creator's joy in creating *Undertale* videos for YouTube
• Other covers inspired the creator as much if not more as the original
Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
• Technology was a means to an end, rather than a necessity
• Creation should be collaborative
• Collaboration is about sharing ideas to create something a single artist could not do on their own
• Ambitious production schedule could lead to heavy pressure on collaborators
• Arrangement took the form of "controlled improvisation"
Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
• Only experience in school with VGM was pep band
B: Formal
• There was a desire to learn VGM in lessons, but the curriculum was too "busy"
C: Informal
• Applied knowledge of instruments to other similar instruments (guitar-banjo; sax-clarinet)
• Experimentation was primary source of learning for arrangement, sequencing, and mixing
• Consumption and learning by ear accounted for 90% of learning
D: Online
• Works spread to other media without approval
• Diversification of revenue streams was important to making a living as a creator online
• YouTube was only part of creator's identity as a musician

• Online collaboration does not replace face-to-face collaboration
E: Mentoring
• Speaking on panels at conferences made her feel might step into a mentoring role as a creator in the VGM community

Sulaiyman Fauzi – *Sully Orchestration*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
• Wanted to expand 8-bit sound to full orchestra
• YouTube became a way to maximize revenue to support education and family
• Nearly whole channel was dedicated to *Undertale*
Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
• Used piano roll to arrange orchestration by adding layers of instruments
• Conceived of VGM as film music and what the trailer might look like
• Created extended players and compilations (YouTube albums) to make listening accessible in different ways
• Experiments with visual representations of music gave way to static images
Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
• Took music technology courses; however, they provided no new knowledge that was not self-taught previously
B: Formal
• Piano skills from lessons were highly useful in creating orchestrations with MIDI keyboard and piano rolls
C: Informal
• Computer music allowed for restarting and adjusting of projects
D: Online
• Watched play-throughs of the game to become familiar with game before playing it
E: Mentoring
• Created live streams of arrangement to demystify creative process
• Published "bad versions" of songs to show growth

Julia Henderson – *Julia Henderson*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
• VGM was ubiquitous in the creator's life throughout their life
• *Undertale* was not an essential part of the creator's channel; only a portion of identity
• There was a desire to create non-musical online content; however, the creator thought "why not create music"
• YouTube provided the creator a platform to perform VGM, which was an alternative to Western classical art music
Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
• Part practice was minimized as mistakes and other issues could be edited in post-production
• Classical music influences learned in school were heavily influential to the creator's approach to covers
• Sound and visual elements were used by the creator to tell stories
Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
• Opera major with a full history of music education courses

- Jazz band, vocals in high school and college, piano classes
- Had access to professional level studio at university
- School provided the creator with opportunities to refine skills that were self-taught or explored informally

B: Formal

- Private lessons from 17-25; church choirs

C: Informal

- Participated in rock bands in high school
- VGM was a curiousity to explore and learn, while applying skills acquired in school through classical music training
- Experimentation was initially the predominant approach to learning recording techniques

D: Online

- Playthroughs were the exposure for *Undertale*
- The creator was recruited to be part of an online collective called GameLark
- Comments were a form of feedback, and the creator stayed connected to audiences and fans by reading and replying to as many comments as possible
- The creator's YouTube channel served as an archive for progress as an artist

E: Mentoring

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Ben Briggs – *bbriggsmusic*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?

- Genres of music inspired to create covers in that style
- Self-reflection inspired by the game inspired covers
- *Undertale* nearly took over the creator's career (for better or worse)
- Livestream playthroughs inspired creation
- Video games' brands were borrowed for original composition branding
- The story and gameplay of *Undertale* was deeply moving

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?

- Created covers with an additive approach (adding until it's done)
- Only some of the creator's content was published YouTube so he would not saturate the platform and redirected audiences to other media
- Visual aesthetics on YouTube are important to audience retention, and the creator used graphics to capture audience's attention
- Limitations in technology provided challenges that required innovation through creation

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?

A: School

- Band classes
- General elementary music taught about tone, timbre, and tuning, which were helpful in music production and editing

B: Formal

- Did not enjoy lessons

C: Informal

- Self-teaching included psychological and entrepreneurial skills that were beyond Musical and technological domains

D: Online

- Once published online, derivative works can lead to loss of access to one's work

E: Mentoring

- Mentoring other creators became part of professional responsibilities
- Livestreaming provided a venue for teaching and encouragement
- The creator's recording label was used to provide opportunities for others

Diwa de Leon – *String Player Gamer*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
- Creator wanted attention that came with the popularity of *Undertale*
- The music of *Undertale* was perceived as simple and inspired the creator to try arranging it.
- Creation on YouTube was self-indulgent

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
- Visual aspects were extremely important as the entire art form, albiet more challenging than the musical aspects
- Genre and style influenced performance on video
- Scheduling was challenging for collaboration
- Published visual and musical MIDI Art as a novel way of creation

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?
A: School
- Bachelor's degree in composition
- No technology courses were available in school in the late 90s and early 2000s.

B: Formal
- Lessons (piano, 14 years, violin and guitar as child)

C: Informal
- Consumption contributed to a cover's authenticity, giving it context, intent, and connection
- Trial and error was predominant way of learning how to mix

D: Online
- Learning how to work with audio recordings was done through watching YouTube tutorials and experimentation
- Other's YouTube videos inspired the creator to try it himself

E: Mentoring
- Creator was initially reluctant to see himself as a mentor, yet now embraces the opportunity to help others
- Created documentaries on YouTube to show the creative process

Peter Anthony Smith – *Soundole*

Theme 1A: How did *Undertale* inspire the creator to make music?
- YouTube creation was a hobby that the creator used to balance their professional career as a classical musician
- Being part of the VGM cover community empowered the creator to explore arranging that ventured away from the original soundtrack
- The way the story in *Undertale* was told inspired the creator emotionally, and covers provide a nostalgic and empathic reliving of that experience.

Theme 1B: What were the creative practices and products developed?
- Long-lived experiences in classical traditions led to the creator to arrange covers with little divergence from the original soundtrack
- Collaborative efforts did not always manifest in equal returns on all party's channels, and therefore, creators needed to agree on their working relationship

• Creator used their own gameplay for videos because they could control the footage and tell the visual story that complimented their music

Theme 2: What learning strategies were used to create?

A: School

- Traditional Australian music education: music as an elective in high school and requisite units in university for music performance
- There is a perceived schism between classical training programs at schools and VGM music on YouTube
- Skills the creator learned from school settings were applied as the basis for arranging covers

B: Formal

- Lessons: piano (weekly for two years) and clarinet in Grade 10 onward into postgraduate degrees.
- Involvement with many semi-professional and professional ensembles, opera productions, and chamber music

C: Informal

- Self taught how to play EWI

D: Online

- YouTube policies challenged the way the creator was monetizing content
- Creator would "rip" emulator files and convert them to MIDI and then to scores. If those were not available, the creator would "cheat" and find somebody else's transcription online and hope that it was accurate.
- The creator emulated the visual layouts of other videos they saw on YouTube.

E: Mentoring

- The creator offers scores of arrangements as rewards for patrons
- The creator was able to share mutual interests in VGM with students they taught in classical-based education settings.

Worksheet B. Case Report Notes for Creators' YouTube Channels

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Carlos Eiene – *Insaneintherainmusic*

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Synopsis of Case

Carlos Eiene, the creator of the Insaneintherainmusic YouTube channel, was 19 when we began this study. He creates mostly jazz covers of video game music. His early videos also included some popular music like "Gangum Style." He started playing piano covers and added saxophone, the instrument he has become most famous for, which is also his brand icon. He used online resources to learn more about VGM and obtain notation through MIDIs and notation websites. Eventually, he moved to transcribing his own arrangements, creating lead sheets for himself to play. To create his typical *Undertale* video, he started with a MIDI drum track entered through clicking, rather than playing a drum pad or keyboard. He then recorded the bass line which was played on his keyboard. He was teaching himself how to play bass during the time of this study; he now plays electric and upright bass in his videos two years after the study began. The initial bass track was a place holder that he would rerecord later to capture nuance that emerged in his recording process. He felt recording was fluid and iterative process during which he reacted to other tracks. He then completed recording the rhythm section by adding the piano. Finally, he added the solo instrument, which was usually tenor saxophone.

Eiene's success as a YouTube creator was in part due to *Undertale*. He received comments on his *Undertale* videos years after publishing them. His primary goal for his YouTube channel was to share his love for jazz and video games. He discovered *Undertale* by watching covers of it on YouTube. He modeled his videos after some other creators. He published 12 *Undertale* videos and an album that he also xlive-streamed on YouTube, which is also available for purchase at major distributors. He worked directly with Toby Fox to obtain the rights for his album. He has one *Undertale* collaboration but has many other good VGM collaborative covers. Eiene, even in 2020, is performing music from *Undertale* live at conventions and concerts. Finally, he has one collective that he created that involved about 100 of his fans.

Situational Constraints

Eiene is an exemplar of all the phenomena being studied. He is the creator in this study with the most subscriptions and second most views. He was pursuing music production in college. His story was highly influenced by institutional music education. Additionally, he was approaching YouTube as a professional whose income comes predominantly from music performance. While he is an exemplar of what a privileged and driven student might be able to do, his case may not differ from others who do not have as many resources or as much education.

Uniqueness Among Other Cases

- **Success because of *Undertale*:**
  "Undertale is one of the main reasons that my YouTube channel is as successful as it is. I still get comments nearly every day on my *Undertale* videos from people who are listening and enjoying the music, which always makes me happy! My principal mission with my YouTube channel is to share my love of video games and jazz music, and to prove that video game music is a significant cultural phenomenon that deserves appreciation, so the fact that so many people have been able to listen to my music and enjoy the videos is so wonderful! My subscriber counts skyrocketed when

I started putting out *Undertale* videos, and while I'm not one to dwell on subscriber numbers too much anymore, I'm certainly grateful that so many people were able to discover my channel this way!"

- **Crowdsourcing**:
    - Eiene was the only participant who crowdsourced a video that included about 100 singers.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- **Putting a spin on another cover:**
  "I'd find a track that somebody has done, and I would say, 'What would it sound like if I took this song and arranged it in the style of this track, and added a few other influences from things that I have done? Or maybe arrange it like other tracks that they may have?'"
    - Eiene saw *Undertale* covers by RichaadEB and was inspired to play the game soon after.
- **Using prior knowledge to incorporate into covers** (e.g., adding 'Sing, Sing, Sing' to 'Dapperblook'):
  "Creating a YouTube channel was a way for me to be part of a community of people who had the same love I did! My current goal for this YouTube channel is to share my love of video game music and jazz music with as many people as possible. I strive to grow the community of people who have a strong sense of appreciation for these two styles of art."
- **Fan feedback inspired creation:**
  "I think one of the most rewarding things is reading someone's comment on one of my videos, saying how this piece of music moved them in some way emotionally."
- **Telling story through music:**
    - Participant used special effects (e.g., fire effects in "Another Medium," snow effects in "Snowden Town," gameplay footage in "Heartache") to enhance the story being told, which mimicked experiences during game play

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- **Arrangement process was very similar to jazz performance, using a *Real Book:***
    - Creator typically transcribed melodies by ear from recordings he found on YouTube, and then created a condensed score arrangement to be offered as a download through the YouTube description box.
- **Form**:
    - Traditional jazz form was used, which is characterized by a head, interlude, solo, shout chorus, return to altered head, and conclusion.
- **Improvisation**:
    - Since it necessitated simultaneous video and audio recording, participant usually recorded three to five improvised takes before deciding which one to use.
- **Recording process**:
    - Participant created drum tracks first, rather than last, by using MIDI program and sequencing. Then, he recorded a bass part and piano part.
- **Editing:**
    - Surgical adjustments of MIDI notes were used to ensure quality with few mistakes:

> "It would just be incredibly tedious to fix all the little wrong notes, and it wouldn't be worth the effort to make the end piece sound better."

- **Covers allowed creator to challenge himself musically:**
  "There are several difficult musical passages that I am, admittedly, quite proud of myself for being able to pull off—such as sustained altissimo passages in the saxophone part, and a solo section in 7/4 time."
- **Creator experienced situational limitations while at college** due to lack of space to record, noise restrictions, and time.
- **Creating a purchasable album:**
  - After creating arrangements online, and seeing RichaadEB and Ace Waters release theirs, he was inspired to create an album.
  - Participant rerecorded YouTube arrangements for the album to clean up missed notes, recreate drum tracks to sound less synthesized, and make the saxophone and piano parts sound "tighter."
  - He contacted Toby Fox and asked for permission to do an album, proposed a royalty split (20% to Fox), and Fox asked for a contract. It was very "informal."
  - Participant used Bandcamp, iTunes, and Spotify (via Catapult Distribution) for distribution of album.

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- **Infrequent school music opportunities** (e.g., singing and playing Orff instruments in weekly elementary school music, basic guitar class in high school) were available.
- **There was a lack of VGM in school music:**
  "It would've been inspiring for me at a young age to have been able to play something that I had memories or some sort of familiarity with. Like if, at age 10, someone had written a piano arrangement of the Super Mario Brothers game that was accessible to me on piano at the time, I would have been so happy to play that, because it's just so cool to be able to play stuff from a medium you're so familiar with (like video games)."
- **Drawing inspiration and finding resources through connections and school:**
  - Participant used school computers during middle school.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **General**:
  - Band 5 (college),
  - Jazz band 7 (college).
- **Lessons** include:
  - Piano (ages 12-14),
  - Tenor sax (ages 15-16).
- **Community:**
  - Jazz band (in Seattle area).

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- **Self-taught on multiple instruments**:
  "I am mostly self-taught on piano, and entirely self-taught on bass guitar, as well as the nylon and acoustic guitars. I had a semester of high school classes on it, but they weren't really *lessons* because our instructor was incredibly lax. I'm a good mix between self-taught and professionally

taught on saxophone because I've had a lot of private lessons, but I didn't start out that way. I didn't have a private teacher until after about four years of playing saxophone, so that formative period, at least, was self-taught. Now, I have had lessons ever since."

"Most instruments were ones that I picked up and learned how to play by listening and watching other people play them."

- **Transcription as learning:**
  "The part of my musical development that I attribute most to video game music is probably transcription because transcribing video game songs and learning them for years made me so much better at doing things like transcribing jazz tunes, or jazz solos. Transcribing VGM made me faster, because now I can identify pitches and rhythms as soon as I hear them. Having a YouTube channel, and creating weekly videos, forces you to be consistent and efficient with your time, and the process of creating videos has done so much for me."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- **Participant utilized resources online** (e.g., middle school):
  "I would download MIDI files of video game music, and the school computers had Sibelius, so I could open them and see the sheet music. I thought that was the coolest thing ever and I would print out the sheet music, take it home, and record the parts on my Casio sequencer. Then, I could play the game music back at any point."
    - Participant used computer lab during lunch to find MIDIs and play with MuseScore.
- **Websites** used include:
    - Ninsheetmusic
    - Musescore.

  Editing style was inspired/modeled after other YouTube creators (e.g., drawing from Amie's work):
  "This style appears in some of the earlier *Undertale* videos that have a noticeably skinnier border size separating the clips. I made a bunch of video overlay presets with thicker borders in the style of Kurt Hugo Schneider, and I still use these to this day."
- **Watching online tutorials to learn:**
  "I went to YouTube and watched a bunch of videos of people I liked playing bass, and I just looked at their right hand to see if I could figure out any things that they were doing differently than I did. I don't recall the specific video, but someone mentioned using the meatier part of your fingers as opposed to the tip because, when you get to the tip, your fingernails can get too close to the strings and it creates a twangy sound. The second I heard that, I figured out what he meant by the meaty part of my finger, and it was a huge change from then on."

  "Mixing and recording have definitely been entirely self-taught if the self-taught definition includes YouTube tutorials. I've done a lot of reading on it, analyses of other people's mixes, and watched videos of other people record. I suppose I've picked up what I know by watching other people do it, not necessarily having an instructor tell me how to do it the right way."
- **Reaching out to veteran VGM artists on YouTube:**
  "Sometimes it's easier now to reach out to people I look up to as idols than when I'd just started YouTube. Because of my popularity, I feel more comfortable reaching out to them because I have

some social proof that I am legitimate in some way—that's happened with one of my great friends, Chuck, on YouTube. He's a *Let's Player*. He's been doing YouTube videos for as long as I can remember, probably since YouTube first started."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- Participant created lead sheets and posted them online for others to use.

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Middling

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: High

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: High

Utility for Theme 2D: Very High

Utility for Theme 2E: Middling

Findings

1. Creator used established musical conventions learned in school to apply to arranging covers.
2. Creator used school resources—computer, internet, and downtime at school—to explore VGM.
3. Creator searched for online resources by downloading MIDI and score notation transcription to print sheet music for VGM.
4. Creator directed their learning by using online resources for informal learning and pursued institutionalized learning to supplement self-directed learning.
5. Fan enjoyment was the most gratifying part of creating YouTube videos.
6. Creator's main goal for creating YouTube videos was to share their love of genre and video games.
7. Creator tried to tell a story through music videos.
8. Dorm living caused complications for creator to record.
9. Creating an album allowed creator to take recording to a different level.
10. Creator perceived an absence of VGM in school education.
11. Creator recruited fans to create a crowdsourced collective musical performance.

Samantha Ballard – *Samantha Ballard*

Synopsis of Case

Samantha Ballard, creator of the *SamiaAntha* YouTube channel, was a 24-year-old professional gigging harpist and educator (studio and school) from Canada when we began this study. She had a major in harp performance and had been involved in school music her whole childhood. She created her YouTube channel after watching other harpists covering VGM and wanting to try it herself, thinking she could do it better than some of the other performers she'd already seen on YouTube. Ballard dreamt of being a full-time YouTube creator, but would be happy if her channel produced enough revenue to supply 50% of her income. She finds feedback to be the most enjoyable thing about YouTube, and its biggest chore to be setting up all her equipment to record. Since she plays such a large instrument, setting up to record videos for her channel usually involves moving to a better room for acoustics, and unpacking the necessary

lights, microphone, stands, backdrop, etc. Her university experiences in music theory and technology laid the groundwork for her to create harp arrangements of VGM. This is the first step in creating most of her videos, followed by practicing the piece, which takes longer for one-track videos. She will usually end up tuning and recording multiple takes, some with a click track, before the tedious task of cleaning up. In classes and through friends, she learned to use different video-editing software to compose content for her channel.

Ballard was given *Undertale* as a birthday gift. She liked the music and, after playing, decided to create a five-minute medley of songs for YouTube, recorded in one take as if she were giving a recital. The video was so popular, it nearly doubled her subscriber count. She eventually made three more covers—two multi-tracks and one solo piece.

Situational Constraints

Ballard's case is highly situated in classical music, and she is a good example of a cross-over artist who plays VGM. She is one of the few women in this study, and her instrument's perception feeds into traditional gender stereotypes. Also, she is a professional gigging musician, so this case may not be applicable to leisurely creators as much as other cases may be.

Uniqueness Among Other Cases

- **Success due to *Undertale*:**
  "Traffic from *Undertale* videos more than doubled my views for a few months, and more than doubled my subscriber count in less than a year. After making the medley, I didn't really have plans to come back to *Undertale*, but since so many people had subscribed because of it, I felt I should make a few more videos—the other videos coming out about a year after the medley."

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- **YouTube channel provided a venue for participant to play popular music, like VGM**:

  "If I didn't have my YouTube channel? Oh, my God, I don't actually know what I would play if I didn't have my YouTube channel. I feel like I've always played stuff with an end goal in mind. If I'm not really performing, I guess I would learn more stuff to play at gigs; I don't know. YouTube helps to keep me practicing new material—I'm always cycling through stuff really fast."

- **Variety keeps her going**:

  "I think [becoming an *Undertale*-only YouTube channel] would get really boring for me. I think I'm kind of already bored of *Undertale*, just because it's been so prevalent everywhere. I have other interests: When I first started my YouTube channel, I did a ton of *Zelda* music. Even then, I was like, *I don't want to become a* Zelda-*only music channel*. I feel like my taste in music is pretty eclectic, and I put up what I want. I have a lot of video game stuff, but I will also do anime stuff, or *Game of Thrones*, or write my own music, or put up a classical piece. I want to do what I want to do, and not just *Undertale* always. I feel like it would be limiting."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Participant initially began creating in iMovie, but then moved to Adobe Premiere Elements.
- **One-take videos require more preparation than edited videos**:
  "The ones that are one take, like just only one track, usually take a lot longer to prepare in terms of *actually* playing it because they're usually a lot more difficult. Then if it's a five-minute-long song like the *Undertale* medley, that one took me 15 takes. I had to go to work, and I was like, *I only have time for one more*, and then it was perfect. I was like, *Thank God*, because I didn't have any more time. Whereas, with the multitrack ones, it's a bit easier in terms of actually learning the music. One thing that I only really figured out recently, which is kind of embarrassing, is using a click track while I'm recording multitrack videos. I did a few multitrack videos before the *Undertale* ones and didn't use a click track, and those don't fit together very well. That [click track] really helped a lot for the *Undertale* videos."
- **Studio prep is difficult with a large instrument**:

  "Usually, I'll move my harp to a different place in the room where I feel like the acoustics are a little bit better. If I'm going to set up everything, then I also need to set up a big stand for a backdrop—*if* I'm going to use one. I haven't been in the last few months because it is such a pain, and I also have to fix my black curtain that goes across. If I'm going to do that, getting that set up and looking good will take a while. Then, getting the harp in front of that and the bench and the music stand… I would usually do the audio stuff next—so then there's two mic stands, two mics, all the cords, connecting them to the audio interface, connecting that to the computer, making sure the mics are positioned properly, testing that they're picking up enough sound, and that it's balanced, and all that. Then, I'll set up the rest of the video stuff. I'll set up the tripod with the camera, making sure the frame looks good—there's nothing on the edges showing (if I'm using the backdrop), the harp is in a nice angle, etc. If I need lights, I set the lights up. By then, there's boxes everywhere and I have to climb around everything, *and* I still have to tune, and that takes a good 20 minutes, at least. Then, I haven't had my harps regulated in a while, so they'll usually be out-of-tune anyway. It's a lot of work; it's a lot of stuff to do. It's not like I don't have a lot of space, it's just—if I had a *huge* space, I wouldn't have to worry about bumping into things. It would be more comfortable. Getting everything out of the boxes, and then putting it all away afterwards, is a lot of work. It takes a long time, and if I didn't also work a couple other jobs, I don't think I would mind as much. If I've already been to work that day, or if it's like, *I have to go to work tonight*, it feels like a pain."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- **Educators served as inspiration and encouragement for participant:**
  - "If I hadn't gone to university for music, I probably wouldn't have started YouTube."
  - This sentiment triangulates with her *"I could do it better"* thinking, which arose from watching other harpists' covers on YouTube, motivating her to create her own channel.
- **School provided inspiration and resources**:
  - A music technology course introduced her to Reaper (used via educational license), mic placement, and plugins.
  - Music theory led her to fake books that helped her learn chord structure, on which she based many of her arrangements.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **General**:
  - Band (flute and saxophone, grade 7-12)
  - University music performance.
- **Lessons**:
  - Piano (age 4-17)
  - Saxophone (age 12-13)
  - Harp (age 15-17; university study).

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- **Practicing as learning**:

"In terms of what you have to self-teach, I often say that I'm not actually good at arranging, I just do it a lot. I think most composers feel that way. Someone I talked to when I was at school was like, *It feels very hard for me, too, but I just sit down and do it*, and I've done it a lot of times. The first stuff that I wrote was very bad. I've learned some tricks and gotten a feel for what's going to sound good, and what's going to convey what I want it to convey, and just doing it a lot is something that you have to do."

- **Asking advice from others:**

"I have a friend who works in film, so I asked for recommendations, and he said, 'I use Adobe.' I was like, 'Should I get Final Cut?' Apparently, that's not the thing to do anymore. Also, my Mac is old, so I bought a PC and then downloaded Elements. It was similar enough to other video-editing software programs that I could get the basics, and then figure out what to do."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- **Composition**:
  - Participant uses MuseScore, a free online software, to create her arrangements.

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- Participant **offers sheet music of her harp arrangements to fans**, which can be purchased online (via *SheetMusicPlus.com*).

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Middling

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: High

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Middling

Utility for Theme 2D: Middling

Utility for Theme 2E: Middling

Findings

1. YouTube became a venue for VGM as a non-classical musical artform.

2. *Undertale* was responsible for rapid and significant growth on YouTube.
3. *Undertale* got boring after creating a few covers, and the creator wanted to move to new things fairly quickly.
4. *Undertale* covers were created to appease audience desires.
5. Creator found the process of setting up for recording to be labor intensive with a large instrument.
6. Creator perceived that one-take videos, due to the inability to edit out mistakes later, took more effort than multitrack ones.

Ro Panuganti – *Ro Panuganti*

Synopsis of Case

Ro Panuganti was 24 years old when we started this research study. He performed progressive rock and metal covers of VGM music on YouTube, featuring his guitar and bass playing. YouTube was a hobby of his while he worked for an electric company and majored in computer science in university. He uses YouTube to reflect on his progress as a musician. He uploads videos to show his progress, his current level, and expose others to the music he loves, the instruments he plays, and the games he enjoys. His school music experience was limited; however, he did play guitar his senior year in jazz band. He also took five years of private guitar lessons. He was inspired to cover a song from *Undertale* because he saw RichaadEB's cover. Because it was similar to Earthbound, a game he liked, he wanted to play *Undertale*. He published four *Undertale* covers on his channel and collaborated with Carlos Eiene, which are published on the *Insaneintherainmusic* YouTube channel.

Situational Constraints

Panuganti provides a unique perspective as one who learned most of his skills out of school. At the time of the study, he had only four *Undertale* covers; however, after the initial data collection was done, he has created many more.

Uniqueness Among Other Cases

- **YouTube and VGM led to personal growth** by helping him come out of his shell, and building confidence:

  "Because of my VGM YouTube channel, there's a personality trait about myself that I think changed for the better: I used to be very reserved. I was both cocky and scared back then. I wasn't sure if this was something I'd be good at, but after the first video I was just thinking, 'Okay, I put it out. It's in public. Who would even watch it?' As terrible as those old videos are, I get really nostalgic about that time because it was so simple. We were just making videos—we were just kids back then, you know? Eighteen-year-old kids."

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- **Musically-interesting material motivated participant**:

  "Undertale has very easy-to-learn arrangements with common scales. On electric guitar, I am always able to approach playing the songs from *Undertale*. I also found the songs to be very involved with lots of smaller melodies and fills, which can be difficult to arrange. For my

process, which generally tries to combine the video game music with rock—or even heavy metal—inspirations, it is easier to cover music that isn't already elaborate."

"Eventually I said, 'Forget it—I'm going to make an *Undertale* cover,' after I felt like I didn't want to do it and have people viewing like, *Oh, he's doing it because it's popular*. I wanted to do it because I loved the song."

- **Telling a story was important in arranging covers**:

"'Heartache' is my favorite *Undertale* cover because of its conciseness. The song is about fighting your foster-mother—which creates conflicting emotions in the player—and I tried to transfer a bit of that into my music. The cover is arranged to respect the original and is as long as the average length of the fight in the game. While it feels aggressive, as many progressive-metal songs or battle themes from video games would, I focused on melodic content with a single lead guitar driving the primary melody. Most of the other instruments are darker in tone, and mixed quietly to support the lead. I have a guitar solo towards the middle of the track, heavily reiterating the main motif that Toby Fox uses to represent both Toriel (the foster mother) and King Asgore (her estranged husband), as well as leading into the cleaner, more ethereal, section after. I opted for delay-driven and heavily-reverberated guitars (that represent Toriel's dialogue) to give the listener breathing space—I felt that could be both a metaphor for the moments when Toriel stops the battle to speak with the player calmly, as well as a good songwriting tool to give the listener a break from so many heavy textures."

- **Not wanting to jump on the band wagon:**

"The story of *Undertale* and I influenced the arrangement quite a bit. To begin, I didn't even know what *Undertale* was until I saw RichaadEB, Richaad Bichler, cover the song, and he mentioned *Undertale* was like *Earthbound*, but by then so many people started talking about it, and I wasn't sure what to make of it. I saw a lot of people—who hadn't even played it—start doing the covers because they noticed a few artists were really blowing up as a result. I didn't really buy into it. I wasn't sure what it would be like because people were comparing it to *Earthbound*, which is, arguably, my favorite game of all time. My closest friends were just like, *Play it, don't spoil it. It's a simple short game*. So, in the silence of my dorm room, I went through the game—and I absolutely *loved* every part of the music. The gameplay was simple enough, and I saw that it was really just a love letter to my favorite game. I really appreciated the game—even though I'd avoided discussing it after."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- **Participant used a *Garage Band Approach* to arrange**:

"I will usually do rough recordings similar to the way most rock bands did back when they didn't go to school for music —like how band members barely knew anything about the instruments. I would just 'rough' record section by section, and I would put labels or regions in Reaper (my DAW). I would label section A, and I would write the chord names in (if I needed it). Or, I would write the riff and just record it. The nature of producing a rock versus contemporary track means you'll record every rhythm-guitar track twice—the ones that are on your far left and far right. So, it's almost like you're drilling it into your head once you find something you like. And, if you play it back, you'll know if you've screwed up because it will sound off. It's a beautiful way of practicing your own part. Eventually you go through the song on video, and you'll have to play it again. When I'm filming, I'll listen to the song and relearn anything I forgot. Then, I'll do the

more 'serious' take again. In terms of how to play each lead part—those are intricate, complex things, honestly, and I'm playing by ear, using music theory, to understand what things *should* be like. *Oh, okay, this song's in* D. *How did I start it? Oh, yeah, I did, like, a bend up*—it becomes muscle memory. It's playing by ear but using some 'smarts' about it."

- **Collaboration involved reaction** (e.g., imitating live musicians):

"I'll listen to a rough take and do my thing. One of us will perform first, and we'll just work with it. We will get familiar with the general vibe, listen to it a few times, and then we'll just go. I do a recording in one take. Sometimes I like to close my eyes and envision: *Okay, this is a live performance. You're on a stage, whatever, just really enjoy your own performance.* And then the next guy will add their part on. For 'Asgore,' I think David played first. I noticed: he does a few solo things on the piano; he'll add a little fill here and there. So, I'll play something to compliment that because I remembered what he did from my quick listen. Or I'll hear him play something, and then I'll pick up on it as he keeps going—and those are the kinds of things I really love about live performances that I've kind of picked up from seeing other musicians when they play live. They goof off of each other, and that kind of thing is just really fun and really different, so that's how we try to do it in our videos."

- **Editing:**
    - Participant learned through practice—he started off minimally, using pre-sets, standard software, and hardware. As he progressed, his technology got more sophisticated.
    - Participant used **MIDI drums for arrangements**.
    - Participant used tons of **scene-switching**, rather than PIP/split-screen:

        "I find that picture-in-picture and block grids aren't going to make me focus on one particular thing. I end up looking at the thing as a whole and, to me, that's less action or personal connection—with all due respect to my wonderful friends who do those things. I think some pull it off, but there is a method to that madness."

        "'Heartache' is an upbeat song, so all of the upbeat sections switch between the multiple-lead parts. I'm changing the angles, because your eyes are always being surprised by something that way. You're not getting bored by the audio or the video, but I want to make sure you're engaged. Bass guitar's probably the most boring thing to watch for a lot of people because it's not obvious when listening, and if people are listening on their laptops, they may not have speakers to hear it. I always try to emphasize the spots where I know there's a bass solo, or when there's nothing critical going on. Then, maybe I can move around more when I play and shoot the bass—so it feels more entertaining. Sometimes, I try to script my movement when I'm filming, just to compensate for the less-complex sections, so that it's something fun to watch. Once in a while, I'll try picture-in-picture, if I want to emphasize something that exists in the mix that may not be obvious without me showing it. That way, I can get the viewer to focus on something. But, when you have all those boxes, it just doesn't quite engage me the same way as one scene onscreen."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School
- **General**:
    - Basic elementary school music
    - Concert band (trumpet; grade 6)

o   Jazz band (guitar; grade 12).

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **Lessons**:
  - o   Guitar (grade 8-12)
  - o   Piano (4 years in childhood).
- **Lessons provided a base knowledge of music theory**, scales, chords, styles of rock, improvisation, soloing techniques, and how to play in a group.
  - o   Without them, he could not have applied those skills to his soloistic ensembles, and VGM.

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- **Learning was a lonely pursuit:**

  "There was no real musical outlet in middle school or high school for me, [as someone] who didn't have any family members who played any instruments, let alone rock instruments. A lot of kids are able to form bands because their dad or mom used to play in a band; it was not like that for me. But eventually, I think after I stopped schooling, I taught myself, and from then on, I would hear someone I like, study how they play, why they chose to play things a certain way, and then incorporate what I liked into my playing. My senior or junior year, I started fiddling around with recording and VGM, and I did a few covers. I saw my interest in VGM was growing, but I didn't process that love until I graduated high school and quit taking lessons. When I took lessons, it was always non-game music. I would do things from the rock and jazz and blues worlds. So, it wasn't like I was going to my teacher and saying, 'Hey, can we learn how to play Zelda?' or anything like that. In its own beautiful way, I don't think I necessitated that, because I think my own personal taste was always geared toward learning how something was written, and accidentally, or naturally, finding little ways to make it my own."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- **Consuming media:**
  - o   Participant listened to a lot of other peoples' covers of *Undertale,* eventually memorizing the music, and then played it by memory on guitar while he was practicing and trying to figure out what to record next.
  - o   Listening to others made him question if doing something a particular way was the easiest or best-sounding way.
- **Watching YouTube videos inspired new ways for him to try things:**
  - o   He modeled his video-editing style after YouTube videos he had seen (e.g., Family Jules); he'd then ask the creator a simple question, like, *Oh, my Gosh. How'd you do that? How'd you get that guitar tone? How'd you record this and that?*
- **Asking others:**
  - o   Participant interacted with multiple musicians on YouTube (comments), Twitch, Vokle, etc:

    "If I wanted to tweet at a movie star or something, it's not like someone's going to stop me. I just have to type it out; they don't have to respond, but it's become status quo that they might). And the same thing goes with the music community: there are people with huge channels who started out very small, like myself. There's transparency and (online) proximity that make talking to people easy and make it so that if I want to message

> someone, it's going to happen, and vice versa. And I think that's a really nice thing! There isn't this *veil*."

- o   Participant would sit with his friend on Skype to ask questions, show each other their processes, and play music for each other.
- Participant **watched a series of tutorials to learn** about guitar recording (by a VGM artist, none-the-less).

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Very High

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: Low

Utility for Theme 2B: Middling

Utility for Theme 2C: Middling

Utility for Theme 2D: Very High

Utility for Theme 2E: None

Findings

1. Creator began with very simple editing techniques that became more sophisticated as skills grew.
2. Creator's online, informal music-learning consisted of listening/watching, mimicking, asking questions, and interacting with veterans.
3. Lessons provided the creator with basic knowledge of genre idiosyncrasies that were applied to VGM.
4. Initial hesitation to jump on the bandwagon gave way once creator spent time getting to know music.
5. Creator's arrangement process resembled other musical situations, like learning music for a garage band.
6. Collaboration allowed the creator to play off their collaborator's ideas.
7. Visual cues allowed the creator to focus the audience's attention.
8. Applying genre-specific conventions allowed the creator to tell the story of the video game in a new way.

Doug Perry – *Dougdrumultimaperry*

Synopsis of Case

Doug Perry was 30-year-old professional percussionist when we started this study. He conceived of his YouTube channel as having two categories: percussion repertoire and video game music. He had seven *Undertale* covers and two vlogs explaining how meaningful a piece from the game was to him. Perry had recorded as a percussionist on multiple commercial video game soundtracks, and as a child of music teachers, he liked to play with instruments from winds, percussion, electronic, and even toys. While one of the less-viewed creators, his videos are some of the most musically complex in this study, including large multitracked ensembles, parodies, improvisations, and arranged variations on a theme.

Perry collaborated a lot with others in the VGM community and was the producer of *Fallen: A Tribute to Undertale*, a 5-month long recording project sponsored by Materia Collective that published 97 tracks of musicians from across the globe. Perry's "Undertale Variations" has been used by marimba students for solo ensemble contest. He used humor as well to produce covers that he found fun to make and listen to. Finally, his "Hopes and Dreams" rock arrangement, which took him over two years to create, included lyrics he created telling the story of Asriel, a tragic yet hopeful character in the game. His follow up vlog discusses how the catharsis that came with the creation of the video was impactful in his life as he remembered his friend, who years prior had committed suicide.

Situational Constraints

Perry is one of the older participants, and therefore, his education was very different. He is also a recording studio musician, so he has a professional career in VGM; however, his YouTube channel is less popular than one might think, and that presents an odd dichotomy in his popularity and reach versus his skill and quality of products. Perry approached the research as very professional, which means he might have been on "good behavior" as a musical professional who is my colleague. In the last two years, I have seen him let his hair down around me as I became an insider of the VGM community.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

- **Success because of *Undertale*:**

  "That being said, *Undertale* did leave such a massive mark on me that I think I have more Undertale representation on my channel than any other game! The *Undertale* videos tend to be my more popular videos as well, though that isn't necessarily a motivating factor in my making of them."

- **Connection to composer:**

  "When I complimented him on his impressive motivic continuity in the game, how consistent he was with his motifs, his answer to that was literally: It's easier when you don't have to write a new melody. He's considered himself being lazy, but I think a lot of his musical success in *Undertale* was really just driven by him wanting to make a game that he liked and could really get behind, one that lived up to his beliefs and his aspirations and his desires as a gamer. I think the music is as good as it is because he just worked really hard at it to make sure it would sound like something that felt like the games he grew up playing and loving, which is why the language is what it is. I mean, you also notice that the sound design in the game is very simple. The samples are actually pretty low quality, but they're mixed incredibly well because he was going for an aesthetic that was a combination of all the different games that he had played."

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration
- There's a desire to be connected to the music in some way emotionally before trying to cover it.
- **Music was an integral part of the gaming experience:**
  - Upon first listening to the soundtrack, Perry was so excited about the music that he stopped listening, and decided to play the game, because he didn't want to ruin his gameplay experience.
  - Perry discovered *Undertale* on Reddit and noticed Fox's name. He turned to Facebook to see why the name looked familiar. He realized that he had roomed with Fox at MAGFest

previously because the two had a mutual friend. After playing the game, he fell in love with the story and music, and it became a game obsession of his—in which he published seven covers on his channel, played on countless other collaborations across YouTube, and spent almost a year to produce a 97-track album as a tribute to the game.

- **Branding complications:**

"I will run into trouble just by the fact that half of my channel is video game music and half of my channel is contemporary classical percussion repertoire, you know? That's always gonna be something that creates a problem in my brand but is also simultaneously *part* of my brand. I didn't really learn anything that would have caused me to anticipate that when I was in school; that would have been nice."

- **Affinity group:**

"I really love doing the video game music stuff because I feel like I can reach out to that audience I relate to so much and feel like such a part of, and I'm finding new ways that balance VGM and classical."

- **Using VGM to practice:**

"I realized the reason that VGM was beneficial was because these kids love the game so much. It's just like wanting to learn how to play songs by your favorite band. If they have the opportunity to play music from this game on their instrument, for a young high-schooler or college percussionist to say, 'Oh, I have the chance to play music from my favorite game on my instrument,'—they're gonna go for it. If they want to be able to do that, they have to tackle the technical challenges that my arrangement poses, which means that they will have a whole new sense of inspiration, and sense of urgency or necessity, to actually work on their technique."

- **Story:**
  - Perry tried to create theatrical direction in his videos by embodying emotions while playing his instruments.
- *If You Can't Perform, Create*:

"I tell other students or like other young professionals pretty often: When you don't have a gig, try making something. A lot of my first YouTube video work was when I didn't have anything else going on, but I wanted to be active—I wanted to be working towards something. I would make an arrangement and turn it into a video so that I could have something to show for my time. I think, once again, using YouTube and making video game arrangements is definitely a part of how I feel I'm fulfilling my duties as a performer. . . If you don't have work, or you're not being offered work, that's the time for you to invest energy into creating work for yourself—whether that means that's where you're going to start cold-emailing people or cold-calling people, or if that's the time that you're going to look up a bunch of audition lists, or whatever. For me, that's the time when, *Okay, I can't do anything right now. So, I'm going to make something and put it out there, and maybe that will turn into another opportunity for me*. I ran out of money around the time that I was working on that. It was the sort of thing where I had a very big gig that was going to pay me really well, but it was a huge time commitment, and I had to wait for a while before I got paid for it. So, there's just a point in time where I just kind of ran out of money because I was waiting to get paid for this thing that kept me from doing anything else, and so I thought, *Okay, well, I'm going to make something because I'm not working right now, and I have time to do it. And what I should not do during this time is nothing, because—if I do nothing—I will sit around*

and have no money. If I do something, I will have created something and still have no money. And I think with the 'Waterfall' video, too, one thing that I was thinking of is, probably in the back of my mind was … *This will be an arrangement that I include on an album that I could release at some point*, which would then be, potentially, a source of income."

- **Participant is at odds with financially-beneficial musicmaking:**

"I guess, when push comes to shove, not all rewards are musically-gratifying. Sometimes it's just: I need to get paid. A lot of what I'm finding my career is, right now, is navigating through the different things that I do and trying to find a way to find the right balance between work that is work, and brings me the financial stability that I need, but is also as musically and personally rewarding as it can be for me."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices
- Participant created improvisations, themes and variations, parodies, silly songs, and other straight-forward arrangements.
    - **Improvisation:**

        "'Undertale Variations,' which is a fully written out marimba solo, most of it was at the marimba. In that sense there was improvisation because I went through my ideas by improvising on the theme in different ways, and then I would pick something that I like and solidify what notes specifically I was going to use. When it came to actually writing that down and getting sheet music out for it, there were a couple moments where I had to really listen to it and say, 'Okay, did I definitely intend to play these notes every time?' I think I played it over and over again. Every once in a while I would record stuff, or I would jot down some notes into Finale or onto staff paper—something like that."

        "Improvisation plays a huge part in my arrangements. All of my *Undertale* videos so far definitely involve quite a bit of improvisation—for better or for worse. My musical background is pretty heavy in improv. I started as a jazz player and didn't actually get into classical music until after I had already been playing a lot of jazz. The most, obviously, improvisation in my *Undertale* videos would be 'Jazzgore', where I think that started as just a piano track. I just recorded piano, freeform improv. I might not have even had a click going when I did that. That was completely improvised based on the tune."

- Participant used humor to play with audiences and music, as well as challenge his own musical ability (on 4/1/16&17):

    "As much as I like playing percussion instruments, it's not terribly lucrative and, as most of my friends know, I make the bulk of my income as a wind-doubler. So, I figured, to celebrate the beginning of April, I would share that skill with you! This is a tune that's been stuck in my head from a very old game that isn't terribly popular—enjoy!"

    "I've been a huge fan of Jeremiah George's arrangement of ASGORE for a long time, but there's been one problem with it that I (and many astute YouTube Commenters) have noticed—it was sung by a female singer! Surely, this makes no sense—Asgore is clearly the exemplary example of masculinity in modern video games today. It makes no sense for this to be sung by a female voice! Thankfully, I was able to step up to the plate and provide the proper, male interpretation that this arrangement has needed. I hope you enjoy ASGORE!"

- **Balance with professional activities:**

- o The biggest challenge about recording VGM for YouTube was to find time to do so, as it was not as financially beneficial as other professional playing.
- **Visuals direct the audience's attention**:

  "I show when things are exciting, or if I want what's happening visually to follow with what's happening musically. If it's only two or three panels, then all things onscreen are things that I think are important right now. It might be time for a little more activity on the screen at that moment. When I have ten panels visible, I think I mostly reserve those moments for when the chorus comes in for the first time, or a big moment in the piece—when the energy is needed. There's something going on musically that I also want to reflect visually, and my visual materials are just videos of me playing, so I think about how I can manipulate those into something that is congruous with what you're listening to."

- Participant applied musical conventions he liked from other genres to his creation (Jpop and jazz).

Prominence of Theme 2A: School
- Participant started in jazz music, then got into classical.
- Participant has multiple degrees from prominent universities in music performance, including an artist diploma from Yale.
- Participant was involved in many ensembles in high school and community.
- Music technology courses:
    - o He desired to learn more about production, and had some opportunities—e.g., a computer music class that focused on musique concrete and application of technologies for electronic instrument—but was disappointed in general because he wanted more.
    - o Participant began teaching courses at the college he worked at to give "direct hands-on experience recording and working with software."
- Participant desired to learn more about marketing, production, and branding in school.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal
- **Lessons**:
    - o (private) percussion and piano

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal
- **Listening to the soundtrack:**

  "I might have figured out how to play it that same night. I mean, Toby's music is pretty simple—it's mostly pretty diatonic. Harmony isn't terribly adventurous, and it all fits within the sort of JRPG, J-pop-infused style of video game music that is very common in games like *Final Fantasy* or *Earthbound* or *Chronotrigger*. He was working in a language that was already very familiar to me. I probably actually started 'transcribing' it at that evening as well; however, I had listened to it about a billion times before doing that. I mean, like, over and over and over again, obsessively. I still do."

- **Exploration as a child led to learning and curiosity:**

  "My dad was an elementary school band director. Growing up, I had access to the instruments that you would take home from school over the summer, and I would mess around on them. I never learned any of them—I don't have any sort of technical proficiency on them that I would

feel would qualify me to *actually* use them in a significant manner. Occasionally, I'd have the chance to figure out how to make a sound on something."

- Participant had a cousin who was a video professional and asked them for **feedback and ideas**.

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- Listening to other YouTube covers inspired Perry to try different things.
- **Asking others online was part of learning:**
  - After listening to other covers, Perry would notice if he liked the sound of a player, and he'd reach out to see how it was recorded.

    "I sent him a message on Facebook, and I was like, *Hey dude, this sounds really awesome, I really like the way the vibes sound. What did you do?* And he was like, *Oh, I just put this and this and this on it*, and he sent me a screenshot. I was like, *Oh, cool. Thanks*. I mean, I don't have all the same plugins that he does, but—like I see he cut a very specific frequency band in the vibes, and then *boosted* a very specific band and I was like, *Oh. Okay. I see why he did that*. So, I just do *that* in my recordings. He also had some other plugin that I don't have, so I don't worry about that too much, you know? And I just kind of make do with what I have."

  - Advice from online connections **spilled over to professional studio work:**

    "A good example of that is when I was recording for Civilization VI: I sent a recording to Geoff Knorr, and he said, 'Hey, sounds good. Just could you send me a picture of the way the mics are set up?' I did that, and he said, 'Do you mind trying to record it again but setting them up this way? Because your recording doesn't have a very full—or the middle octave of the marimba doesn't *sound* as full as the rest of it,' and he sent me a picture and I said, 'Oh okay.' So I reconfigure the mics the way he showed me, and he said, 'Yeah, I see that. I think that sounds a lot better. Do you notice that?" I was listening, and I was like, *Yeah, actually, you're right, I do*. So every once in a while, I'll have an experience like that—that teaches me a little more about how to record everything. But I guess you could say that my education is very much experience-oriented and was sought out on my own. I had to ask people, and I had to research all of the things I used when making and producing a remix, and what they did. And inadvertently, I learned how to be a producer."

- Participant used tutorials on YouTube if he didn't know how to do something.
- **Experimentation with technology techniques were explored through forums like OCR:**

  "So, OverClocked ReMix is where I first started learning this stuff, and that was simply because I stumbled on their website when I was in high school. I went, *Wow, this website is all about music and video games. My two favorite things*. So, I became a part of the community. I was listening to a lot of the remixes posted on the site, I was digesting a lot of material, and I had dreams of being able to do it myself someday, which started with simple mini realizations, done in a finale of things, that I would like to hear. And it had always been kind of a pipe dream until after my first year of college, where I decided, *I really want to try to make one of these*. And the technology that I had available to me was pretty limited, but by this point I had started to make friends, and they were able to start to guide me towards the materials and resources that I'd need. A lot of my education early on was just seeking out people who I knew had a greater skillset than I did, and that I knew, who understood more about this than I did, and then asking them for help."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- **Published arrangements were made to be used by others:**

  "I think '*Undertale* Variations' may represent more of what I want to be doing with video game music, and is the first major step towards using game music in a way that could benefit and inspire young percussionists."

- VGM on YouTube brought at least one student to study with Perry at WestConn.
- Creator **facilitated collaboration as producer and musician** through spearheading a collaborative *Undertale* **tribute album** called FALLEN, with Materia collective:

  "After making my admiration of the game known to the community within Materia Collective, Sebastian reached out to me, asking how I would feel about directing a project like that. Normally, I would consider myself too busy to be able to extend that much of my time to something as big as that, but *Undertale* was an important enough experience to me that I decided it would be worth it to take the chance and lead that project."

  "The summer I was working on *Fallen*, I was performing with Video Games Live at a concert in Long Island. Triforce Quartet was also playing this concert and had remarked to me that they had just recorded their track for the album, the arrangement for which I hadn't heard. Between the dress rehearsal and the concert, they set up in the hallway backstage, and gave me a live performance of their arrangement of "Undertale." That moment was a very emotional one for me—it really made me realize how real this project was, and how special it is to have other musicians working hard towards a common goal."

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: High

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Middling

Utility for Theme 2D: High

Utility for Theme 2E: Very high

Findings

1. Creator desired to be emotionally connected to the music before covering it.
2. Video Game Music became a passion project that allowed creator to produce leisurely when unable to have more financially productive activities.
3. After discovering an online VGM community, the creator realized that he could also make VGM, and used that community to learn.
4. School music provided the creator opportunities to use technology, but not always the most useful to produce online music.
5. The creator desired to connect his love of video games with his love of classical and jazz music, exposing audiences of both to each other.
6. The creator used improvisation while recording; sometimes recorded improvisations were learned and then notated as an approach to arranging.
7. The creator used visual layouts to direct audience attention.

8. The creator listened to the soundtrack, tried to play it by ear, and then transcribed it.
9. Online forums and direct messages allowed the creator to learn and get feedback from more experienced creators.
10. Online collectives helped the creator facilitate music making for others.

TeraCMusic

Synopsis of Case

TeraCMusic was the YouTube channel of a 25-year-old musician whose job was teaching English language in South Korea. TeraCMusic featured violin, vocals, guitar, and piano in two solo multitrack *Undertale* covers. She also featured two *Undertale* collaborations on her channel, one with Amie Waters and another with String Player Gamer. YouTube became an archive in which she could track her progress as a musician after graduating high school because she was not planning on pursuing music while in college. The rationale for creating YouTube videos changed to showcase her abilities for others and make a difference in others' lives. She aspires to compose and record music for video games.

Situational Constraints

TeraCMusic only had only four *Undertale* covers on her channel, however, she had multiple collaborations with other participants.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

- Participant balanced between **collaborations and solo endeavors**.
- Production **skills were better off learned on one's own**, rather than in school.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration
- **YouTube served as way to keep up with music-making after high school**:

  "Honestly, I wanted to be able to practice, and give myself a reason to practice, because at that time I was a senior in high school, and I wasn't planning to go on to a music school. I was planning to go to a community college and then complete prerequisites needed for pharmacy school, so I was under the impression that I was not going to do music as a career. I wanted some kind of incentive to keep practicing and playing music, and just to, I guess, stay aware with everything that needs to happen when you're playing violin."

- **Staying up to date drives creation:**

  "As a YouTube musician, it is important to stay up to date on the latest video game releases, in case the soundtrack is worth covering. Making covers in a timely manner to a new release is critical to gaining traction for your channel and building your fanbase. I heard about *Undertale* from some other music friends that recommended the OST. I actually covered 'Undertale' (with Amie Waters) before I played the game. I could hear the emotion in the track without knowing the in-game context. The rest of my covers were done after playing *Undertale*."

- **Fan feedback serves as motivation:**

  "The kinds of comments that I get on the covers sometimes—emails, private messages from people on Facebook or Twitter, or on YouTube as well— are mainly people just saying how my

music had helped them through, like, *a bad day*. I've had people comment on the death of their loved one, and how this track reminded them of that person, and how beautiful and nice it was to have that kind of shared moment, I guess. Other people just say, 'Oh, I had such a bad day, but this cover just really brightened my spirits,' 'You did such a good job with it!'—those kinds of things. Just knowing that I made someone happier or have moved someone in some kind of way, having the ability to, I guess, give the viewers a chance to experience the same kind of emotions that I felt when I heard the original—I think that's a kind of skill in itself."

- **Contexts and choices are important to musical meaning:**

"It's always a good idea to have some kind of knowledge where that music, or where that track, was being played in the context of the game, because you're able to infuse things from the plot into the actual song or track. By playing *Undertale*, I was able to actually understand the entire story and all the events that happened, and the choices that I made as an individual in the game, so all of those things come into play when it comes to making a cover, and I feel like that makes my covers more meaningful to me. I think it also comes across as more meaningful to the people who are watching."

"In terms of the music, before and after playing the game, I felt happiness. I felt some tension for some tracks, anger for some other ones, fear, and sadness, and some things were very upbeat, so it made me feel pumped—like 'Megalovania' and 'Spider Dance'. Some of the boss battle themes were really uplifting in a way, where you felt like you had to *get this done*—motivational, I guess."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices
- Participant created a mash-up of "Memory of Hikari" from *Kingdom Hearts* and "Memory" from *Undertale*.
- The editing process was the least enjoyable part about creating videos for YouTube, as it can sometimes take up to 50 hours for a single video.
- **Collaboration functions as peer pressure.**
    - Collaboration gives her access to instruments and ideas that she doesn't normally have, however, the timelines of others are often demanding, and hard to keep up with:

        "Making collaborations on time is peer pressure. Like, when I say that Ace gave me three days—there was a lot of pressure to make sure that it sounded good and that it was finished on time. I think I was creeping to the deadline, but we were able to get it to happen. That was, I guess, bad, but also good peer pressure because it pushed me to make sure that I got it done on time. Working with more popular musicians—that kind of pressure—makes you want to re-record until everything is perfect, especially me, as a perfectionist. If it's slightly out of tune, I have to scrap it and re-record some of my collaborations, and even my covers, but definitely my collaborations. If it's with someone who's got a lot more of a following, I'm much more attentive to little intonation issues— so sometimes my recordings can go into the hundreds (like *400-500* takes). That's just how it ends up being for me. I guess that's kind of a bad thing, but it's also because I want to make sure that they have the utmost quality product that they can mix, and make sure that the actual cover itself is of optimal quality."

    - *Undertale* **collaboration:**

"When I get the backtracks and the rough drafts of the arrangement from my collaborators, I'll listen to it, and I imagine things in my head. Some melodies just pop up in my head. Both the collaborators gave me some direction and some things they wanted me to test out, so it wasn't all in my creativity, but I feel like I was able to easily inject my own personality and my own style into the collaborations. I felt like they set me up perfectly to experiment a little with my creativity. I just think the *Undertale* tracks in general are able to do that throughout that whole process. For the 'Undertale' actual collaboration, I got direction to do pizzicato in certain timestamps and to do an improv section he gave me. He said, 'Okay, improv from this timestamp to this timestamp, and then you can do whatever you want for this timestamp, but I'd like to hear pizzicato for this part.' He gave me some guidelines and some things he wanted and some things where he said, 'You can just do whatever you want, whatever seems cool to you.' That was one."

- **Layering harmonies by ear:**
  - Participant creates her covers by ear and does not make notation, even as a classically-trained violinist.

    "The harmony: I believe I played around with how it sounded by ear, and then, if it sounded good, I'd record it just as a standalone thing. *Maybe this might be a good harmony*. Then, if I figured that harmony would work well, I'd try to record the third harmony. I'm pretty sure there were two harmonies accompanying the melody towards the end. Basically, I just listen to the melody a lot, try to think of a good harmony by ear, and then sometimes I'll notate it in MIDI, but most of the time it's just me playing around with the harmony to see what sounds good when it's actually produced by my mouth."

- **YouTube allowed for stylistic exploration:**

  "Usually, I would stick to one style or the other—so I'd just do choral videos, choral covers, orchestral covers, or violin covers. The third style was electronic, which I had told him that I've been trying to branch out into and just experiment with, just a little, to give my covers a bit more of an edge and something to separate them from other covers. The three styles I believe he's talking about are choral, orchestral, and electronic. I'm pushing myself in a different direction now, making more risky decisions in terms of the arranging process and trying to inject more creativity, and going even further outside of the box than I normally would."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- Experience includes a **degree in Music Therapy**:

  "All the courses that I took—on music theory, music history, the aural skills, piano class, guitar techniques—have also helped me improve and have guided me to create what I've been creating recently."

  "Being able to retrain my piano-playing in college was a really good confidence booster for me, and I think that helped me feel okay with incorporating piano in my covers."

- Participant took a course on composition and arranging, and was **able to create a VGM arrangement for class:**

"We had to compose or arrange two pieces: One piece was for symphony orchestra, and the other piece was for pep band or wind ensemble. For the symphony orchestra, I presented an original piece. Before pep band, I actually did an arrangement of Asgore's theme, so she helped me a little bit with that, and I also got help from my composition professor or orchestration professor. She did help me, but most of our lessons were catered towards the original piece that I was trying to compose, so just a little bit of VGM in the lessons. In the orchestration class, it's required for you to compose it and have it printed on very professional, long score paper. We did actually get to sit down and listen to our pieces being played by the Nazareth College orchestra and pep band. I got some written feedback on both of the pieces. For Asgore's theme, a lot of the comments were about how much they liked the syncopated rhythm. That was nice to hear. I know a few people did know the piece already before playing it. Some people were *Undertale* fans, so that was also something that probably helped them be excited about playing it. I think I have recordings of both somewhere (both the original piece, and Asgore's theme) being played."

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal
Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- **Progression of informal learning and performance styles:**

  "Lots of trial and error over the years. I started my YouTube channel in November of 2009, so it's been eight years. I started my YouTube just recording my electric violin over the original track, and that slowly developed. I wanted to challenge myself more, so I started making backtracks, but then I had to know how to mix them, so it took a lot of time to figure out what sounds good, what doesn't sound good, how to optimize my violin sound and my vocals. It was basically me just teaching myself, figuring out what works and what doesn't over the years."

- **Consumption of music during game play:**

  "I'll start from when I first heard it in-game, because I think I might have listened to it before I played the game, but it maybe didn't stick out to me as much. Definitely when I played the game—because in order to hear this track you have to put an umbrella over the statue, and so, as soon as you do that, it's not raining on the statue anymore and you hear 'Memory.' I heard that for the first time and I immediately just stood there for 10 minutes listening to it, because I was like, *Ooh, what is this? Ooh, I like this!* Also, when I was listening to it, it reminded me a lot of Kingdom Hearts's 'Hikari.' I was hearing the 'Hikari' melody in my head while 'Memory' was playing in the game, so I was like, *This is very interesting.* I think I told one of my friends, who's a huge Kingdom Hearts fan, how similar 'Memory' is to 'Hikari' and he said, 'I don't really see it, I don't know what you're talking about, it's different. They're very different.' I'm like, *Mm, I'm not so sure. I feel like I could do a mash up of the two*, and I started the process."

- **Participant learned technology through experimentation and practice, which led to what she called *breakthroughs*:**
  - The timbre and blend of a violin-only cover necessitated the addition of other instruments because of the treble frequencies and *compression*—in that certain pitches would be louder than others when recording violin. She often turned to voice, synthesized strings, or piano.

    "I was still struggling with the whole 'bare arrangement' and the lack of the lower end, so I didn't want to rely on the piano for it, but it just ended up happening. For my more recent covers, I've been using the piano to fill out that lower end that was missing for so

long, and I can already tell that my covers sound that much more complete, and full. The percussion—usually I try to recreate percussion that's already in the original for the cover. Sometimes I'll just add some snaps and claps or whatever—to make it sound a little bit more driving, I guess."

- **Participant believes schools have limits in teaching production**:

"I self-teach myself what I do… I mean I feel like for YouTube, for the kind of videos that I make, there's only so much that can be taught professionally or in an institution. I think most of what I do for my VGM covers would have been better off anyways with me just learning it myself."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- Participant would acquire **MIDI files, adjust them for her arrangement, and play or sing along** with them on violin:

"Usually, I arrange the MIDI first. I do have an old project of 'Memory of Hikari' and it's unfinished, but I did have piano MIDI of what I ended up playing on the violin. I usually do that to arrange, just using MIDI, and play along to it on the violin or with my voice, depending on what instrument I'm going to use. MIDI first, then I record. There's really no specific instrument or part that I record first. Typically, it will be the lower end. That's basically all I did. As I was arranging and recording, I was thinking of what comes next. I would stop recording, and then arrange a little bit more with the MIDI, and then continue recording. My process of actually making a cover is not super streamlined. It's kind of all over the place, but I feel like having those sudden inspirations like, *Ooh, I just thought of something, I'm going to add that in*—that kind of spontaneity—is a lot better than trying to plan everything out at once. That's basically how it came about: I decided to add in vocals and then the snaps and claps and a little bit of electronic synth to it. Then, the guitar at the end—I think I was just playing around with that track and it sounded good, so I decided to just stick it into the end."

- Participant went back and forth with other cover artists**, sending drafts to get feedback and ideas** for arrangements, mixes, and other ideas.
- **YouTube archived growth:**

"I guess in terms of things that I wanted to track progress-wise, I wanted to be able to improve creativity and also improve my intonation, because I can tell a difference when I look back at a cover from 2009, 2010-era to now, or even 2014. The quality has improved dramatically, and my intonation has also improved a lot, so I know that the progress is there and that I can always improve more."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring
Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Middling

Utility for Theme 1B: Middling

Utility for Theme 2A: High

Utility for Theme 2B: None

Utility for Theme 2C: High

Utility for Theme 2D: High

Utility for Theme 2E: None

Findings

1. The context and choices of the video game experience made the created music meaningful to the creator.
2. The creator learned technological skills by experimenting and practicing, which led to "breakthroughs" in her creative process.
3. The creator found collaborations highly fulfilling, but also experienced peer pressure while participating in collaborations.
4. YouTube was a way for the creator to keep up with music making after high school.
5. YouTube videos served to archive the creator's growth.
6. Music courses taken by the creator laid a foundation for musical creation that was leveraged for creating YouTube videos.
7. Creator believed that production skills are better off learned on one's own, rather than in a class.
8. Creator had an opportunity to pursue VGM in arrangement and composition courses.
9. YouTube channel documented informal music learning techniques.

Thomas – *Sky Tenkitsune*

Synopsis of Case

Thomas created the Sky Tenkitsune YouTube channel and was 20 years old when we started the study. Thomas was from Hanoi, Vietnam and used they/them/their pronouns. Initially, they created a YouTube channel as a Grade 3 student to listen to music; more recently, they created a new channel to share "my music and my vibes." His channel featured both original and cover videos that featured still images that were drawn by fans, and sometimes, sound visualizations were incorporated into the videos in the form of equalization bars and moving images. His channel had four *Undertale* covers—three with only *Undertale* music and one that mashed up a cover with original work—and his music was also republished by GameChops, a VGM/EDM community that featured artists to get their names out.

Situational Constraints

Uniqueness among Other Cases

- Thomas is a good example of an artist who is from a country less represented in my population (Asia), had no music in school, and uses they pronouns.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- Participant desires to make music that people like, but ultimately wants to make music that they enjoy and have fun creating.

- Participant did not initially like *Undertale* when their friends showed them the game; however, they eventually downloaded it and "went mad!" when they started getting into the story, saying the vibe of the music in the game "sucked [them] in."
- YouTube is an afterthought for Thomas because they focus on audio-only platforms, which is why **videos are minimalistic**:
  - Videos featured still images that were drawn by fans, and sometimes sound visualizations were incorporated into the videos in the form of equalization bars and moving images.
- **The "voices" of the characters provided atmosphere for remixes:**

  "The voices of the characters gave me the atmosphere for the remix. At first, actually, I wanted to make it be percussion for the remix, but it started sounding like a very good atmosphere for it. I was intending to cut it off entirely because I was just testing, but it fit so well into the song that I decided to keep it, and it just became one of the good aspects of the remix (as everyone tells me)."

- **VGM kickstarted EGM (electronic game music):**

  "Because the video game music industry for so long had a lot of composers who were improving the entire electronic music genre, they just kick-start everything that we never really listen to—any commercial music on iTunes, on CD, physical CD release or anything like that. It's really, really cool to see artists who have the influence on the music in video games because video games are what we're growing up on since childhood, and all the melody, all the games we play—it's just stuck in our head. All we need to do is just expand the idea of the melody—of everything you listen to—on your mind, and that's what the electronic music nowadays sounds like."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Participant worked on projects with heavy intensity, dedicating approximately three days on each project, which would consume most of their waking hours.
- Combining original melodies with VGM music helped to create mashups and remixes, which he would spin live as a DJ.
  - Publishing multiple versions of songs with little tweaks was to share new ideas and create fresh experiences for audiences—which parallels live DJ-mixing, as no one show is quite the same—even though recordings are thought of as static.

    "'Hopes and Dreams and a Cup of Latte' is a super long name, and I was intending to do that. I was having a day, having some fun with my latte stand, which I'd just published on my YouTube for people to remix, and I put it with the 'Hopes and Dreams' melody and it just went pretty well. And then I was like, *I should do another remake of* Undertale*,'* and I just made it and put it on my SoundCloud and it just became another *Undertale* remix that went popular on YouTube and SoundCloud. That song itself was made in one day—actually, not one day, because I was working on the melody, and then I had met one of my friends who'd just given me an entirely new computer on that day. I brought the new computer home, and I'm starting to turn on my studio and stuff and put the hard drive into my new computer to work, and that takes half of the day. And so basically, it's gonna be like I made the entire composition in one third of the day, and I brought it to SoundCloud. I wrote all the melody and the compression from top to bottom, without using any of Latte's stems on the melodies and the chord compression. The 'Hope and Dream and a Cup of Latte' was because I was listening by ear and tried to synchronize

between 'Latte' and the 'Hope and Dream' melodies, and that was what became the fundamentals of the 'Hope and Dream' remix—which it's really, really weird and amazing at the same time because I was just playing around with that, and it just became a remix in one day."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- Participant worked on the audio team in secondary and high school, which then became a hobby; eventually, they became a professional DJ, hosting shows in Hanoi, Vietnam.
- While in school, there was no time to DJ, so graduation opened an opportunity to focus on art, as music was not a priority in his education
- Majoring in art with a concentration in music: they say it is like two jobs.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- Participant learned music theory and piano from mother, an educator at the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, from a young age (5 or 7 years old).
- Participant self-taught guitar, electric bass, and played in a rock band every week.
- Participant also went to further skills on piano on their own.
- **Covers provided attention to get original work to an audience** (e.g., 'Megalovania' served to kickstart their career):

"After I uploaded 'Megalovania' on YouTube, it just bit up 'Once Upon A Time' in one second—it became my most-played on SoundCloud and YouTube. I'm actually really proud of it because the song itself kickstarted my music career, and I just keep doing all my electronic music now because of the 'Megalovania' remix."

- **Consumption:**
  - They would listen to portions of the soundtrack on loop, concentrating on a melody and separating the layers of parts, memorize it in their head, and recreate arrangements on a DAW workstation.
  - The game gave them new ideas for their own composition and how they could improve their song writing.

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- Participant taught self to use FL Studio by watching YouTube tutorials on how to sound design and how to arrange on the DAW. This way of music creation was something they would leave and come back to, until they started publishing online, and it became a regular part of their life.
- DJ Cutman reached out to him after hearing his remixes on YouTube, and offered to sign him as an artist and remix and license his work. This led to a relationship in which Thomas did remixes that were representing GameChops and themselves as an artist.
- Participant published music on YouTube, GameChops, SoundCloud, BandCamp, and Spotify.
- **Participant used online forums as an affinity space to talk about the game:**

"When I played *Undertale*, I would constantly go to search on forums on the internet and just talk to a lot of people inside the community, and they helped me a lot on the music on *Undertale,* because back then I only concentrated on *Undertale* music. So, it's really, really great to have the community inside *Undertale* help me become what I am today. There's a lot of music tribute inside the *Undertale* community, as well. First, we tried to collaborate with each other, and then

we decided to work on our own because we always help each other on music. So, we share our experiences on music theory together."

- o **Participant developed a group of composition friends who would send feedback back and forth on mixes.**

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- Other creators used their work to create **derivative works**, initially without their knowledge:

"One of my people who listens to my music opened my 'Megolavania' video and commented and said, 'Hello, I found this one girl who just sings your song on top of my music.' I opened the link up and it was really, really good, and I was like, *Oh man, that sounds really good*, and then I messaged her, and she became one of my close friends because of that. I've talked to her since then about music and stuff. Even with original composition nowadays, I talk to her about collaboration and stuff. She gave the entire atmosphere that I originally believed I didn't have the ability to do, but she did it, and that was really, really awesome."

- o The original derivative work with lyrics created by Jenny has three times the views as the original posting; however, there are so many derivative, derivative works (**fanception**).
- **Derivative music without attribution is a problem:**

"If they asked to give me credit for using my music, I would actually give them away and ask them to feel free to use it, but if I see someone who doesn't credit me at all, it's basically just stealing music and losing a lot of time. And a lot of people, not just me, a lot of artists who have a YouTube channel make original compositions, and then someone big just comes along and they monetize your video, monetize your music without crediting you—and that's just basically stealing music. That is so wrong. I think credit is one of the critical things to do when it comes to music, and even if they don't credit us, they shouldn't monetize the video—or maybe just not use the music at all."

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: Low

Utility for Theme 2A: Middling

Utility for Theme 2B: None

Utility for Theme 2C: Very High

Utility for Theme 2D: Middling

Utility for Theme 2E: High

Findings

1. The creator felt that VGM (musical form) kickstarted new genres (EGM).
2. The creator's works were inspired, perpetuated, and used within the larger fandom.
3. YouTube was an afterthought to audio-only platforms.
4. Character voices were used as inspiration for remixes.
5. School responsibilities made it nearly impossible to find time to create.
6. Parent was primary music teacher in the creator's life at home.

7. Covers provided attention to get original work to audiences.
8. Consumed music on loop to memorize, imagine, and then create.
9. Derivative works were made based on creator's works.
10. Online recording label recruited creator to publish.

Amie Waters – *Amie Waters*

Synopsis of Case

Amie Waters was a 30-year-old full time self-employed performer, producer, and composer when we met. At the time of writing up this research, she identified as a trans-feminine non-binary person and used she/her/hers pronouns, which was different when we started the study. Waters created her YouTube channel to publish a non-musical video featuring her and her friends playing with dry ice. The video became popular, and she was offered to enroll in the creator partner program, which allowed her to monetize her videos. Because of her desire to be a self-supporting musical artist, she began making YouTube music videos of various popular genres. Amie has produced 18 covers of *Undertale*, which was more than any other game in her 124 VGM covers at the time of this study. The next most represented video game franchise was Zelda, for which she produced four covers every year during a selected month to celebrate the fandom.

Amie was one of the first people to produce a large number of *Undertale* covers on YouTube along with her friend RichaadEB, who each produced an album called *Determination* (red and blue), which served as compliments to each other. Later, the two also produced a third album for the series in which they collaborated, and fondly named *Purple*.

Situational Constraints

- Amie ran her channel very much like a business, which put added pressure on her collaborators to get their work done at a high quality with little turn around.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

- Collaboration was highly represented in this case.
- Participant was the only creator who pushed back against the identity of "YouTuber."

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- The creator used musical complexity and emotive playing to develop **ambiance** that resembled the mood she perceived in the game, giving the audience a music listening experiencing; she stated that her favorite part of video creation was the last step: "color grading and making the whole video look coherent and appealing and aesthetic."
- **Creating or recreating a mood:**

  "I never go into a song like: *I want to tell this story.* It's more like, as I'm building it, I realize that the music is communicating. That influences the arrangement. . . I feel like a big part of music is expressing something through tones and then having someone else, too. The most amazing feeling is when someone else picks up on that—when you're able to convey emotion or story or something, when you convey something through a medium that isn't typically thought to convey such deep things. . . For that song, it's just the combination of the emotional experience of the game, me trying to express that emotion through my instruments, and the connection with my

friends. The way that—when Austin finally comes in and the key changes up and the violin shifts—is such a great moment is something that I attribute as much to my collaborators as I do to anything I came up with, if not more. That was just *that* perfect moment that we all kind of synced in."

- **Gameplay was highly emotional, which was able to be used in arrangement:**

"By the end, people ask what the meaning of the different sections and stuff were, but the whole point was, you get to the end and you're like, *What am I doing?* But you have to do it—you have to fulfill. You are the sum of the choices you have made. You have no option but you do have to do, because you are here now. Yeah, at the end, I know it's just pixels. I know it's just story, but they're like, *Please don't ruin our perfect life by starting over. Just let us be*. I'm like, *Okay, I'm letting you be. I'm done*. It was a very emotional thing. That game is just chock full of emotion—so heavy and so beautiful and so evocative and so silly. Yeah, there were several times that I was coming to tears, near the end, when everything comes together and everyone's happy. The end was another one that really emotionally struck a chord. If I remember correctly, the first time you really hear the themes from the 'Undertale' track are walking, as you're finally approaching Azgore. You've all crossed this really long bridge, you can see stuff in the background—there's just something about it as the music slowly came in. It comes out of a very washy, ambient piece. I just sat there for a second. It was just pure emotion. That song is just, it definitely plays the right chords and the right melodies to hit the right notes. It's a very, very emotional piece. The song of all the songs on my channel that gets the most. I'm not crying. Are you crying? What? It's obviously a very touching piece. I'm also a big emotional ball of feeling, so stuff gets to me."

  - She later continued to discuss how her interpretation of the game was personal, and that it should not influence the listener's experience: "I have a story behind this, but I don't want to make that define what you hear."

- **VGM cover creation was a way to make money:**
  - Amie pursued YouTube creation after being invited to the creator program by YouTube for a non-musical video reaching 100,000 views; she decided to monetize. Amie was about 50 covers into her VGM series; however, her album *Determination* was the first time she was able to live off of music comfortably.

    "Video games have definitely had a huge, had a monumental, impact on me. Video games and YouTube completely changed the way that I have grown me. YouTube is the reason *why*. I would 100% say the skills I have are because I've done a cover every week for four and a half years. It's just through that process that, every time, I try to do better. Through working those muscles, my ears are getting better at hearing things, and I'm getting better at knowing what works and what doesn't. That's obviously had a huge impact on the way I do music."

- After producing two albums worth of *Undertale* music, she was **burnt out** and vowed: "I will never cover another *Undertale* song."

"I've done 18 covers from the game. That's well above and beyond any other game on my channel, any other piece of media. The next closest is Zelda, probably, because I do four every year—those are spaced out. I do four, and then I don't do anything else. I think a part of it is, at the end of Determination, I was burnt out. I've done everything I need to say about this. By the time Purple Side was done, even more so. I think a part of it is, I covered the songs I wanted to

cover through those 18 songs. There's one or two that are the what-if tracks. What if? What if I ever decide to go back? There's one in particular where I had a very nice and friendly fan reach out to me, and they shared a very emotional story about how my music impacted them. They asked that I do 'Battle for a True Hero' someday. That's always in the back of my head, but doing as much as I did, I was very happy with all of it as I did it. But, looking back, I think I very clearly understood my limit, and I reached that limit. I don't want to ruin such an important thing to me. It's already a meme. It's already a thing that people joke about. It's already a thing that me and my friends, every time we get together, it's always, *Doot doot doot*. It's a joke, but at the same time, it all stems from a very personal, meaningful experience of this video game that is still, to this day, and will probably forever be, one of my favorite games. I don't want to become bitter about it. I feel like I'm right on that edge, so I'm like, *Nope, I'm done. I'm happy. I'm very happy with what I've done. It solidified. It changed my life in a very tangible way. I'm very, very happy for it, and I'm very happy with the work I did on those albums.*"

- Human connection was at the center of this creator's joy in creating *Undertale* videos for YouTube:
    o "**Collaborations are my favorite** videos, by far."
    o Friends introduced the game to her.
    o Participant created an album series with a friend.
    o Participant created a virtual collaborative band.
- Amie was inspired by other cover artists' versions of songs as much as, or more than, the original soundtrack.

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Ambiance and atmosphere were major goals, evident in the variety of instruments (synthesized and acoustic), channel art, and video effects.
- Participant used technology as a means, not as a must:
    o "If a tool doesn't fit or I don't use it, we're done. I try not to collect things that I don't use."
- **Creation should be collaborative:**

"I have a lot of very intentional ways of working with collaborators to try and foster that. I collaborate with Peter Smith, who lives in Australia. I collaborate with people in Europe. I've collaborated with people who are thousands of miles away from me. I very much want to have that intention in a collaboration: everything should be collaborative. We should be pouring into it equally, which is why I never write out parts for collaborators. I'm never like, 'Here. I want you to play this and then that.' I give notes. I definitely have an idea of the arrangement in my head. Sometimes, I will be like, 'Play the melody here' or 'Do this here.' I always say, 'You're open to do more. You're open to change it up if you have a better idea. I really need your lead here. I want a violin or a guitar or an EWI or whatever. I want that right here, but feel free to experiment and follow what you're feeling and do what you want.'"

- **Collaboration is about the sharing of ideas to create something a single artist could not:**

"We are able to infuse our creative essences into a track that represents both of us, while taking on a life of its own as a composition that neither of us would have come up with on our own. I like to allow my collaborators space to add what they think will help a song out. I give ideas, and parts where I absolutely want certain things, but I always try to leave it general so it can be

collaborative in all aspects, even in arrangement. I also love just making music with other people. Collaborations are my favorite videos, by far."

- o **Example of Soundole in Megalovania:**

    "I gave him the reins. I said, 'Are you ready to arrange this in 11?' He was like, 'Okay.' I was like, 'I can do it for you if you're too busy, but I want you to if you can, because you're a frickin' genius. I want to let you do what you're going to do.' He is extremely wise in music theory and the stuff he does; I really wanted to let him do what he could with it. One of my favorite things is to throw curveballs at my friends and be like, 'What do you think of this?' In 'Megalovania,' that second section, I definitely had a lot of fun laying the groundwork: very groovy, electronic, inspired by Radiohead and stuff like that. But it wouldn't be what it was if it wasn't for Peter's melody, and the way he chose to accent the beat and do the solo. It really came together around his lead. I actually restructured some parts to fit the choices he made, because they were really cool. At the time, I was trying to understand how to use Ableton Push. I had two or three parts going that stayed the same, like the drums and the main padding of the chords, which carried through from the demo. The bass was rerecorded to play off of what he was doing. I remember being like, *Man, I've got to shift things around a little bit.*"

- Ambitious production schedule (one video a week) sometimes required a recording from a collaborator in less than 24 hours.
- **Arrangement as controlled improvisation**:

"My arrangement process—I like to think of it as controlled improvisation. I have, always, some level of concept of the song I want to do, but I almost never write out notes for it. It's always in my head. I kind of want to start in this sound, but then I let the song have the freedom to become whatever it needs to be, because if I get too zoned in on *this needs to sound like this*, then I'll get frustrated if it ends up changing. Then I might not appreciate where it was going. Let the song be what it needs to be. Then I just record drums or bass. I'll get a baseline of what the song is, the structure. Then, I just go, *What does it need next?* For a lot of my arrangements, I'll have three or four instruments planned out in the beginning. I know I want this patch and this lead and this bass and this drum kit. Then I'll listen to it and go, *What is it missing? Does it need anything? What do I need to add?* It's at that point that I'm rushing around my office, grabbing different instruments, futzing around with them like, *Does this one work? Let's try something else* and then coming into what comes next. It's very rarely all arranged out ahead of time."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- Participant played saxophone in school bands throughout Grades 5-12 and won the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award.
- Participant majored in music performance, but didn't get degree (took advanced theory, sight reading, history, etc.).
- **The only experience in school with VGM was playing a 16-bar Mario theme in pep band.**
- After joining band in junior high, music took over her life, and she was inspired to pursue self-learning in addition to the things she was learning at school.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **Lessons**:
    - o Piano (as a child)

- o   Saxophone (6 years)
- o   Bass guitar (2 years)
- o   Bassoon (2 years)
- **There was a desire to learn VGM, but curriculum was too busy:**

  "When I was a kid, if my piano teacher said, 'Do you want to learn how to play the theme from Donkey Kong Country?' I would have been like, 'Yes!' We just never had that. We were too busy working our way through our piano books, and doing the lessons, and doing the things."

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal
- Participant self-taught a variety of instruments (e.g., guitars, drums, synthesizers, sequencing).
- Applied knowledge of instruments could be transferred to other similar instruments, and those were used in her videos:
    - o   Guitar knowledge was used to learn banjo, mandolin, and ukulele.
    - o   Saxophone knowledge was used to play clarinet.
    - o   Piano knowledge was used to play melodica, accordion and synthesizers.
- **Experimentation toward arrangement, sequencing, and mixing:**
    - o   Everything she knew about engineering, mixing, and mastering was learned through trial-and-error over 12 years.
    - o   Participant struggled to know when she was "done" with an arrangement, continually learning and experimenting with arranging, trying to "do more with less—letting a song be done before it's super crowded."
- **Consumption**:
    - o   90% of learning was by ear and sitting at the piano, pulling parts out by ear; for more difficult songs, she would slow things down by 40% and pick every note out by ear.
    - o   Whenever she listens to an album, she's got "**engineer's ears**," asking herself how the sound engineers did the things she is hearing.

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online
- While Amie released her music on sites like Distrokid, Bandcamp, Fangamer, YouTube and Spotify, she acknowledges that they **spread to other media she does not approve of**:
    - o   "They are also probably on torrent sites, web boards, and freebooted to Facebook. But I do not choose or particularly desire those being there."
- Participant created a band called Involved in the Troubles that produced recordings of online collaborations regularly, including "Once Upon a Time" from *Undertale*, which was formed when Josiah McDaniel, the bassist, suggested they give the group an official name.
- Online marketing provided diverse opportunities for revenue:

  "I currently make about 40% off of streaming, album sales, and physical sales of Determination, 40% off of Patreon support, and the rest from my personal album streams, digital sales, and YouTube revenue (which is almost nothing). I also have the inconsistent income source of commission work, when I actually have potential jobs lined up, which is not super reliable. So, as far as VGM, I make the majority of my current income off of various revenue streams that come from VGM and other cover songs off the channel, and very little of it comes from the actual videos, but rather from streaming, digital, and physical sales."

  "YouTube accounts for almost none of it as far as actual monetary value of what I'm getting. I get very, very little money straight from YouTube, but I use YouTube as a platform to build an

audience, to present a version of my music in the visual medium, that can hopefully attract new people to my name and to the music that I make."

- **YouTube is only part of identity as a musician:**

"That really goes back to just, any time you talk to someone who has, most people who haven't gotten extremely lucky—most of the working musicians—have five, six streams of income. They're doing lessons. They're doing studio gigs. They're doing some sort of performance. Most musicians I know diversify because they know it's a hard work to get into; YouTube is very much the same. YouTube is not, on its own, a thing that I think is very, especially these days, very viable on its own. You should always be seeing it as just a part of your musical expression. That's just a part of it for me, at least. That's how it kind of works. I was a full-time musician before Determination, but now that's very much in residual income. It's just another small, residual income stream that I'm trying to build to get them all to a point where I can pay all my bills…Still working on that, but it worked, and it was something that I found a practice in and I found a schedule in, somehow, which was also really wild to me, because I'm normally really, really bad at sticking with things. I've written hundreds of blogs for two months and then stopped, so that was very strange for me. Somehow, that worked with my style of doing music, and it lent itself to my strengths of arranging and having an ear for the pieces that need to go together to make a song come together in texture and atmosphere. All of that led up, and they worked for each other."

- **Online collaboration does not replace face-to-face collaboration:**

"Collaborating with people through the internet doesn't compare to playing with musicians face-to-face, live or in the studio. They are two very, very different things. It's really cool, and I really am happy with what we can accomplish with technology. It's beautiful, what it's capable of doing, but it's the same thing as saying, 'What's the difference between me recording a track and me performing a track?' If I were to do a live performance, they would be hugely different. The whole process of recording and engineering music, especially in this age, from not going into a studio, necessarily, but recording all of our parts from all over the world from our own home studios, and watching them come together, is just inherently different from being in a room and jamming. It's something that, as much as I am very, very happy that I have the technological advances to work with the musicians I have, it is the thing I desire most these days—more in-room collaboration. Two people hanging out together. You don't get that. Someone plays a thing. You go, 'Wait. Do that again'. Then you are able to immediately. That immediate connection and cohesion is just not there. It's definitely very noticeable. It's very—you can't replace it."

"It's still, nothing beats working in the same room with someone. Josiah and I recently, very recently, just experienced that because he was on my most recent cover. Every time we worked together in a room, we were like, 'Man, this is so much better than over the internet.' Over the internet, sometimes I'll get a part back. I'll have to be like, 'That was good. Try this.' They'll be like, 'Wait, what?' Yes, I could notate it out, but a lot of times, it's easier to just grab my phone and do a video and be like, 'No, not *dot dot dot dot*. Go *dot dot dot dotta*. There we go.' There's also some times where the communication breaks down. 'Involved in the Troubles,' we did the Zelda dungeon last year for Zelda Month. I sent it, very clearly: 'Hey, Rich. Play the leads here and here.' He didn't understand that I meant the lead not the doo-doo-doo arpeggio. I meant the trumpet part that goes over it. He didn't do it at all. I got all the parts back. I'm like, "Hey, Rich. You didn't play the part I wanted you to play. I guess I'm playing it on a synthesizer now." It was okay, because that song still totally came together. That's a part of, I think, the flexible nature of

my arranging style: I can work with it. That's the other thing. I try to be willing to work with whatever I get and try to make whatever I have work and fit the idea or maybe change the idea. All of that allows connection between my collaborators."

"We are in the long process of recording a solo album of Josiah's. Last year, right near the end of summer, Austin brought his drum kit out to, Josiah lives on the coast of Oregon. We all hung out at the coast for a weekend, and we recorded all the drums for the project together in a room. We were able to, in the moment, go, 'Can you try this? No, that didn't work. Now try this. That worked.' We were just able to have that immediate feedback and that connection. We were doing the thing we would be doing far away from each other, but just in the same room. Even that was inherently different than the typical collaboration process, which is also different from all playing our instruments together and jamming together. They're all just different ways of expressing ourselves. I love them all, but I definitely want more of that intentional, in-the-same-room music stuff. I just don't get a ton of that these days."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- Speaking on a panel at a conference made her realize that stepping into a mentoring role might be useful to the community; however, she does not feel like a master of any particular subject or instrument.

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: Very high (particularly for collaboration)

Utility for Theme 2A: Low

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Middling

Utility for Theme 2D: Very high

Utility for Theme 2E: Low

Findings

1. The creator pushed back against the indent of "YouTuber," distinguishing that YouTube is only one platform—a small part of their identity as a musician.
2. Emotions that were experienced during gameplay were used to inspire arrangement.
3. VGM cover creation was a way for the creator to make money.
4. YouTube revenue was part of a diverse financial portfolio.
5. Extensive covering of *Undertale* led the creator to feel burnt out.
6. Listening to covers of other artists inspired the creator to make their own versions.
7. Technology was a means to an end for the creator, rather than a necessity.
8. Collaboration allowed for the sharing ideas that a single creator could not come up with on their own.
9. An ambitious production schedule required heavy pressure placed on collaborators.
10. Arrangement took on the form of "controlled improvisation" for the creator.
11. Experimentation was a primary source of learning for both musical and technological activities.
12. The creator's works spread to other media without their approval.
13. Online collaboration did not replace face-to-face collaboration for the creator, emotionally or musically.

Sulaiyman Fauzi – *Sully Orchestration*

Synopsis of Case

Sulaiyman (Sully) Fauzi was18-year-old in Worcestershire, United Kingdom studying mathematics, physics, and music technology at the time of the study. He traveled to the UK from his home country, Malaysia, for university study. Fauzi started posting "joke" videos that centered around video games and popular online and gamer culture. His musical YouTube endeavors started when he was 17 years old with a MIDI orchestration that remixed two *Undertale* songs. He perceived his orchestrations as an expansion of the original soundtrack and published 56 videos related to *Undertale*, which included individual tracks, compilations, and extended plays (looping an arrangement for 30 minutes or more). His expansion of the original soundtrack included clicking on MIDI rolls, note-by-note. This process was documented on his YouTube channel through a series of live streams showing how he arranged his orchestrations.

Situational Constraints

Fauzi just started his music technology degree, so he had only one semester of higher education training (which included three majors).

Uniqueness among Other Cases

Most of channel was *Undertale* content until end of data collection, when he started to venture into Star Wars. His channel is the only one in the study for which *Undertale* content was the sole source for his YouTube success. His joke videos were not well-viewed.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- YouTube began as a way to share arrangements of orchestrations for *Undertale:*

  "It was in hopes of getting recognition. Now, it is increasingly becoming a financial asset to my life. Plainly, my primary goal is to maximize revenue in order to support my education, life, and possibly my family."

- When listening to the 8-bit soundtrack, he felt it was designed for an orchestra to play.
  - o Participant conceived of orchestration as an "**expansion of the original**." Orchestration vs. 8-bit sound/16-bit sound are different styles of music.

    "You're not coming to YouTube to listen to a direct transfer of notes, just with orchestral instruments. You want to hear other people's take on it, and you try and look for new feelings. I think I'm basically trying to throw away people's expectations in a good way. I'm trying to introduce something new. It's really boring if you know what's going to come up. When you're listening to a soundtrack again and again, you know how the song goes. You know how the melodies form. You kind of know the pattern. It gets boring when you listen to that for a while. If you introduce a lot of more new elements like instruments, a percussionist for example… I think percussion is a very driving, very prominent feature of orchestra. I really try to use a variety of percussion in that. But like I said before, you came to hear a cover, someone's interpretation of someone's song, not a direct transfer of notes, if you get what I mean."

- *Undertale* **specifically was responsible for his success** because the game had many "memorable" aspects:

  "I think, with *Undertale,* it has such a memorable soundtrack that people want to listen to different renditions of it, especially because I think what's unique about it is that it's an 8-bit style. It's meant to be—the style is an 8-bit game with 8-bit music. Redoing it in orchestral fashion is kind of, well, it makes it feel more like a film, really. It gives a different dimension to that."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Participant used piano roll to arrange orchestrations.
- **Layering an orchestration:**
  - Participant would listen over and over until things got stuck in his head, and then he would layer and thicken the orchestration, both in his head, and in the DAW.

    "I don't actually have a full plan of what to do. I kind of just do it spontaneously. That's why I kind of only work every four bars. I make sure that the first bit sounds nice before moving onto the next bit, rather than going instrument by instrument. I always start at the beginning of a song. I think with 'Spear of Justice,' I actually tried to start at the beginning of the song, but I felt that it didn't really resonate with what I envisioned it to be, so I quickly scrapped that and started afresh. I mean, I always start from a certain technique that I know, maybe even just a full one sustained note of violins playing. I build up from there. Other times I just take a theme, like 'Heartache'. I kind of just get a solo violin and make it play the theme, and I build up from there."

- **VGM was conceived as similar to film music,** in that it enhances a story:

  "I kind of take inspiration from how **trailer music** starts, or how other films and soundtracks are, and I just implement those techniques and then somehow get the theme. I insert the themes somewhere just after that."

- **Arrangement told the story of the game:**

  "A combination of all those things, really. With the emotion bit, I think that it's basically how you feel as you went through the story. For example, with the 'Spear of Justice', the reason why I started quite somberly, or a bit suspensefully, was because I was thinking of Undyne standing on top of the cliff and telling her story about why Asgore started to kill humans and stuff like that. Then I realized: *Wait, I'm just going to kill you now.* Yeah, that's kind of what I visualize in my head. I try to tell that story. I think with 'Heartache', obviously, at the end I did something completely different. I didn't include any of the motifs. I thought about how Toriel was talking to Frisk and how somber it was, so I tried to get that in as well. You need to have context—if you know what I mean."

- Participant created April Fool's Day video of dog barking and used that as a sample:

  "I got a sample of a royalty free barking dog, and I replaced it with every note. That was just me being silly."

- Participant created compilations and long plays to make music accessible and easy to use for audiences, which led to multiple publications of the same work online:

"I kind of had the feeling in the back of my mind that people didn't like switching. For me, as a listener as well, I don't like manually clicking on different songs, so I compiled them altogether into one piece. First it was a 30-minute orchestration compilation of all the songs that I had done. I was very surprised that loads of people liked it. It was one of the highest growing videos during that time that I uploaded it. That was really positive feedback for me. I think from that point on I started doing more of these medleys and trying to compile all the songs I'd done previously. I think the last reason, which I have to shamefully say, is because it allows me to put more ads on it and that increases my revenue."

- Participant experimented with visual representations (e.g., piano rolls, hands playing on piano), until finally deciding to focus on still images:

"Later on, I decided to redo 'Heartache' completely, start fresh. I ended up making it more to my satisfaction. I think the third time was when I used the MIDI note bars to actually visualize the music. That was just an experiment, really, to see if my audience really liked the new style of visualization or if they like the sound-wave waveform thing. It turns out that people liked the MIDI note trail thing much more than the waveform, so I decided to use that instead of the waveform in all my future videos."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School
- Participant took music technology courses for two years, but most knowledge was self-taught before starting.

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal
- **Lessons:**
    o Piano (ages 5-12)
- Piano skills were what prepared the creator for how to use a MIDI keyboard:

"I think keyboard skills really help in terms of inputting notes into software and also trying to recognize patterns that you can do with your hands. I realize that all the simple melodies are usually done with one hand. The best melodies are those that you can do without moving your hand. I think that when learning to play the piano, I kind of got some of the inspiration of what some of the classical composers did in reading notes. I've done up to grade 5 ABRSM {standard British examination board for music}. I mean, from what I've learned, I guess it helps in a way. I would say it definitely did help, but I'm not quite sure to what extent."

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal
- Participant repeated listening to original soundtrack.
- Computer music allowed for restarting and adjusting projects as needed:

"The nice thing about composing on computers is that you can hear your composition again and again and again. You can literally redo it as many times as you want in the same trial. In terms of that, you don't really feel like you failed on a certain song, but rather keep trying to perfect it again and again and again. That's basically how I learned."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online
- Adapting his style of orchestration to meet the demands of viewers was the least enjoyable thing for the creator.
- Participant watches play-throughs to get to know game better, and from different perspectives. He watched play-throughs first, and then wanted to experience it himself.

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring
- Participant created live streams on YouTube about his creative process.
- Participant published "**bad versions" to show growth**:
    - "I have also done lots of failures, which I really didn't like. I thought I'd share them with you."

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: Low

Utility for Theme 2B: Middling

Utility for Theme 2C: Low

Utility for Theme 2D: Low

Utility for Theme 2E: High

Findings

1. The creator wanted to expand the original soundtrack.
2. The creator used YouTube to maximize revenue.
3. The creator thought of VGM as similar to film music that tells a story.
4. The creator published derivative works of their own work to get more views and make recordings accessible to audiences.
5. School courses did not teach the creator anything they did not already self-teach themself.
6. Live streams were a way the creator showed audiences their creative process.
7. The creator published "bad versions" to show growth.

Julia Henderson – *Julia Henderson*

Synopsis of Case

Julia was a 26-year-old performer, composer, arranger, and producer when participating in this study. She was in her first semester of a master's degree program in music technology and digital media. She began performing professionally in operas while an undergraduate student, and then ran a private lessons studio before focusing on her master's degree. She published three *Undertale* videos but was strongly connected socially with other participants—particularly Panuganti, Eiene, and TeraCMusic, as the three ran a VGM podcast. Her *Undertale* videos were published after she started developing her own style of VGM covers and used split screen techniques that prominently featured a solo singer. Her performing for the camera, particularly for opera arrangements, resembled live performance with her stoic look and subtle hand gestures.

Situational Constraints

While she claimed that *Undertale* "has never been an essential part of my channel," she applied opera conventions to her arrangement of "Oh! One True Love."

Uniqueness among Other Cases

She is the only participant who pursued a master's degree in music technology and digital media. While deciding on what to study, she debated between opera performance and the aforementioned degree,

ultimately deciding that she wanted to strengthen her skills in production and drive her own music making, rather than being beholden to other people's musical visions.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- **VGM was a ubiquitous presence in the creator's life:**

  "VGM was always there in my life, but I was never thinking of it. Even when I started my YouTube channel, I wasn't thinking VGM was a thing that people thought of. I just knew there was music in video games—I didn't think there was this community or that anyone called it VGM. There is music that is in video games, and I like a lot of this music. I wouldn't even necessarily listen to it on its own outside the context of video games, or whatever."

  "Undertale has never been an essential part of my channel."

- The creator had emotional connection to covers.
- **The creator had a desire to make content and put it online:**

  "I bought a Blue Yeti microphone for the purpose of streaming online and making a series of video game reviews. I decided to start using it to make music one day for fun and was happy with the result. I uploaded my first cover and posted it everywhere I could. The feedback, both positive and negative, was very helpful to me and encouraged me to continue to make music online! My main goal now is to have a place to show my growth as a musician and creator. I like having the freedom to work on whatever I like and get feedback from the community. Simply, it is a way to showcase my current abilities and gets my name out there as an artist."

  "I started just recording at home, and I thought, this is kind of fun. I'll put it online. And put it online, and I love video games. That's really what it comes down to. It's not necessarily a particular attachment to the music from video games. It's just video games as a medium, and the people surrounding that. It's basically combining the two things I love most."

- YouTube provided the creator a platform to perform VGM, which was an alternative for music making beyond art music:

  "I knew going in that if I were going to put music online on YouTube, it would be video game music. I probably wouldn't make as much music without video games and YouTube. I think the fact that I'm so emotionally connected to video games as a medium allows that emotional connection to then transfer to the music itself, and I think that's why so many people stick with this."

  "You could put everything I used to do on YouTube in one box, if you could categorize it as an explicit genre, but it was very classically-influenced, with maybe some contemporary in there. It was very me, but there wasn't anything else in there. So, now, I'm going into things thinking, *Okay, this one is going to be jazz, this one's going to be rock anthem, this one's going to be synth pop*, and then working within those confines, because I love so many genres, and that's kind of why I started doing this: to get away from just being stuck in classical opera music realm."

  "So, **technology nowadays everything is digital**. It's not even a real thing. It's all formulas. It's all algorithms. If I did not have this technology**, I would not be able to produce in my own bedroom.** This is a completely new thing, like, never before have people been able to do this

stuff to this level of quality in their own bedrooms. You needed a tape machine, or you needed one of those big IBM computers that filled the whole room. If you wanted to create reverb before you had basically two good ways of doing it—one, you had a big plate of metal and you put contact microphones on the metal, and then the sound source moved the plate, and then you would record how the metal was moving, or two, you had your own acoustic chamber, and you would play back your song through the loudspeaker into this room, and then just gather the sound of the room, and then mix that with your stuff. I don't have a room, loudspeakers, and all these microphones to do that. Technology's crazy nowadays. It makes everything so much easier, oh my gosh."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- *Undertale* covers were early in YouTube creation career.
- Participant didn't create sheet music.
- Not much practice went into preparing for videos, as she felt she could edit in post-production if mistakes were made:

"The video performance: I wing it so that a lot of stuff is taken care of in editing, and I can switch between different tracks. A lot of it is honestly to hide mistakes, but I usually just run through the song, do the best I can, and it doesn't really matter what it sounds like, because all that matters is that you've at least mimed it in a way that's convincing enough that it seems like you know what you're doing; whereas in a live performance, obviously you want it to sound as polished as possible. Yeah, it's completely different."

- **Classical music influences learned in school were heavily influential in how the creator approached covers**:

"My operatic approach to 'Oh, One True Love' allowed for a fidelity. For the comedy to come across, it makes sense for it to be in that operatic medium. It's quite obvious that Mettaton is up singing an aria, and it is an aria, really, at its core, but the lyrics are ridiculous. We get this idea that operatic music is high class, and it's meaningful and when you sing an aria. It's usually about love or death and this is, in fact, about both—but is clearly satirical."

"Just a little bit over the top. I suppose I was trying to express what people's idea of opera is, versus what it *actually* is to me, because those are very different things. You think of the Wagner and the horns and the exaggerated expressions, and the ridiculous diction and then there's that one line, *it'll suck,* and I thought, if I really ham this bit up with perfect lyric diction, that would be quite funny."

"That being said, when it comes to actually making the music and arranging the thing and harmonizing and all that stuff, I'm not thinking to my classical music training. I'm not thinking, *Okay, here's the fourth, this goes down*. I think a lot of that does instinctively happen, but I'm not thinking theoretically in that sense. If I apply any music theory to my stuff, it's mostly things I've learned more recently in borrowing from jazz theory and contemporary harmony, not classical."

  - **Participant tried hard to stay close to the original, which was a product of a deep connection to classical music**:

    "I probably didn't think I was creative enough to stray from the original. It was more about creating a modernized version, or a live, a performed, version of something, rather than an actual arrangement, if that makes sense."

"I would probably not stick as closely to the original. Even the instrumentation wasn't very creative. It was kind of a, *what do I have at my disposal in order to recreate this*, kind of a performance, of the original tune. I don't know. I'd probably pick some style or elaborate, maybe orchestrate…something."

- o **Regarding what eventually changed:**

  "A lot of discussion pops up in this community about the merits, when you're performing something pretty much as-is, versus when you're taking your own spin on it, and it's very much in the classical music tradition to take the same piece of music and to perform it, over and over, and you don't really deviate from the score—especially if it's Mozart, let's say. Don't even add a single ornamentation to that Mozart, because people are going to debate you on that."

  "Yeah. Well, for that one, I believe I just did the one take of the voice, one of each flute, and one of the piano, which was actually back when I used to practice more so and try to get it so that I can do one continuous take of video, because I thought it was kind of cheating if I didn't fully learn everything all the way through. In 'Undertale,' you can see a couple fade outs in the video—that's about it. That's when I record things separately. So, specifically in the 'Oh, One True Love' video performance, it's funny because I realized that I had sung a wrong word, and that I had only had the one take, so I thought, oh, I can't display myself the whole time because it's very obvious where I made the mistake, so it was purely for that reason: I needed something to cover up the mistake."

- o **Regarding quality and making mistakes:**

  "When I was going through school, there was this idea that you don't put an unfinished product online, so I was explicitly told by my voice studio teachers in undergrad that if I were to put demos of myself singing online, that it had better be the closest to a finished product that you can get, and until you're a professional or very near professional level in quality, you don't put anything up, because then it's there forever. But, if that's the case, especially in this kind of world where you're creating music, and you have to put it out there to be noticed, what's the point? You're creating it for yourself. It seems selfish, and you're holding onto it, and you don't get the public feedback. My voice studio, every time there was a master class, we started getting into the business of singing and the online marketing stuff. There was this idea that, when you're in university, you don't put your stuff on YouTube—period, end of story. That's common with a lot of what my teachers say."

- **Sound and visual elements were used by the creator to tell stories**.
  - o Creating music video covers were a medium through which the creator could tell stories through sonic experiences, enhanced with sound editing:

    "So, reverb creates the sense of space, so when you put a reverb effect on a track, or on several tracks, you're taking it out of where it was recorded and you're putting it somewhere else, and that could be anywhere, because we live in the digital age, and that could be in a tiny bathroom. You can imagine how that space would sound. Or in a concert hall, or somewhere that doesn't even exist, because you can digitally create a space that doesn't exist. Limitations there are endless. With regards to multi-tracking, it allows you to have a stereo image, so to place your performers, whoever they are, on a

sound stage, kind of from left to right, and then even front to back, and you can place people on this sound stage, so you're taking it out of where it was recorded and you're putting it into this space."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- **General**:
  - School music class
  - Band and orchestra (flute)
  - Jazz band
  - Vocals (high school and undergraduate)
  - Piano classes.
- Participant had access to a professional-level studio at university.
- School provided the creator with opportunity to refine skills self-taught and explored informally:

"My musical training has helped me a good amount to be able to do what I do on my YouTube channel. The singing, definitely, and being able to do the choral aspect. I have an extended range, so to be able to be my own choir—that's probably directly related to my training."

"I liked having full control over everything, and with this master's program, I was looking for a program that would help me do that and be my own self-sustained artist. I went into the interview with a bunch of questions, and I said, 'This is what I'm doing now,' and they said, 'This is exactly the purpose of the program: to take you from conception through to recording, producing, mixing, mastering, and then actually being able to release the thing, digital distribution and also music entrepreneurship.' I thought, *Yeah, this is perfect. Full control over what I want to do, and my time, being able to take my time to do it.* I can still perform—it's just you're performing as a recording artist, and on your own terms. I listen back and I can say*, '*Okay, I don't like that take, let's try that one more time. There's no, okay, I practiced this recital for six months, and then I perform it one time, and if it blows it blows, and that's it.' There's so much pressure on that one moment and there's all that preparation, and just all the production work that goes into something like this, even for something simple, because you're doing the arrangement, or you're probably doing some kind of transcription then you're doing an arrangement, and you're doing the recording, you're doing post-production, you're doing some kind of video. You're putting it on, and then, *Okay, how do I get this out? How do I spread this to the world?* I realized that every one of those steps I really enjoyed, and there wasn't one part of it that I was like dreading doing every time. And plus, it's all me doing the work, and I had a lot of people saying, 'Oh, you guys are great,' and I'm like, *no*, it's usually just me doing the work and playing all the instruments."

- Participant composed, arranged, recorded, and produced works for undergraduate degree assignments.

"If I wanted to, I could incorporate VGM into my assignments. Some assignments have stricter rules, but some of the ones that have to do with, let's say, MIDI or synthesizing or anything like that, I could do a video game inspired thing. Sone of them have to do specifically with mixing an orchestra session, for example, which doesn't really apply."

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **Lessons**:
  - Private voice (ages 17-25).
- **Community**:

        o   Church choirs.

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- Participant was involved with rock bands in high school.
- Compared to classical music practices, which provided a lot of guidance and expectations of how something should be performed, VGM was a curiosity that encouraged the creator to analyze the music on her own:

"Well, VGM helps me be a lot more analytical about music, because music is created for a purpose. So, you kind of think, *Okay, why? Why did they use this instrumentation? Why these chords?* Everything starts with the most basic transcription, chord, cymbals, baseline, melody. That's usually what I go for, but even just doing that much gives me an appreciation for the basic building blocks of video game music, and of a lot of music in general."

- Experimentation was initially the predominant approach to learning recording techniques:

"I've learned how to create sounds that aren't produced by me—so entirely synthesized sounds— using extensive sample libraries for orchestral, bass, drums, whatever. I've learned how to actually create a mix that is somewhat cohesive, and not just using my ears, because mixing used to always be an experiment. I know how to choose microphones for the job better. That was all done using one microphone that's not ideal for music recording but it's what I had. Probably the simplest way to describe is it would be a more intentional, thoughtful process, and I would have an idea of what I wanted to create, and then know how to go about creating it rather than just doing the only thing that I knew how to do then."

"I use a combination of online resources and experimentation—a huge amount of experimentation— and asking other artists, 'How do you do things? If you need to solve this particular problem, how would you go about doing it?' And then more recently, stuff in my master's degree."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- **YouTube is simply a platform:**
  - o   "Views and subscriber growth are secondary to me. YouTube is a means to an end: it is simply the platform on which I upload my works."
- Participant discovered *Undertale* when watching a playthrough online by Game Grumps.
- Creator was recruited by Allen in GameLark, a recording label that focused on VGM covers and remixes, to be part of an online collective.

"Yeah, so GameLark is a record label for video game remixing, and it's been around, I want to say, about two and a half, three years now, and it's essentially a collective of artists that have been kind of chosen to be part of this record label, and together, a couple of times a year, we make albums. It produces through Materia Collective now, but it's still considered separate from them, for sure. So, we've done final fantasy album, we've done a fighting game music album, we've done music from Rare games, we did a winter-themed one—so generally there's a theme or a game or whatever, and it features a bunch of different artists and a bunch of different styles."

"Allen, the creator, asked me to join right when I had released the Fallout thing around November of 2015. He messaged me on Twitter and just said, 'Would you be interested in joining?' He didn't say much about it, just that it's a record label for video game music, and let's have a Skype call, so we had a Skype call, and it was really nice, and it was like, I barely had four videos out,

and I was like, *What? I don't know what's going on. I've been doing this for two months; already someone's reaching out and likes it enough to ask me to join on.* Yeah, I was so excited about it, immediately said yes, and met the most amazing group of people through it, including my current partner. It's just a huge variety of artists—different genres and stuff."

- Comments were a source of feedback, and the creator worked to stay connected to audience and fans by reading and replying to as many comments as possible.

"I like replying to as many comments as I can. I think people like it when you reply. I've always foreseen that if the channel were to grow to large enough that it would become unfeasible to keep that up, and I fall behind sometimes, but I still try to go back and respond to everything and at least say thank you if they've taken the time to comment. Even me, I'm bad at it sometimes."

- **The creator's YouTube channel served as an archive for progress as an artist:**

"I was trying to show my growth to myself. I don't know if I would say fans, but just, yeah, the public, people, anyone. Well, hopefully the growth that can be seen on my YouTube channel should look like I'm learning more and more about how to be a musician, and that I'm making decisions that are a little bit more informed, and then also branching out into different styles, because that's been the most recent thing."

  o Henderson's YouTube was used to apply for graduate school programs.

  "Yeah, I feel like it makes me reevaluate my choices. Everyone's opinion, I believe, comes from somewhere, right? But there's no use in me taking criticism to mean that I suck. But what it does make me think is, okay, well, why did I make this choice? Was I correct in making this choice? Was this a choice that I actively made, or was it accidental? Even a positive comment. You had mentioned earlier, I'm sure we'll get to it later, about the inner voicing on the 'Undertale.' My friend Peter had said, 'Oh, I like how you brought out the inner voicing.' I thought, *Well, it's just because I'm playing it with my thumb, so it's stronger, and that's accidental*. So then, that makes me evaluate: *Okay, well now, next time, maybe I will make the inner voice stronger on purpose and try to make that work*. Yeah, that's all it is. It's just self-evaluation—all those comments."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring
- Not applicable.

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2A: Very high

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Low

Utility for Theme 2D: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2E: None
Findings

1. *Undertale* was only (a non-essential) part of the creator's YouTube channel.

2. YouTube provided the creator a platform to perform VGM, which was an alternative for music making beyond art music.
3. Sound and visual elements were used by the creator to tell stories.
4. Classical music influences learned in school were heavily influential to the creator's approach to covers.
5. School provided the creator with opportunities to refine skills that were self-taught or explored informally.
6. The creator's YouTube channel served as an archive for progress as an artist.
7. Comments were a form of feedback, and the creator stayed connected to audiences and fans by reading and replying to as many comments as possible.

Ben Briggs – *bbriggsmusic*

Synopsis of Case

Ben Briggs was 29 years old from Florida when we started this study and owned his own record label. He worked full time as a DJ, producer, musician, and "online entertainer." His online entertainment featured his work on plartforms including YouTube, Twitch, Soundcloud, and discussion board forums. His record label, *Tiny Waves*, was an Orlando-based community of mostly EDM artists that had interactions online and offline.

Ben's *Undertale* music spanned various electronic genres from nerdcore to glich-hop. His "Tem Shop" remix was hugely popular and took over his career and brand for a time. Instead of lamenting about in some way losing his autonomy, he leveraged Temmie's popularity in the fandom, embracing the association by cosplaying as the character and publishing versions of remix. Briggs also published an album called *Straight from the Underground*, which was released nearly at the same time as *Fallen: A Tribute to Undertale.*

Situational Constraints

Uniqueness among Other Cases

- Participant is the **owner of Tiny Waves**, an EDM record label and community.

'Tem Shop' Story:

"'Tem Shop,' which honestly was a random experiment / fluke that exploded in popularity—I still love 'Tem Shop.'"

"Temmie is...cute, sporadic, and a little off-kilter. She's easily excitable and speaks in a wild, unkempt version of 'leet speak,' and LOVES humans. She's trying to save for college (cooleg) but has a nasty habit of buying every single thing that is offered to her. She quite literally cannot resist buying every item you show her. She loves coffee and is (presumably) a visual artist. To me, she is a relatable, highly amplified version of the typical kind-hearted, creative, ADHD Millenial. As time went on, and especially when I wrote 'Collecting Junk With Temmie,' I ended up seeing a LOT of myself in Temmie as a character—perhaps too much..."

"Why did I create the 'Tem Shop' remix? The short answer is: **Because I passionately love *Undertale*, and Temmie was a character after my own heart.**"

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- Genres of music played into the desire to create covers.
- Self-reflection provided lyrics to remix covers, e.g., "Collecting Junk with Temmie"—lyrics are truly inspired and self-reflective.
- *Undertale* **nearly "took over" his career**, and caused a potential "one-hit wonder" situation:

  "On my personal YouTube channel, perhaps thankfully, it doesn't dominate my stats or audience. It honestly sits alongside my other popular remixes (Cowboy Bebop, Sonic the Hedgehog, among others) as an equal piece of my brand. I say 'thankfully' because I think I narrowly avoided the dreaded curse of YouTube: having an audience that only cares about one thing or one type of content and being stuck making *Undertale* remixes forever, just to please them!"

  "Honestly, when I upload a song that I personally really love, and my audience doesn't respond, it can be pretty discouraging. Some of my best original music just... doesn't get the attention because it isn't a video game remix. Also, the actual GRIND gets tiresome. I upload once a week and I don't always feel like going through the dozens of steps necessary."

- **Livestream playthrough inspired covers:**

  "I had been livestreaming my playthrough of *Undertale* and was madly in love with the game. I was deeply and emotionally affected by it in a way that no game had ever touched me before. Additionally, I had been totally smitten by Temmie as a character; she just filled me with glee and delight when I discovered her part of the game. So naturally, during a livestream, one of my audience asked, 'So when are you going to remix *Undertale*?' With a hint of sarcasm, I scoffed, 'Psh, I'm not going to remix Undertale!! And besides, even if I DID, I would obviously remix Tem Sh—' I kid you not, I immediately stopped speaking, bought the soundtrack directly from Toby Fox's Bandcamp, went to Splice and searched 'glitch hop' and 'EDM drums,' and dragged the sample into FLStudio and got to work. Six to eight hours later—still live streaming—the song was basically finished in one sitting. It was the most 'lightning in a bottle' moment I think I've ever had in my career."

- Participant used video games to brand original music:

  "It's a constant struggle. Honestly, what gets me through it is not focusing on the view counts as much as the comments. When I upload an original track, I've started to train myself: *This is not going to pop off, there's no Kirby sound effects in it, there's no chiptune in it, it doesn't sound like some other video game song*. Sometimes I'll brand original songs. I have a track called 'Downtime,' and it's on YouTube as 'Animal Crossing Song.' It's not really an Animal Crossing song, it just has that vibe to it, but I made it and I branded it around Animal Crossing, and it did better than a normal original track. I have an original track called NES Funk. It's a giant NES controller floating, and it's a chiptune, but it sounds like video game music, and it says 'NES' and it reminds people of Nintendo, so those do better. But every once in a while, I will literally just upload an original song, and I'll just let it be, and I ignore that view count. I try as hard as I can to not look at the view count, and every time I get a comment from someone on YouTube or anywhere—the ones where they specifically break down the individual parts of the song, and you can tell that they're really listening closely, and they're really getting something out of it—those make it easier."

- *Undertale* deeply moved the creator on a personal level, which inspired covering:

"Toby Fox did that. He created that for me. He created something that inspired me so much that I created something that inspired them so much that when they meet me, it feels like they're meeting a god, one of their heroes. That cannot be understated—that, sort of, cultural impact that's affected that many individual lives that deeply and connects people in such a universal way. I don't know. *Undertale*—it is too pure for this world. *Undertale* seems like a magical happening that should have never happened, that we don't deserve it, you know? For me, I built my career on it without even realizing that was going to happen. I'm so grateful. Now I'm friends with Temmie."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Creation is an additive approach:

"I'll start with a very simple idea or a very simple motivation, and then I'll just build from there. I don't really have a plan. I just kind of create until it's finished, and 'Tem Shop' in particular was one of those where I did not have a plan. My only plan was, *I'm going to remix 'Tem Shop*,' and then it just happened. I look back on that and it feels like the planets had aligned; it's serendipitous because everything just feels so perfectly designed to trigger that nostalgia response from the maximum number of people. It was a very good example of what I'm capable of, although I've never made another glitch hop track in my life."

- Creator did not produce everything on YouTube in order to direct audiences to other platforms and not saturate the medium:

"Then, other examples of things not being available on my YouTube channel—I just don't want to oversaturate. I don't want to upload all of my videos all at once, and then none of them get any views. I want to trickle out once a week, every Thursday. I'm making like three or four songs a month, and those are all going directly to my Patreon patrons early. Then, they get to feel that exclusivity."

- **Visual representation is important to the YouTube platform:**

"It's just a universally human thing. A still image with music behind it is going to have lower viewer retention. People get bored, and the younger they are, the more easily bored they are. If you have something, anything even moving on screen, people are just going to pay more attention to it, because that's the whole appeal of video content, right? It takes up enough of your senses that it triggers this sort of vegetative response, where you're just vegging out, because your brain doesn't have to do any work. Your eyeballs are occupied, your ears are occupied. You can make it full screen and there's no distractions, and the box is just telling you how to feel. It's sort of overwhelming your senses enough to the point where you don't desire to do something else unless it's content that genuinely isn't engaging to you. But if you're listening to a song on YouTube and you're looking at the screen and there's nothing moving, there's just a percentage of people that are going to leave because it's boring. It's visually boring, so using gameplay, using animations, using fan art, something that can hook someone visually from the thumbnail, something that— even if their computer is on mute—it's a visually appealing video. Then there's the added bonus of being able to promote the people who made the fan art, which I try to do as best as I can. If it's fan art, I want to make sure that I put in the description: *This is where you can find the fan art, this is that artist's DeviantArt, or their Twitter, or their Instagram.* Again, we actually talk about this a lot with the netlabel. It's like, if you can convince someone that it's a good song without

them even pressing the play button, then you're just going to double your sales. If you have artwork that is attractive and flashy enough that someone's going to look at it and assume that it's a quality product, you're setting their expectations for when they press that play button, you're more likely to make a sale, and you're more likely to have a conversion from that—I think the same thing applies on YouTube."

- **Limitations in technology provide challenges that bring out innovation in creation:**

"But I'm a fan of working within limitations. Call it the chiptune artist in me, but I like using something like Windows Movie Maker and going, oh, well, I can't do these things, but if I combine it with OBS, then I can do some more things, and then learning how to use Windows Movie Maker in a way that creates something that someone would go, at first glance, 'That video does not look like it was made with Windows Movie Maker.' There are parts of it that seem, like, okay, which is probably After Effects, and I have no idea how to use After Effects whatsoever. No, not even close."

  - **The most enjoyable thing about creating YouTube videos is:**

    "Learning—using the tools and limitations of my software to create visually pleasing, impressive videos. I love learning how to animate and find workarounds to make my visions come to life."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- Participant was involved in school music since 5th grade, including marching and jazz bands.
- General elementary music helped him learn things about tone, timbre, and tuning that were "extremely helpful in music production and audio editing."

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal

- **Lessons**:
  - Piano (1 year)
  - Trumpet (2 years).
- Participant felt lessons were a chore and didn't enjoy them.

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal

- Participant self-taught guitar, singing, piano/synth, and drums.
- **Renaissance person:**
  - Learning about technology or music isn't enough—the online artist needs to know about human connection:

    "There's a lot of psychology in being a successful content creator. Understanding how, not only your audience thinks, but just how people in general think. These concepts, like: if there's something moving on the screen, you're going to have more audience retention. It seems obvious when you say it, but not everybody has thought of that. Not everyone knows that, but yeah, this stuff, it just naturally, intuitively became clear because I spent basically every day trying to improve my methods and being critical of myself. Self-taught is the answer, I suppose."

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online

- **You can lose access to your work through derivative use of your content:**

"I don't think about it, honestly. When I first started my career, I, as a matter of principle, accepted that people were going to steal my music because I was a pirate—I was a music pirate, a software pirate. When I started releasing music, I saw all of my friends who were coming up as musicians at the time complaining about piracy and getting so angry that people were stealing their music. If we've learned anything from the AAA video game industry, it's that trying to stop pirates just makes it worse. So, when I first started making music, it was a very distinct matter of principle, that, *You know what? Fine, I'll just give it to everyone for free, and I'll say, do whatever you want with it, as long as you give me credit*. That way, not only are you enabling people who don't have any money to get your music and download it, you're also giving people the opportunity to pay later, or just pay right then if they want to buy it. I honestly don't even worry about it, as long as someone's giving me credit, and as long as it's not actively hateful content. It's Creative Commons attribution, so they can kind of just use it, which is kind of scary, but that's the idea. The idea is: people who are going to steal my music are going to steal my music, so just let them have it, and then hopefully, out of the kindness of their heart, they'll be like*, Man, it was really cool that he just let me upload his song. Two years later, I'm going to give him some money. I'm going to buy his album, because I remember that he was chill about his music being uploaded somewhere else*. At least, to my knowledge, and I could be talking out of my ass here. I've started leaning towards All Rights Reserved now because I like the opportunity of someone emailing me asking me for a license, and me being able to figure out if they can pay me or not, but for things that are labeled as Creative Commons attribution—that is basically my express permission to any random person. God forbid, if somebody who was making KKK or anti-Semitic content really loves my music, they're allowed to use it. It says in the license. So then, I would have to go to them, and it would basically just be an emotional plea, like, 'Hey, I don't agree with your content to the level where I'm not comfortable with you using my music,' but as far as I know, I don't have a legal defense there, because the license is Creative Commons 3.0. I've had this discussion with a lot of people, and they're like, 'So you don't care if anybody uses your music, even porn?' I'm like, 'Yeah, whatever, fine.'"

"If someone can't separate the fact that my music is in something else—if they're going to relate my music to some horrible content—that just seems like too much energy to try to change their mind in the first place. I don't even need you as a fan. If some horrible person uses my music and that makes you think less of me, you clearly don't understand how it works, and I don't even have the time. The thought pops into my mind sometimes, *I wonder what horrible people might be using my music for their podcasts, you know?* But what are you going to do about it? I truly believe that art should be shared, and it definitely is not a 100% safe, blanket statement, to just be like, 'Art should be shared freely, no matter what,' but I do believe it as a matter of principle. It's kind of a fun, not-funny funny, not-funny thought. Sometimes I wonder, but I don't go digging."

"You're also sending a message to the pirates that says*, I get it. It's cool. You can have this, and if you never want to pay for it, if you never want to support me, that's fine*, because when someone downloads my music for free, I see that as an opportunity. I see that as a new set of ears, a new set of emotions that are being connected to that music, and a new source of word-of-mouth, of free advertising…which is sort of the pirates' mantra—*well, it's free advertising*—which is a problematic statement but, in my case, I've accepted that to be a universal truth. Because that was my philosophy from day one, I don't really get riled up. I only get riled up if you're not giving me credit."

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- **Participant mentors others as part of job**:

    "Creating, selling, and performing music is my full-time job. I live-stream the creation process on Twitch, travel to conventions for performances, play local shows, throw my own shows locally and at other events under our record label Tiny Waves, sell my CDs and merchandise, distribute my music to online stores like Spotify and iTunes, sell my music on Bandcamp…I'm sure the list goes on. I try to diversify the ways I profit off of my skills as much as possible."

    o **Other people's success is a motivator for creating opportunities:**

    "It's inspiring, and it gives me hope when someone who I have put up on a pedestal turns out to just be a regular person, and they're super nice and friendly. I think that really just inspires me to keep trying to build things in a positive way, instead of giving up because shady people always win."

- **Livestreaming allowed for teaching and encouragement:**

    "I think that creates an 'air of mystery' about the process, which, again, incentivizes coming to my livestreams and talking to me there, where the human element, for me, is on Twitch, and the human element is in person. I don't put that on YouTube, because quite frankly, it's too much work. I'm trying to turn my YouTube into a machine. I just want to be able to upload once a week and see those numbers go up. If I can do that and I can make people happy in the process, that's great, but if you want to talk to me, hit me up on social media, come to my Twitch streams, come to my performances and my meet-and-greets. That's where the human element exists, and YouTube is very much just a showcase."

- **Participant used his label to provide opportunities for others to publish.**

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: High

Utility for Theme 1B: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2A: Low

Utility for Theme 2B: None

Utility for Theme 2C: Low

Utility for Theme 2D: High

Utility for Theme 2E: Very High

Findings

1. Self-reflections of the creator sparked by *Undertale* provided inspiration for covers.
2. Success from *Undertale* covers nearly took over the creator's career, which made breaking away from *Undertale* difficult.
3. The creator believed visual aesthetics for YouTube were important to audience retention.
4. Limitations in technology provided the creator with challenges that led to innovation.
5. Self-teaching required the creator to develop psychological and entrepreneurial skills.
6. Published creations can lead to derivative works, which meant the creator lost access to the work.
7. Mentoring others became part of the creator's professional endeavors.
8. Livestreaming provided a venue for the creator to teach and encourage others.

9. The creator used his recording label to provide opportunities for others to publish.

Diwa de Leon – *String Player Gamer*

Synopsis of Case

Diwa de Leon was a 37-year-old native of the Philippines when we started this study. He was a professional composer and film score creator from a famous musical family. Shortly after our interview, he moved to the USA to pursue YouTube full-time.

Situational Constraints

As the oldest person in this study, de Leon's experiences predate everyone except for a few people. Additionally, he has had a full career as a successful musician with a lot of fame, particularly in his country of birth. In contrast, the decision to pursue YouTube fulltime led him to decide to move to the USA. de Leon experimented with visual depictions of music, focused on clean-cut visuals, and considered himself an artist of various sorts.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

de Leon had an illustrious career as a professional performer, composer, and arranger. The dream of finding larger fame and financial success drove him to pursue YouTube full time, move from his country to the USA, and pursue a career as a creator and performer. The creator also included visual art in his videos.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration

- Creator wanted "attention" that came with the popularity of the game:

    "At first, I just wanted attention—attention whore at the beginning—but eventually, hey, this can be a two-way thing. This can be an actual conversation. So that, for me, is the one really great bonus of being a YouTuber: being happy doing your passion, and at the same time making others happy. And if by some chance they learn something from you, or not just learn, but if they're inspired by what you're doing—if they learn something from you because of the techniques that you do—then that's a great bonus. At that time, the *Undertale* hype was really through the roof, and I've seen the positive effects it has on Richaad's channel—his subscriber count really skyrocketed and I wanted a piece of that, is what I'm saying. think it's a great combination of hype, fan passion, and really just excellent music. So those three things kept me going and it gave me a lot of enthusiasm to pursue that *Undertale* thing."

- The perceived simplicity of melody inspired the creator to play with the music and arrange it

    "It's such a simple thing—kind of like I'm always impressed by a simple melody, a simple melodic figure, a simple melodic motif, and then when you expand it, it just becomes something else. For example, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: four simple notes, but he was able to expand it into such a large, epic symphonic piece. It's a very simple idea, but it also works with any chord progression, and you could do so many things with it. You could even insert it in any other video game cover that's not *Undertale,* and you can somehow find a way to fit it. I think I'm just really enamored by that kind of idea, and Toby Fox nailed it in the head with this one."

    o Great music—both original and covers—swayed de Leon to play *Undertale*.

"Indie games aren't my usual type of game because I'm usually spoiled—I go with the good graphics, and either the Nintendo ones, the big titles, or the Final Fantasy ones, or the Elder Scrolls of Fallouts. Those are my default go-to games, I guess. I wasn't really big on the retro gaming because most of the indie games are usually leaning on that style, hanging on to nostalgia and... I don't know, it just wasn't really my cup of tea. But then again, I am easily swayed by great music. And *Undertale* easily fits that description. I did—I listened to some of the music, I listened to some of the covers, and then I played the game. And by then I was already connected kind of into the game—despite the good story, despite the quirky characters, the music already connected me."

- Creating and publishing on YouTube was self-indulgent for participant:

"The way I started YouTube is kind of selfish: I just wanted to make arrangements of video game music that I already like, and to listen to them in a way as if it were performed by a live band or a live orchestra, which we didn't have access much to before, but it's different now."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices

- Participant published four albums of *Undertale* music.
- Participant created MIDI Art with a MIDI keyboard to input notes and piano roll to assign colors and create art:

"So, I have my visual arts chops, so I try to combine that with my musicality and my editing skills in Logic, and that's what I came up. I just wanted to give it a try because this is amazing, when I saw Mary [inaudible 00:43:42]'s work, I thought: *This is amazing, I can do that. I can do that, but I want to do it with video games, so maybe it will become even more appealing to my fans.* And that's what I did. I thought that I'd give it a shot and boom. . .It was definitely in the plan to include the motifs, to make it number one, appealing visually and sonically, because, *Oh, I'm watching Frisk doing battle with the dummy. I'm watching Frisk doing battle with Undyne but I can also hear their themes.* I think that adds an extra layer of appeal. After a day or two of trial and errors: *Okay, let's do this.*"

- The visual aspect of YouTube videos was the most challenging part for the creator, due to his perfectionism:

"It's the most physically demanding and stressful of the entire process for me. Everything's so much about 'in the moment' and little mistakes mean repeating the entire thing again. I do a lot of reshoots because of a tiny mistake in my performance, which means it's gonna be an obvious mistake on video. I have to make sure my angle is correct, my hair is just right, etc.—everything should be perfect."

"My hair. If my hair is in an off position in just one second of the video, I am so tempted to reshoot everything. I am so conscious about how I appear on video because, to be honest, I don't really have confidence in how I look physically on video, so I try my best to play up the angles."

- The genre of music or style of arrangement influenced the way de Leon acted:

"Yeah. For example, me personally, if I listen to a really, really intricate classical piece, for example, I want to see how the musician is playing it, I want to see the fingers, *how fast is he really playing it?* Seeing that happen on video kind of gives your playing, your performance, an elevated sense of believability, authenticity. *Oh, he's really playing it. I can see.* That, for me,

makes me appreciate the music more. For me, it's not enough for people to just hear the sound of the instrument. For example, the hegalong: I want them to also see it, because it's a unique instrument. Same as when I'm listening to a really good classical violinist, I want to see how he or she is playing it. Is she playing it stoic or is she playing it animated? There are so many aspects of video and visuals that really enhances the musical experience for me."

"For guitar and for bass, I can usually afford to be more animated when I shoot the videos for that because the parts are simple. Most rhythm guitar parts and bass guitar parts are simple, or maybe because I arrange them to be simple, but for violin, I am usually more concentrated because it all depends on the melody, and the violin is the one doing the melody, so even though I try or I think I try to be more animated when I play the violin, I usually end up being this stoic version of myself because I end up concentrating more on the playing. I guess it all comes down to me not really memorizing the pieces that much by memory, by muscle memory, so I have to kind of concentrate because let's say, yes, I have memorized the pieces before I film them but maybe it's like 20 to 30% memorization or something like that. So, the 70% of that depends on my concentration of the piece so I don't make a mistake. But, if you notice, there are some videos I did where I really memorized the piece on violin part quite hard—I think in some of my Pokemon covers—so that affords me some leeway for movement while playing the violin. Yeah, that's basically it: concentration and memorization, or the lack of it. It's because the nature of the guitar, as you said, is a headbanging thing, and it's very natural because of the posture, and the upper body is basically free when you're playing a guitar, especially if it's strapped. But the violin is kind of more rigid, and you can't jump around all the time, so I just focus on the sideways movements instead because that's the easiest one to do, at least."

- Scheduling was difficult for collaboration:

"You are both slaves to each other's schedules, and there's nothing you can do about it other than wait for the other one to be available. This is not contract work or paid jobs, so we both adjust with each other's availabilities. Even today, I still have a couple of collaborators who still haven't sent in their parts a year later. And all I can do is be patient because everyone's always doing something they need to do first."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School
- Participant has undergraduate degree in composition.
- No courses were available (late 90s).

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal
- **Lessons**:
    - Piano (14 years)
    - Violin (as child)
    - Guitar (as child).

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal
- Participant self-taught guitar and played in a rock band, and fooled around on electric bass.
- Consumption was a form of authenticity that gave a cover **context, intent, and connection:**

"For covers, at least, I always go to the original OST first because it has to be in context for me, it has to be in context with the original vision, the original sonic vision of the song. If it was meant to be an 8-bit tribute, I *have* to hear that. I *have* to give context to why is it 8-bit and why did the

composer, why did Toby Fox, do it this way. I want to learn the context of the original song first before I cover. I think that way it adds some sort of authenticity to the cover, and it gives some fans—it gives fans a more genuine connection. *Oh, he did listen to the original OST. Oh, he did do his research and he added this 8-bit part or something. I remember this in the original*. Sometimes if I listen to other people's covers right away, it's not authentic in a sense that most cover artists just add their own style anyway. For example, Carlos is just super, super happy with his extended solos and syncopated patterns that are not really in the original; Richaad is, of course, very flashy with his finger tapping styles and that's one of the reasons why I love his covers, as well, but that's not in the original. Those parts are not in the original, and I have to hear the original first. And most of the time, I like to hear the original music in the context of the game. So, I play the game itself, if I can, if I have the time, but that's my default preference. If it's a game that I played and immersed a lot of time in, I believe I can do more justice to the music from that game because I know it inside and out: the story, the game, the characters, and the music."

- Trial-and-error was the predominant way to learn how to mix:

"Mostly it came to the balance of the drums and the violin, because 'Battle Against a True Hero' is such an energetic piece, and for energetic pieces like that, the sense of balance in the mix is so important because it's actually, for me, 'Battle Against a True Hero,' is like a contradicting thing on its own. The bass, the guitar part, and the drums are super hyper—something like very, very shock-metal or death-metal in character. And then, the melody of the violin, very balladic, very soothing. And then you put those two together, there's going to be some pulling up or pulling down and so the balance should be perfect. And I don't know how many passes I tried, maybe 10 to 12 trial and error mixes, until I think I got it right. Even today, I listen to it. I still think that I could've done some parts better, but I'm not very nitpicky of myself, as usual. But yeah, that's the thing that made 'A True Hero' a bit more challenging for me, at that time."

   o *Undertale* was a time for experimentation in de Leon's YouTube journey.

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online
- All audio learning was done through watching YouTube tutorials and experimenting:

"I think I'm kind of jealous of those who, early on, decided they wanted to study music production. I was late in the game, so I had to learn stuff all by myself because, when I was still in the Philippines, music production was not really offered in any classes or any schools."

"Yeah, I watched a lot of video lighting tutorials on YouTube, and then I also observed my other fellow YouTubers—in particular Jonathan Young. I love the lighting he does in his videos and it's usually just, like, a black background with a simple backlight that creates an outline of the person, of the subject, and I kind of like that. It's kind of like a Rembrandt painting, or something."

- YouTube started as a "bet" that he could get views. Eventually, it became a career:

"It was a bet with my younger sibling—that someday I will have one video with a million views. I now have four of those. I never really had a plan at the start, and it just evolved to be about video game music."

- Seeing YouTube creations of others inspired de Leon to try it himself.
   o Various times, he talks about other VGM artists. This was also true with MIDI Art:

"Yeah, it all started when I saw MIDI art being posted on YouTube of this bird, and then Andrew Huang also did a MIDI art of a pony in his channel. Are you familiar with Andrew Huang? Yeah, there you go. He's definitely going to come up when you search for MIDI art. But what they did, that bird thing, the bird MIDI art and Facebook and Andrew Huang, they were just simplistic, figure-based midi art. What really enamored me is when I saw the works of Mary [inaudible 00:42:28], did you look her up?"

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- Being a mentor happened, much to the creator's chagrin, and now he embraces the opportunity to help others:

"More and more today, I am being thrust into the mentorship role reluctantly. I still feel that sometimes I haven't done enough to earn such acclaim, but it is what it is, so I still impart knowledge that I believe is appropriate for the learner, when asked."

"I am so reluctant at first to be a mentor. I kind of have this selfishness where I want to keep everything I learned on my own, to myself, because why should I teach anyone? **Nobody taught me this, I learned this on my own, and I don't owe anyone anything. And that was how I thought like 10 years, 20 years ago, but then eventually, I think it became an organic process, or** like a natural process that, eventually, especially here in the United States, people were approaching me asking me for advice and what's happening, and it's becoming more and more frequent. Asking for advice, like, 'Hey, man, how can I promote myself on YouTube, how can I earn from my videos on YouTube?' And it always happens when they learn that I'm a YouTuber. I do this thing on my channel, and they just approach me, and sometimes I'm so amazed, because *why are people approaching me*? I'm a nobody. I'm just some guy on the internet who plays videos. And I didn't know, until maybe a year or two ago, the impact I'm having on my following, on my friends, on my subscribers, and that it's kind of empowering, to be honest, that I am here, being thrust into a role that I'm reluctant about, because—I'm not sure if I told you before but—I really hate teaching. Teaching is not my thing and there's a certain stress associated with being a teacher that I really can't handle, unlike my dad— he's really a natural teacher. But for me, I've always found myself to be more a creator, a producer, than a teacher or a mentor. But lately, it's happening unexpectedly, and I think it's empowering for me. I'm enjoying it, that I'm able to help others, even no matter how little or how big. And yeah, it's a new thing, it's happening, it's still currently happening, and I'm still trying to adjust to it. It's, wow, mind boggling for me. Wow. Me? A mentor? I'm no Master Miyagi or Master Splinter, why am I being the one who's being approached? There are other bigger YouTubers than me, but there you go. I'm just starting to accept it, and it's still very new to me."

- Participant had the opportunity to formally share his experiences in guest lectures at schools:

"Sometimes, back in the Philippines, I did maybe five or six how-to YouTube lectures for specific targeted audiences in lecture events, sometimes in schools, but what I still don't have is me lecturing directly to the type of audience that I want: the musicians. The struggling, surviving musicians—I still haven't had a chance to talk with them directly on a large scale. Yeah, sure, I gave a private lecture of how-to YouTube for maybe 10 of my musician friends in the Philippines, but those are my friends, so I don't think it counts because I can easily just go, 'Hey, want to learn how to YouTube? Let's go to my house and I'll get pizza.'"

- Participant created documentaries about the creative process:

"Eventually, I found that, hey, *people are enjoying this, too.* They are watching my videos. So, what if I up my game a bit, tell them a bit about the process that I do, make a mini documentary like that Behind the Strings that I did? I wonder how far this will reach. I wonder how far the interaction with my crowd reaches. It's just phenomenal, because I didn't even expect such a level of interactivity between me and those who watch me."

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Moderate

Utility for Theme 1B: High

Utility for Theme 2A: Low

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2D: High

Utility for Theme 2E: High

Findings

1. The creator wanted to garner attention that came with creating *Undertale* covers.
2. Publishing on YouTube was a self-indulgent way to make music that the creator loved.
3. Visual aspects were extremely important to the creator as an art form.
4. Genre and style influenced the video performance of the creator.
5. Working with collaborators' schedules were challenging.
6. Consuming media contributed to the creator's authenticity as a video game musician, thus giving covers context, intent, and connection.
7. The creator learned mixing and other technological skills predominantly through watching YouTube tutorials.
8. Other YouTube videos inspired the creator to try creating similar products.
9. The creator was initially reluctant to be a mentor.
10. The creator made documentaries to show the creative process to others.

Peter Anthony Smith - *Soundole*

Synopsis of Case

Peter Anthony Smith, known as *Soundole* on YouTube, was a 30-year-old university lecturer and instrumental tutor in Australia when he participated in this study. His YouTube channel initially served as a repository for his musical explorations, which included multitrack split-screen performances, video footage of studio recording sessions, and live classical music small ensemble performances. He had two YouTube channels, including *Soundole Music* and *Soundole VGM Covers*. Smith was well known for using an Electronic Wind Instrument (EWI). His *Undertale* covers were mostly EWI multitrack videos; however, he also did a video in which he played piano. He used his platform as a creative artist to bring awareness to animal adoption. His cover of "Dogsong" was inspired by *Undertale*, using characters and songs from the game to inspire his cover. The video also featured footage of some dogs of other VGM artists in this study.

Smith provides perspective about the balance between the classical art world and VGM. His approach was that both are valid and can exist in tandem. He believed that the there are barriers between the classical and popular music realms, but that those barriers are being broken down and more cross-over is now occurring.

Situational Constraints

Smith was amid upheaval in his career as a university and instrumental tutor. While we did not go into details, the demand for private tutelage was waning in his area. Therefore, he is on the cusp of big changes in his area, which may have influenced his views of the classical/popular music debate.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

Smith had a long history of working within the academy while exploring novel ways of making music. This was evident by the EWI, VGM, and publication of online performance. He was one of few people working to popularize the EWI on YouTube and his channel brought a lot of people to know about the instrument.

Prominence of Themes in This Case:

Prominence of Theme 1A: Inspiration
- Participant joined YouTube to audition for the YouTube Symphony Orchestra in 2009.
- Being part of the **VGM cover community empowered the creator to explore arranging** that ventured away from the original soundtrack:

  "Now, I feel a lot more open and empowered to do what I want. I'm exposed to all of these people who say, 'Well, for the next track I'm going to try and make a country track, what are some of the features of country music? I can do that,' and off they go, making something. When you're witness to those sort-of creations constantly, it's very empowering, and I feel that I've got so many more options now as to what I can do in the future. Any approach is sort of on the table now."

- **Regarding VGM**:

  "That music is part of my DNA, I think, now. There's something just sort of deeply engaging about those melodies in whatever format they appear, in whatever way they're covered. So, the nostalgia is a draw for people in the same way that hearing a familiar folk song might be, or a familiar pop song—it's another way of connecting with people with a shared cultural heritage to you."

- The way the story in *Undertale* was told inspired the creator emotionally, and covers provide a nostalgic and empathic reliving of that experience:

  "The concepts that it tackled were fairly rarely addressed by other games, and I think it signifies a sort of maturity, in that it was using a lot of common video game tropes and understandings about video game history. Not just as kind of a fourth-wall breaking, *hey, don't you remember when RPGs do this*, but it was specifically to try and bring attention to the assumptions that people are going into other games with. It was specifically for a storytelling purpose, so there was just a great degree of intelligent design that went into its storytelling and mechanics, and I hadn't seen anything else, and really haven't seen things that have done that to the same level since."

"I think that the covers that we're making aren't just traditional musical performances. They're kind of a fan creation that leverages nostalgia, specifically, so having some extra musical connection to the game acts as just another part of that artwork."

"I think it actually goes hand-in-hand with empathetic and emotional messages. A lot of other covers that people have done—if they draw from extra-musical things, if they're drawing from experiences in their own life—are because Undertale has connected with these fundamental human feelings of empathy, and friendship, and all of those positive emotions. So rather than say, you know, for instance, Super Mario Brothers, where there's just not that same sort of empathetic connection. To link that idea with *Undertale* seemed a lot more natural for me."

- YouTube creation was a hobby that the creator used to balance their professional career as a classical musician:

"I always loved, in the classical music world, any opportunities to get together with other people and just produce music that we loved. But there are different mindsets there, compared to YouTube creators. It seems that among most, even undergrad people, there's the expectation that you're going to get paid for your work, even if you enjoy it, and that's fine, but it's unsustainable for producing a huge amount of stuff without funding. YouTube, by comparison, is driven much more by hobbyists, or by people who are taking up these positions as secondary to their main other roles in life, and they don't have the same sort of expectations when it comes to reimbursement."

"I think the hobbyist background of most YouTubers has a very big part in that. But here's the interesting thing: even if you come to this sort of video production as a complete professional in the musical field—as a fantastic arranger, amazing performer—and there are people in this field that come from that background, you're a novice in something. You know, there's, for instance, been a learning curve as people learn video editing software. Or, they learn audio editing and production. And I think the memory of having to acquire these new skills quickly, or having to teach themselves, or seek help from other people—these are all things that have happened recently to people that are developing work on YouTube."

Prominence of Theme 1B: Creative Practices
- Creator uses MIDI technology and an EWI to build his arrangements:

"I record MIDI from my digital piano whenever I do those parts, but all of my EWI recordings have used mono out from the instrument itself (it has an onboard analog modelling synth). I use a click track for everything, generated in whatever software I'm using. I usually record all accompaniment parts first, not necessarily from the bottom up, but I always leave the melody parts until last, because the way I play them changes if I'm inspired by the surrounding harmony!"

"For *Undertale*, obviously those source NSF files or whatever didn't exist, I just had the wave files to operate from. So, in some cases, I think a handful of those tracks were straightforward enough that I could just do them using my ears. But for some of the other tricky parts, where it was too difficult to hear what was happening—the inner voices when things got denser, especially once things go beyond four part—I'm just stuffed. So, there's a piece of software I use called WIDI. I think it's, yeah, WIDI. It's designed to convert wave or MP3 files into a MIDI format—that's its main, actual function. But in the process of doing that, since it's doing spectral analysis to get to that point, it renders things first in a piano roll, with a kind of heat density graph, showing you likelihoods of notes in various places. And that's not its main function, I have

to say. That's more like a tool within itself that's designed to help clean up the MIDI files that it makes. But that's been incredibly useful, just for rendering complex chords against a piano roll so that I can see what's going on. So, there are a few parts in that, especially 'Quiet Water.' It's just tricky to hear that—I think it's like a sus2 chord, or something, that's wrong? That's just a little bit blurry, even when you slow it down, but as soon as you open it in WIDI, those three notes show up clear as day and that made it much, much easier."

- Long-lived experiences in classical traditions led the creator to arrange covers with little divergence from the original soundtrack:

"But there's just that culture within the classical music world, that you're dealing with these very sacrosanct interpretations of works, and any divergence from this idealized interpretation, whether that comes from a high-ranking recording or from what's being imparted to you by a teacher, you know, any sort of diversion from that is never treated as something interesting. It's something that's abhorred. So that attitude is very, very different."

"Up until pretty recently, recreating tracks in similar renditions to the original was an aesthetic principle of mine—I highly valued authentic and accurate transcriptions. That particular track is written for three-tone generators and percussion, so I was pursuing an arrangement pretty close to the original. I think there's some novelty and interest from seeing even pretty 'straight' arrangements performed with real instruments. I would hope my audience appreciates seeing those tracks in a slightly different light, while feeling a fond connection to the original tracks."

"The majority of stuff that I was covering was stuff that was a simple three-part texture, and I had a handful of patches that I knew would work that I could get going relatively quickly for this."

"Because the approach that I had in terms of transcription and pursuing these really, sort of, *exact* arrangements, I think that mindset came from the classical world of holding up original editions of things as something holy, and sort of uneditable in that sort of way—the same way that we value Urtext, or we value very particular editions of Bach works that people have put together. I had conceptions of there being immense value in just producing this work in its purest form, even though, as I was doing that, I knew that it wasn't the most convincing performance, or the most convincing piece of music in that arrangement. So, that mindset still carried over quite a long time, but that's something that's dissipated over the years, just as I've hung out with more open-natured people, and a greater variety of types of musicians, that have a much more open or varied approach to their arrangement."

"Yeah, so since then, I think I've become a lot more comfortable knowing what will work. There've been a few sort-of awkward stages where my views on how to arrange stuff have changed, and I think *Undertale* sort of came at a bit of an in-between period, where I was originally writing a lot of arrangements of 8-bit tracks, and I had a few go-to patches that seemed to replicate those sounds well. I didn't have that much of a toolkit ready to go to work with more complex things or things in different genres, or how the EWI could interact with other instruments so much—they're all more complex questions to answer. So, for some of those tracks, it was still pretty straightforward. Like it's called 'Once Upon a Time,' the main theme? That's pretty straightforward, because that's just a replication of those 8-bit things. A lot of those 16-bit tracks don't work as straight transcriptions—that's a weird thing about them. The 8-bit tracks will frequently work because it's kind of an analog to chamber music. We're used to hearing trios and quintets and players like that, and it sort of works, but when you take a track from the mega drive

that's using a very pared down instrumentation to try and simulate a rock band, or some sort of symphonic opera thing, it starts to break down when you take it out of context—like when you're not used to hearing that specifically coming out of a mega drive. I've found that those tracks start to just feel shallow and thin, and don't have appropriate textures to cover."

- The creator used a combination of transcription and finding resources online to create arrangements for covers:

"Pretty much. So, I have absolute confidence that, given a single melodic line, and enough time, there is nothing that I can't transcribe. But it's when other stuff gets complex and harmonic that I can't pick stuff apart, so when I'm coming up against just tricky-to-decipher inner voices of things—that's when I take the individual layers apart. That's what I would consider cheating."

- Collaborative efforts did not always manifest in equal returns on all party's channels, and therefore, creators needed to agree on their working relationship:

"As much as I would like to get Ace working on my own tracks, I haven't had any sort of success in getting collaborations working the other direction because he is always running on tight schedules. He's always pretty sleep deprived to keep that sort of stuff going, so I've just been fortunate that he keeps reaching out to me occasionally for these things."

  o Sometimes, it's just a large "call out" for collaboration:

  "They're all members of GameLark, so I don't remember if I posted in GameLark directly. I'm pretty sure I made a post from my Facebook page, for VGM covers, and I think I made a post in the main GameLark private group, just asking people if they could get some footage for me in the next day or so."

  o **Megalovania collab:**

  "That one, the 'Megalovania' medley that he was doing, I remember it always. It was always intended to be a really big, special, defining moment from the purple side album. He wanted to make that his *magnum opus*, and he was collaborating with a number of his other long-time collaborators as well. I think he was influenced—and you'd be able to get a lot more information from him directly about this—but he was influenced by various other sorts of prog rock and electronica, doing stuff with weird time signatures. And we actually went through a few revision processes over that EWI part in 'Megalovania,' which was the most interesting part of working with it. I don't remember what time, was it 7, or—11/8, there you go. So yeah, I had no idea what I was going to do with that at first. The solo was easy enough because it's easy enough to make something up that worked in that time signature. It was kind of like 12/8, cutting the end off each time. But to make the actually head of the melody work, we went through a few revisions, especially because 'Megalovania' is just so syncopated. That's what added to the difficulty there because those syncopations didn't work out when I tried to preserve them going into 11/8. When you had those other off beats there, it just sort of sounded like a confusing mess that was constantly out of time. So, I sent him a few back-and-forths with ideas where we tried to keep that heavily syncopated nature of the track going, and he was kind of like, 'No, keep fiddling—see if something happens.' So eventually I just said, 'Fuck it, that's not working.' It's already going to sound weird enough because of

the 11/8 time signature, so I just went to reinforce the 11/8 groupings as he had done in the percussion track, and that's what finally sort of worked."

"I'm nearly certain that I got the percussion parts first, because—in that sort of situation—sometimes the mechanism for controlling time in some of that vintage equipment is not exact. And I'm sort of extrapolating back from other stuff, I'm not 100% that this is how it actually worked out then, but I'm pretty sure I worked from percussion first, the main reason being: if you're using, like, an arbitrary metronome that's set up in 1970s drum machine, for instance, it's not going to be synchronized at all with a metronome in any other sort of modern editing software. So, you kind of have to take that machine's click as your metronome track if you want to work with that sort of percussion thing, unless you did a whole ton of time shifting afterwards—which wouldn't be worth it. So, it just made sense for him to record those percussion parts first, and then I used that as the timekeeping method, recording everything else over the top of it."

- Creator used their own gameplay for videos because they could control the footage and tell the visual story that complimented their music:

"Videos aren't just a performance in themselves, that's an extra-musical aspect to it. But also, it's just another level of interest in visual presentation. I think it's frequently a bit of an ask to get somebody to just totally tune out everything else that they're doing and watch a three, or four, minute music video. So, if there's more going on that they can actually follow—and people tend to like watching game footage—I think that also helps to sort of keep people's attention."

"Usually, it's the most varied and interesting part of the actual visual presentation. In rare cases, like when somebody is doing something particularly musically interesting, for instance, a very difficult solo on an instrument or something like that, it might be worthwhile paying attention to how they're actually performing that. But for the most part, a lot of those sequences just sort of fade together. If you've seen some people strum chords, you've seen everybody strum chords."

"Gameplay can distract from music making, but it doesn't necessarily have to. I mean, people aren't necessarily going to these videos to assess these performances in the same way that they would a classical music performance. There's not that kind of deep intent listening to them frequently. They're a different sort of piece of art, aren't they? So quite possibly they're distracting, if you're trying to really listen to musical details, but I don't think that's necessarily what people watch the videos for."

"Because it is part of the whole presentation, and it doesn't always work out this way, but it's nice if you can sort of line up cadences or little bits of musical impact with stuff that's going on in the video. It doesn't always work out like that, but that's much harder to do if you're using somebody else's footage, because you just don't have that level of control."

Prominence of Theme 2A: School

- Participant got a traditional Australian music education, taking music as an elective in high school, as well as requisite units in university for music performance.
- There is a perceived schism between classical training programs at schools, and VGM music on YouTube:

"The biggest conflict is just in the attitudes present in tertiary study communities, and the VGM cover scene. While the general musical values of bettering oneself and making well-thought-out performances are universal, YouTube is, overall, less elitist and more supportive."

- Skills the creator learned from school settings were applied as the basis for arranging covers:

"I think it just gives me a technical background of listening to stuff, and there's maybe some transfer of skills when it comes to pursuing phrasing, and just thinking intelligently about interpretations of pieces, but there's no direct connection."

"When somebody covering this sort of music has a classical background, it comes out in their arrangements—one way or another. Like, when somebody has done training in voice leading, you're without a doubt seeing voice leading principles in one way or another. And even if they're rejected, it's much more of a whole-hearted rejection than just sort of choosing roles for harmonic voice resolutions at random. There's some sort of ways that their past is reflected in their art, which I think is really interesting, and true of me as well."

- Technology in music courses provided basic knowledge on some DAW software:

"So, I would have had a very basic understanding of that from doing a little bit of a music tech class in university. The very basics to do with audio editing from Audacity was just sort of standard knowledge, I think. And I think the interface there is enough that you can pick it up in half an hour, just fiddling around yourself."

Prominence of Theme 2B: Formal
- **Lessons**:
    - Piano (weekly for two years)
    - Clarinet (grade 10-postgraduate degrees).
- Participant was involved with many professional and semi-professional ensembles, opera productions, and chamber music.

Prominence of Theme 2C: Informal
- Not applicable.

Prominence of Theme 2D: Online
- Part of learning the EWI was done through watching videos of other EWI players on YouTube.
- YouTube policies challenged the way the creator was monetizing content:

"Most recently, there were the announced changes to the YouTube Partner Program that mean I won't earn ad revenue anymore unless I get a big jump in watch-time over the next few weeks. Also, the way that the content ID algorithms and content dispute systems work is heavily weighted against creators; there's no way to dispute a false positive flagging, and the system is geared in favor of people putting content claims on your videos, even if they're in the wrong. Numerous videos on my other channel, of works that have been in the public domain for hundreds of years, have had their monetization revenue split with rights trolls that have no rights to those pieces. I'm powerless to dispute those claims, and YouTube doesn't really help to arbitrate anything."

- Creator would "rip" emulator files and convert them to MIDI, and then to scores. If those were not available, the creator would "cheat" and find somebody else's transcription online and hope that it was accurate.
- The creator emulated the visual layouts of other videos they saw on YouTube.

Prominence of Theme 2E: Mentoring

- The creator offers scores of arrangements as rewards for patrons:

  "I currently offer them as rewards to my patrons on Patreon. I've considered getting them ready for publishing, but these particular EWI arrangements are pretty niche, and I can't see it ever justifying the effort of prettying up the scores."

- The creator was able to share mutual interests in VGM with students they taught in classical-based education settings:

  "I never received questions, you know, about the validity of this as a field of study. So, the attitude that it's not worthy of study I think has pretty much completely disappeared, and the fact that we get so many symphonic concerts of video game music now, and that most of my students (when I was a teacher) were really eager about, and really excited to both be involved in, and go and see? I don't think there's any attitudes that are disparaging about video game music."

Expected Utility of This Case for Developing Themes

Utility for Theme 1A: Very high

Utility for Theme 1B: Very high

Utility for Theme 2A: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2B: Low

Utility for Theme 2C: Low

Utility for Theme 2D: Moderate

Utility for Theme 2E: Moderate

Findings

1. YouTube creation was a hobby that the creator used to balance their professional career as a classical musician.
2. Being part of the VGM cover community empowered the creator to explore arranging that ventured away from the original soundtrack, an outcome from classical training.
3. The way the story in *Undertale* was told inspired the creator emotionally and covers provide a nostalgic and empathic reliving of that experience.
4. Collaborative efforts did not always manifest in equal returns on all party's channels, and therefore, creators needed to agree on their working relationship.
5. Gameplay was used in covers to visually compliment the music.
6. Skills the creator learned from school settings were applied as the basis for arranging covers.
7. The creator used online resources to help arrange covers.
8. Consuming covers inspired the creator, and they attempted to emulate veterans.
9. The creator offered learning materials as rewards for patrons.
10. The creators used VGM as a mutual interest to connect with students in traditional classical settings (university).

Worksheet C. Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case to the Development of Themes.

Theme	1A	1B	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
Carlos Eiene – *Insaneintherainmusic*	M	H	H	L	H	VH	M
Samantha Ballard – *Samantha Ballard*	M	H	H	L	M	M	M
Ro Panuganti – *Ro Panuganti*	VH	H	L	M	M	VH	N
Doug Perry - *Dougdrumultimaperry*	H	H	H	L	M	H	VH
TeraCMusic	M	M	H	N	H	H	N
Thomas – *Sky Tenkitsune*	H	L	M	N	VH	M	H
Amie Waters – *Amie Waters*	H	VH	L	L	M	VH	L
Sulaiyman Fauzi – *Sully Orchestration*	H	H	L	M	L	L	H
Julia Henderson – Julia Henderson	H	M	VH	L	L	M	N
Ben Briggs - *bbriggsmusic*	H	M	L	N	L	H	VH
Diwa de Leon – *String Player Gamer*	M	H	L	L	M	H	H
Peter Anthony Smith - *Soundole*	VH	VH	M	L	L	M	M

Note: This worksheet was constructed after Worksheets A and B were completed to determine the utility of each case to the themes. Utility was determined by the researcher based on his knowledge of cases, number of occurrences of each theme within the case write-up, and the relevance of data to inform the theme. VH means that the case has a potentially very high usefulness for developing the corresponding theme. Respectively, H, M, and L represent high, moderate, and low utilities. An N is used when there was no data from that case noted that might contribute to the development of themes. This data was used to guide the creation of merged findings and their importance to each theme in Worksheets D and E.

Worksheet D. Merged Case-Specific Findings to Develop Assertions about the Quintain.

1. Some creators made covers because wanted to be part of the *Undertale* fandom.
2. Performing *Undertale* covers led to success as a YouTube creator for all creators.
3. Some creators wanted to cover music using their preferred genre and style.
4. Most creators were able to identify growth evidenced by an archive of covers on YouTube.
5. Creators applied established musical practices to making covers.
6. Creators collaborated with others to expand their music making.
7. Creators work within the confines and affordances of the media platforms to make covers.
8. Creators sometimes experienced challenges that affected them negatively.
9. Creators had mixed opinions about how formal schools effected making covers.
10. Creators used their YouTube channel as inspiration to self-direct their learning.
11. Creators used online resources to learn musical, technological, and marketing skills.
12. Some creators content became learning materials for others.

Note: All case-specific findings from Worksheet B were coded and grouped by similarity to develop assertions regarding the quintain. The assertions were then created as a summary about each group of case-specific findings.

Worksheet E. Matrix of Assertions with Rated Importance According to Theme.

	Assertions from Merged Findings	Themes						
		1A	1B	2A	2B	2C	2D	2E
1	Some creators made covers because wanted to be part of the *Undertale* **fandom**	H	L	L	L	L	M	M
2	Performing *Undertale* covers led to **success** as a YouTube creator for all creators	H	M	L	L	L	M	M
3	Some creators wanted to cover music using their **preferred genre and style**	H	H	M	M	M	L	L
4	Most creators were able to identify growth evidenced by an **archive** of covers on YouTube	M	M	M	L	L	H	L
5	Creators applied **established musical practices** to making covers	L	H	H	M	H	L	L
6	Creators **collaborated** with others to expand their music making	H	H	M	M	L	H	H
7	Creators work within the **confines and affordances** of the media platforms to make covers	M	H	L	L	L	M	M
8	Creators sometimes experienced **challenges** that affected them negatively	M	H	M	L	L	L	H
9	Creators had mixed opinions about how **formal schools** effected making covers	L	M	H	H	H	H	H
10	Creators used their YouTube channel as inspiration to **self-direct** their **learning**	M	M	L	L	M	H	M
11	Creators used **online resources** to learn musical, technological, and marketing skills	L	L	L	L	M	H	M
12	Some creators **content became learning materials** for others	M	M	L	L	M	H	H

Note: Merged Findings from Worksheet D were rated based on perceived importance to each theme. High = high importance; M = moderate importance; L = low importance. A high mark means that for this theme, the finding is of high importance. Parentheses around an entry means that it should carry extra weight when assertions are drafted. The notation "C" within a cell means that this situation warrants caution in drafting assertions. The matrix was analyzed to develop a list of cross-case narrative.