

Policies of Misconduct: A Content Analysis of Codes of Conduct for Online Multiplayer Games

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In this paper we searched the websites of 60 popular online multiplayer games to locate their codes of conduct and then performed a content analysis on 32 unique codes of conduct. Our analysis consisted of a two-cycle coding process including initial coding, and then pattern coding for clustering categories and themes together. Our aim was to better understand how game companies include codes of conduct on their websites and what content they include in the codes of conduct. The two-cycle coding process identified five main themes: (1) game company values, (2) expectations of players, (3) bad behaviors and rules, (4) moderation practices, and finally (5) document structure. Our findings suggest that codes of conduct are routinely inaccessible, if present at all, and that codes of conduct are often framed around punitive legal language that reflect policies of misconduct rather than expressing communal values and expectations. Our findings can help contribute towards community management in online games and make codes of conduct more accessible for all stakeholders in online gaming communities. We have also provided design recommendations and a design process that should help guide game companies looking to create value focused codes of conduct.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)** → **Empirical studies in HCI**

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Moderation, Code of Conduct, Content Analysis, Multiplayer Games, Online Communities; Design

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1 INTRODUCTION

The advancement of underlying technologies have made it easier for people to connect and interact in virtual worlds and online multiplayer games, but they have also created challenges about how to manage conduct in ever increasing online communities. Companies running virtual spaces have to manage both social and technical challenges to ensure online conduct and interactions maintain a certain degree of civility, and in the context of multiplayer online games,

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challenges have been identified that include toxicity, ensuring inclusive spaces, and identifying individuals that seek to cause harm to others [7, 25, 28]. These challenges underlie many uncertainties around how best to manage virtual spaces, and limited information exists about how to structure the standards we use to govern online conduct. This problem is worsened by the fact that the community managers responsible for creating or establishing standards of conduct in online virtual games are often overburdened and under-resourced [1, 9].

A strategy companies use to manage some of these challenges in online spaces revolves around the use of governance and policy documentation which companies use to help guide decision making and for legal protection. Governance documentation often includes policies and rules aimed at communicating legal rights, but also at shaping the culture of the online space through direct guidelines of what is acceptable and not acceptable [19, 34]. Companies often have different names for governance documents such as Terms of Services (TOS), End User License Agreements (EULA), or codes of conduct. While existing work has considered these documents in the context of social media platforms [19, 32] and social streaming sites [12], little is known about how these guidelines are communicated within the context of companies running online multiplayer games.

We sought to explore how codes of conduct are communicated in the context of online multiplayer games and aimed to answer two main research questions: (1) where are codes of conduct located on popular multiplayer games' official websites and (2) what content is being communicated in the codes of conduct of popular multiplayer games? We also wanted to explore how the codes of conduct designed by game companies compare to existing ethical guidelines created by nonprofits for structuring a code of conduct for multiplayer games. To answer these questions, we identified 60 popular multiplayer games and conducted a click test to track the search process a user might follow to locate the code of conduct. We then conducted a content analysis on 32 unique codes of conduct identified after the click test. Our content analysis involved a two round coding process involving initial and then pattern coding. We identified five major themes from the content analysis, namely (1) company values, (2) expectations of players, (3) bad behaviors and rules, (4) moderation, and (5) document structures. Our findings show that codes of conduct are often unreachable, if present at all, and that they are communicated through legal language that reflects policies of misconduct rather than expressing communal values and expectations. We also noted an emphasis on individual expectations and personal responsibility on the players to maintain the values set forth by the game companies.

Our study makes contributions to both theory and practice as our findings build on existing work exploring both legal and user-facing governance documentation of companies responsible for online spaces and virtual worlds. Specifically, our study adds a more nuanced understanding about both the content and locations of codes of conducts for popular online multiplayer games, as well as how they compare with existing ethical standards for codes of conduct in multiplayer games. From a more practical perspective, we contribute by identifying potential examples of how the top game companies in the context of multiplayer games are portraying their codes of conduct and provide a design toolkit to help companies create their own value centered code of conduct. Thus, our work contributes towards helping community managers in game companies with establishing a suitable standard of conduct for online multiplayer games and has the potential to lead to more ways to ensure respectful and civil interactions among players of online multiplayer games.

2 Related Work

2.1 Codes of Conduct and Governance

Codes of conduct are considered a component associated with governance and are often used to convey expectations around behaviors that are acceptable in a space, role, institution, or virtual world [2, 17, 19, 37]. A code of conduct often includes policies used by institutions and groups to establish and communicate expectations around normative behaviors and actions related to a specific context [17, 37]. Related work has explored the use of codes of conduct in a number of contexts, including defining the norms of a workplace [11], exploring decorum in open-source software projects [27, 33], advocating for inclusivity and accountability at scientific conferences [17], and maintaining standards during interactions at game jams [31].

The standards, or content, conveyed in a code of conduct are generally linked to the context it was developed for, but there are some commonalities across them. At a fundamental level a code of conduct should communicate acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for a specific context [17, 37]. Another component relates to the inclusion of consequences for exhibiting unacceptable behaviors [17]. While covering all of the elements in codes of conduct across every specific context is difficult without a proper content analysis, a proxy to identify some commonalities lies in the organizations creating ‘templates’ for designing codes of conduct. For example, Favaro et al [17] draws on existing templates created by the “Society for Human Resource Management” [4] to design a code of conduct that communicates respectful behaviors expected at scientific conferences and outlines the consequences for any form of harassment between members at the conferences.

Although the specific content might differ across codes of conduct, a number of benefits have been linked to having a code of conduct that effectively communicates acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Codes of conduct have the potential to encourage ethical behaviors around interactions and act as an ethical standard for members of a group to maintain when interacting with others [2]. They also act as a way to discourage unacceptable behaviors and support the onboarding and welcoming of new members to a given space or context [17, 37]. There are even recommendations that having a code of conduct is a crucial step in creating more inclusive and diverse contexts as they ensure there are a set of standards around the interactions among members and create more support for marginalized groups entering a space [11, 17, 31, 37].

2.2 Codes of Conduct, and Online Multiplayer Games

In the specific context of online multiplayer gaming, a code of conduct tends to convey the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors that game companies expect of players in their games and other online spaces. A content analysis conducted by Busch et al [10] on the codes of conduct for Riots Games’ League of Legends and Blizzard’s World of Warcraft in 2015 revealed a number of common components that were included alongside standards for behavior. These components included general statements used to promote the ideal of positive player communities, and moral arguments meant to legitimize the regulation of behaviors and moderation approaches [10]. Busch et al [10] also noted the codes of conduct poorly communicated standards of behavior and that the language used in these documents was vague and confusing to players.

The vague and confusing language identified in codes of conduct can be linked to the relationship codes of conduct have with other legal governance documentation found in the context of online video games. Multiplayer games and virtual worlds can be considered as legal

spaces where players are asked to conform to regulations and navigate changing rules and negotiations with developers and fellow players [13, 20, 38]. Game companies design legally focused policy documents, namely the end user license agreement (EULA) and terms of service (TOS), to inform users of their rights in terms of the usage of the game and the limitations about modifying and exploiting the software. The legal language and length of the EULA and TOS documents have been found to dissuade players from engaging with them and previous studies suggest that less than 10% of users even access these documents [6, 18, 22]. Among those that do access the EULA and TOS it was found that the average user typically navigates through the documents in around 8 seconds, indicating low engagement with these documents [8]. If codes of conduct are designed to match existing legal documentation, then they are going to be ineffective at communicating standards of behavior to players.

Codes of conduct that are ineffective at conveying expectations to players run the risk of facilitating toxicity in multiplayer video games rather than creating the benefits towards inclusivity. Toxicity in multiplayer games consist of interactions involving harassment, discrimination, and exclusion and multiplayer game companies are seeking ways to reduce toxicity in virtual spaces [3, 24]. One problem linked to toxic behavior relates to mixed interpretations of vague and unclear standards of behavior. For example, Beres et al [7] explored the normalization of toxic behavior in competitive multiplayer games and found that vague rules can contribute to players interpreting the same toxic incident in a number of different ways, with some considering the same interaction as normal game banter and others considering it toxic. There have also been instances of game companies interpreting vague standards in different ways which lead to different degrees of punishments for similar in game behaviors [13]. A clear and well written code of conduct that expresses standards and expectations players can understand is an important first step in clarifying mixed interpretations and reducing toxic behaviors.

Part of the motivation for our study revolves around the opportunity to leverage the benefits of having a clear code of conduct in multiplayer online games and to move away from the legal language and technical speak of EULA and TOS documentation. The opportunities around designing accessible codes of conduct was a motivation for us to explore the content of codes of conduct. Through our searches for related work, we identified a number of ethically focused guides, created by non-profit institutions, for game companies to use in designing a code of conduct. We briefly outline these guidelines in the next section before moving to our study design.

2.3 Guidelines for a Codes of Conduct

A number of non-profit organizations have presented guidelines about creating ethically focused codes of conduct to manage online communities and multiplayer games. One organization, AnyKey, [21] partnered with Twitch to introduce community guidelines that model equitable, fair, and inclusive competitive social gaming. AnyKey suggests that codes of conduct for a community need to be designed around four fundamental values, defined as compassion, integrity, respect, and courage. Compassion links to perspective taking and treating others how you would like to be treated, integrity relates to playing fairly and being honest, respect concerns being respectful towards other players and courage concerns standing up for what is right [23].

The Fair Play Alliance and Anti-Defamation League is another example of an organization working on guidelines for structuring codes of conduct in multiplayer games. The alliance created the 2020 report “Creating and Maintaining Community Guidelines for Online Games and Platforms”, where they provide a framework for game companies to follow when writing and upholding codes of conducts and community guidelines. The report states that a code of conduct

“defines what is acceptable behavior and what good citizenry looks like in your play space. It captures the spirit of intended play.” [15, 16]. Recommendations included in the report state that codes of conduct should use the language of the game, should be easy to understand and simple to read. Codes of conduct should also include examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, consequences for violations, and companies should make an effort to tie values with expectations of behavior [15]. The report notes that designing a clear and understandable code of conduct is a good starting point for establishing trust and community values [15].

The last organization we identified is Ethical Games, who provide extensive ethical guidelines for game companies seeking to make their spaces more inclusive and community focused [14]. While not all of the guidelines relate to the design of codes of conduct, there are still some useful recommendations. These include ensuring a code of conduct is clearly communicated and not hidden in the back of a website and having a code of conduct that players are aware of, can understand, and have engaged with prior to play [14]. Ethical games also advocate that game companies outline the consequences of violating the code of conduct, consistently enforce the standards included in the code of conduct and include actionable instructions concerning reporting of harassment and discrimination [14].

While existing guidelines outlined by these organizations provide good recommendations and models for multiplayer game companies, there is still a limited understanding of what is currently included in the codes of conduct of popular multiplayer game titles. In our study, we aim to contribute towards the limited knowledge around codes of conduct for multiplayer games by taking a step towards understanding what content is included in the codes of conduct of popular multiplayer games. We bring back these guidelines on codes of conduct in our discussion to highlight how the content of the current codes of conduct might compare with the recommendations laid out by these guidelines.

3 METHOD

We conducted a content analysis on the code of conduct documentation for popular online multiplayer games, that included both qualitative coding and a ‘click test’. Our content analysis was informed with the data making, inferring, and narrating process outlined by Krippendorf [26], which we used to guide the overall study design and ensure alignment between our research questions and content analysis inferences. To analyze the content of the codes of conduct we conducted two cycle qualitative coding drawing on initial, concept, and pattern coding techniques [35]. For the click test, we identified and documented the ‘clicks’ in a search process to locate the codes of conduct on the websites of the games. Our study design was also informed by other content analysis work on community guidelines, codes of conduct, and other user-facing documentation [12, 19] and we adapted our click test design from ‘first click’ usability tests [5, 30]. We outline the sampling strategy, the data collection, and the content analysis strategy below.

3.1 Sampling Strategy

We used lists of games generated from several digital marketplaces, including Steam, PlayStation Network, Xbox Store, and the Nintendo Store, to ensure we identified a broad range of popular multiplayer digital games across a variety of gaming platforms. Where possible, we tried to limit games to multiplayer titles with an active player base using the search filters on the digital marketplace. We sorted the game lists by the number of active users, relevance, or popularity depending on the digital marketplace. We made sure to check the games included features

supporting direct player to player interaction and had a currently active user base conducting multiplayer interactions. We excluded games focused on interaction through user generated content (e.g., Roblox or The Sims). To account for the differences in size, or number of games, on each digital marketplace we either selected all multiplayer titles available or the first fifty games listed. We also added to our collection of game titles from a few popular PC multiplayer titles listed in their own unique store locations e.g., titles from Blizzard and Riot Games.

The completed list included a total of 60 multiplayer game titles that we used during subsequent steps in the study. The 60 games were associated with the following companies: *Grinding Gear Games*; *Riot Games*; *EA*; *Digital Extremes*; *Epic Games*; *Mediatonic*; *Psyonix*; *ArenaNet*; *Amazon Games*; *Microsoft - Rare*, *Xbox*, *Mojang*, *Blizzard*, *Bethesda*; *KRAFTON, INC*; *Bungie Inc.*; *Studio Wildcard*; *Innersloth*; *Rockstar*; *Nintendo*; *HiRez Studios*; *Wargaming / Lesta Studios*; *Hello Games*, *Behavior*; *Ubisoft*; *Square Enix*; *Facepunch Studios*; *WeMadeCo*; *Blue Mammoth Games*; *Valve*; *PocketPair*; *KLEI Entertainment*; *Techland*; *Sega*; *Liquid Bit/ Bubble Bear*; *Capcom*; *24 Entertainment*; *Facepunch Studios*; *Psyonix*; *Re-Logic*; *Konami*, *Iron Gate AB*.

3.2 Data Collection and Click Test

We documented and categorized each ‘click’ in our search and made sure to follow a consistent process in locating each code of conduct. The process would start on the game’s official website home page, where we checked the page and footer menu for any links mentioning a code of conduct, or community guidelines. If we found nothing during this stage, our second step involved looking across the navigation menu of the site for terms relating to community, code of conduct, or anything similar. We checked pages for any mention of a code of conduct, community guidelines, or anything resembling in-game conduct. If the page linked to a “Frequently Asked Questions” section, we would also look through these questions for anything relating to a code of conduct. If we were unsuccessful through all of these steps, then we would then use the search function with the term “code of conduct”. If searching still yielded no results, we would look at the end-user license agreements (EULA) and terms of service (TOS) for any sections that made reference to ‘conduct’ or ‘community guidelines’. We would only search the EULA and TOS as the last step in our process and if we identified a code of conduct document earlier in the search process, we would not check other governance documentation. If we were unable to locate any documentation on conduct, we would categorize the site as not including a code of conduct. We also took detailed field notes during this process to keep track of any other interesting findings. All searches were conducted between December 2021 and January 2022.

3.3 Content Analysis Strategy

To analyze the codes of conduct we followed a two-cycle coding process, drawing on coding methods outlined by Saldana [35], for formulating the coding approaches. During the first coding cycle we used initial coding to inductively identify the codes from the content. While the majority of initial codes were identified through bottom-up coding, we also applied conceptual codes to the content based on our existing familiarity with community guidelines and codes of conduct. The conceptual codes supported our transition to second cycle coding by laying the foundation for identifying broader categories and themes within the content. To identify themes during the second cycle we followed a pattern coding process involving the clustering and categorization of the initial first cycle codes. We grouped similar terms and codes together and identified broader categories and themes. To ensure inter-rater reliability, we would meet frequently to discuss the

clusters and themes and spent multiple sessions collaboratively working on clustering the codes together. We used Miro [29], a digital white board tool, to support collaboration during clustering. Once we had identified initial themes and categories, we conducted another pass through the codes of conduct to make sure we had established a certain degree of saturation within our content analysis.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Click Test

In searching the websites of the 60 games, we were able to locate some form of code of conduct for 47 of the 60 games analyzed. There were 13 games that did not include them on the websites in any form, and 19 games included a code of conduct section in their Terms of Service (TOS) or End User License Agreement (EULA) documentation. Thus, a surprising finding was that over half the games (32/60) did not have a standalone document for the code of conduct located on the website and suggests that the creation of standalone code of conduct is not prioritized within the context of online multiplayer games.

When considering the games where we found a standalone code of conduct, the codes of conduct were routinely buried or hidden away from the homepage. Only eight games had codes of conduct that were accessible directly from the homepage. We found many of the codes of conduct in the support pages, forums, legal sections, or on the publisher's website where the average number of clicks to identify the code of conduct ranged from two to four. On some game websites we had to manually search the support pages for the term 'code of conduct' or navigate to the publisher's website to locate the code of conduct. These findings suggest that including the code of conduct on the homepage could be a simple opportunity for companies that want to improve the accessibility and the likelihood of a user engaging with a code of conduct. The results of our search process are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Search Process

Location of Code of Conduct	Frequency	Percentage	Average Clicks
Game Site - Support	9	15	4.0*
Game Site - Legal	3	5	2.0
Game Site - Forum	1	1.67	2.0
Game Site - Homepage	8	13.33	1.3
Publisher Site	7	11.67	3.4
Terms of Service (TOS)	14	23.33	1.6
End User License Agreement (EULA)	5	8.33	1.4
Not Found	13	21.67	n/a
Total	60	100.00	2.2

* Five Codes of Conduct located through search function excluded from average

We also noted the generic and non-contextual nature of the code of conduct across games that shared publishers. Of the 47 games analyzed with codes of conduct, there were 15 cases in which a game shared the same code with another on the list. For example, we looked at a number of

Nintendo online multiplayer games (Smash Brothers Ultimate, Mario Kart 8 Deluxe, etc.) and these games all lead us back to the same Nintendo's platform-wide community guidelines. While game specific terminology was rare in general (to be discussed more in detail later), this approach of linking to corporate codes of conducts in lieu of game-specific codes was found across many of the larger game development companies (I.e., Electronics Art, Blizzard, Amazon Games) and suggests there are many opportunities to create more game specific codes of conduct.

4.2 Content Analysis

After filtering out games that share publishers, we were left with a total of 32 codes of conduct, namely 22 unique codes of conduct and 10 conduct sections in either the EULA or TOS. After coding, we identified five distinct themes that represent the key types of content included across all of the codes of conduct we analyzed. The five themes we identified were: (1) company values, (2) expectations of players, (3) explicit bad behaviors and rules, (4) information on moderation and reporting, and (5) the structure of the codes of conduct. Each theme included some dimensions which we discuss in more detail below. We also provide a summary of all themes, and the dimensions at the end of the section.

4.2.1 Company Values

Company values represent broad concepts or ideologies that game companies want to promote or support within their online games and communities. We defined values as the beliefs that gaming companies have about their ideal model of conduct in an online game or community. There were two dimensions of values we identified, namely values relating to gameplay and values relating to social interactions.

4.2.1.1 Gameplay Values

We coded gameplay values as those that had a direct link to playing the game, and included instances such as, fairness, focusing on the game, and having fun. Fairness represents instances where codes of conduct express a belief that all players should be playing by the rules and not being given an advantage over or distracting others. Valorant's code of conduct, a competitive team-based game developed by Riot Games, showcases fairness through stating "*We believe that fairness means games are free from cheating, misuse of game systems, and all forms of harassment*". A definition of fairness that states to play within the rules might seem simplistic enough, but it does rely on game companies defining and communicating rules and standards to players. There were many instances of fairness linked with playing within the rules of the games while the actual rules were not clearly defined.

While fairness aligned with values of playing within the rules and were similar across the codes of conduct, there were also instances that mentioned a type of ideal gameplay that the companies valued for their specific games. We termed these as "focus on the game" and again drawing on Valorant's code of conduct we see the value "*Triumphant through Teamwork*" which outlines how teamwork is crucial to the success of a game of Valorant. If we look at Amazon Games' code of conduct, where the context is linked to massive multiplayer titles (New World and Lost Ark) we see that "focusing on the game" is not linked directly to teamwork but rather to being a helpful member of the community. The differences associated with what constitutes ideal gameplay in each context suggest that these values will differ based on the type of game being considered.

The third type of gameplay value we identified was associated with 'having fun' and like 'focus on the game', it was dependent on the specific game context. However, a large number of the codes of conduct provided little explanation for what fun gameplay might look like and often

included only a reference to the word ‘fun’. There were several codes that just included the word fun among other social interaction related values, such as “*We want [game x] to be a safe and fun place to play together...*” (e.g. Epic Games, NCSoft, Digital Extremes, Amazon Games, Blizzard, EA). There were attempts to link fun to gameplay in some codes of conduct, for example in Rare’s *Sea of Thieves* code it states, “*Sea of Thieves is a pirate game, and stealth, stealing and battles are all part of the fun*”. This points to opportunities for the design of a code of conduct to consider how to link the context of gameplay with beliefs around fun, rather than just linking it to other social interaction focused values such as safety. Although, it is important to recognize that players might have many different ways of having fun and thus it does make sense to link it with other social values such as ‘respect’ and ‘inclusivity’.

4.2.1.2 Social Values

The social values we identified represented beliefs and assumptions that game companies had about how social interaction with other players and members of the community should be conducted. There were two broad dimensions of social values that we coded, namely those associated with being a member of a community and others associated with being an individual player. Community values included instances where codes of conduct mentioned inclusivity, and respecting others. The community values were expressed in terms of games consisting of many players and would often reference playing together in the same space, creating a “*...space for all*” or as the code of conduct for *Sea of Thieves* states “*...players creating stories together*”. Community values associated with respect for other players were often phrased as: “*Treat others as they would like to be treated*” (EA Positive Play Charter). There were also instances that extended the idea of respect to not just treating others well but actively welcoming new members and being a helpful community member. For example, Xbox’s community standards state that “*Helping others makes us all stronger*”. There seem to be different ways that game companies consider the role of the community within the context of multiplayer games which range from acknowledging the existence of other players, to actively being helpful, welcoming, and friendly.

The social values relating to the individual often concerned safety, responsibility, and individual freedom. Many of the codes of conduct would highlight the importance of creating a ‘safe’ space but would express that it is individuals who are then responsible for their own safety and security. While many of the values expressed the importance of creating a safe space for all, the responsibility to ensure individual safety would often be linked to the idea of individual player agency and players being able to use tools to curate the experience they want. This points to some tensions between community values mentioned and values around individual freedoms and ‘creating a safe space for all’.

The gameplay and social values underpin other parts of codes of conduct, as we saw many links between values, and the other themes associated with the expectations, bad behaviors, moderation, and even the structure of some documents. Values or the beliefs they represent are considered as an almost foundational layer on which many of the other parts of the code of conduct can be built upon.

4.2.2 Expectations of Players

Expectations of players was a theme we created to capture the specific expectations that game companies have for players in their online multiplayer games and represents the standards game companies expect players to adhere to while being in the virtual space. While expectations of players are closely linked to gameplay and social values, they should be considered as the actual standards that players need to follow to embody ‘ideal’ gameplay and social values expressed by

the game companies. In other words, the expectations of players are the specific attitudes or actions of an ‘ideal player’ that embodies the values expressed by the game companies. We identified four components associated with the expectations of players, namely expectations associated with (1) respectful attitudes (2) gameplay, (3) community interaction, and (4) personal responsibility.

4.2.2.1 Expectations of Respectful Attitudes

Statements that concerned expectations of players to have a respectful attitude were often linked with statements that asked players to embody community values associated with inclusivity and being mindful of individual differences. One of these more detailed examples can be seen in Riot Games’ League of Legends code of conduct which states “*Be aware of and respect individual differences and experiences. League of Legends is a global community*”. The expectation here goes beyond just starting to treat others as you would like to be treated and incorporates the idea that respect is the acceptance of individual differences and global cultural norms. Amazon Games’ code of conduct also provides additional details around respect and encourages players to “*...respect their style of play*”, thus linking ideas around respect to individual differences in gameplay styles. The expectations around respect could be considered as expectations that embody some of the social values previously covered around inclusivity.

4.2.2.2 Expectations Around Gameplay

Expectations around gameplay involve asking a player to behave in a specific way within the context of the game. Some of these expectations aligned with the values of fairness, such as stating to “*...play within the rules*” of the game, while others referred to specific elements relating to the context of a game. Riot Games’ League of Legends code of conduct included expectations linked to team-based gameplay and competition such as “*compete to win*” or “*support your teammates*”. Gameplay expectations found in team-based games were often linked to supporting cooperative gameplay among team members. Sometimes gameplay expectations went beyond the idea of pure cooperation and suggested that players are expected to actively acknowledge teamwork and cooperation. For example Amazon Games’ code of conduct states that players should “*...value other players for their in-game contributions and activities*”. Interestingly, there were not as many examples of codes of conduct that acknowledge that players should “*be a good sportsman in both victory and loss*” (Rare’s Sea of Thieves code of conduct) as would have been expected, with the only instance we identified as the one in the Rare’s Sea of Thieves code of conduct.

4.2.2.3 Expectations of Community Interaction

The expectations around community interactions were associated with standards for interacting with other members of the community. Community interaction expectations were commonly phrased around defining virtual spaces as community spaces and locating virtual spaces in the public domain. A rather detailed example of acknowledging the public nature of virtual spaces can be seen in Rare’s Sea of Thieves code of conduct, which states to “*Keep it appropriate*” and even reminds players that “*Remember kids are playing*”. The expectations around community interactions also included behaviors such as sharing clean content, using suitable language, and being kind.

Interestingly, there were several instances where codes expected players to take an active role in the activities of community management. There were instances where codes of conduct suggested players should be involved in helping other players, welcoming newcomers, and even protecting the community through reporting and standing up to instances of bad behaviors. For example, Innersloths Among Us’ code of conduct states “*We encourage all players to work together to prevent*

harm and create a positive environment for everyone". It was common to see codes of conduct include expectations around *"protecting the community"* but specific expectations differed across codes. One approach suggests the avoidance of conflict through reporting and blocking tools, such as Blizzard's in game code of conduct stating, *"If you come across a player violating the policies below you should report them."* Another approach suggests players should actively get involved if witnessing bad behaviors, such as Xbox's community standards stating *"If you know that someone is engaging in behavior or dispersing content that violates these community standards, let them know that their behavior is not okay, and caution them rather than help them walk the road they're on."* These differences suggest a lack of standards surrounding community involvement with some companies expecting players to take an active role in curating the community and other companies expecting players to protect the community by avoiding interaction and reporting bad behaviors.

4.2.2.4 Expectations on Individual Responsibility

Expectations around personal responsibility included instances where players are expected to take personal responsibility with activities such as managing emotions, maintaining safety and security, using tools provided by the game to curate an experience, and using common sense. For example, Epic Game's code of conduct states *"You can find a full set of all the things you can do to better protect yourself and what we currently do to keep you safe in our FAQ"*, implying players need to learn how to protect themselves, while Riot Games' Valorants code of conduct even expects players to *"Practice self-care so you can bring your best to every game you play"* In each of these cases the game companies are expecting players to accept responsibility and liability for a multitude of elements related to the game, the community, and aspect of the gaming experience. While we understand and discuss in more detail the specific legal nature of these documents, it's still a concerning trend to see so many expectations placed onto players to ensure the values of the game companies are maintained.

4.2.3 Bad Behaviors and Rules

Bad behaviors and rules were more specific than the expectations of players and were often conveyed as a series of rules or a list of bad behaviors. Codes of conduct expressed as lists were far more frequent than those listing values and expectations, and despite being given different names such as "Prohibited Behaviors", "Rules of Conduct" or "Policies of Misconduct" they would act as a way a way to inform players of actions that were not accepted within the game and its community. We identified three distinct categories that these behaviors and rules would often be grouped within, namely game related behaviors, actions taken against others, and individual sharing.

4.2.3.1 Game Related Behaviors

Game related misconduct often included references to terminology prohibiting players from engaging with exploits, hacks, and cheats, or from altering, changing, or using certain aspects of the in-game world for unintended purposes. These would often refer to either manipulating the game system or using third party systems to gain an unfair advantage over others. For example, Electronic Art's Positive Play Charter highlights various types of exploits and cheats, like *"aimbots"* and *"triggerbots,"* before using the old adage *"cheaters never prosper"*, and Wargaming's code of conduct for World of Tanks warns players against accessing areas of the game unavailable for the public. There were also instances where the codes of conduct linked cheating to disrupting other players' experiences.

Other actions like abusing moderation tools and discouraging false reporting of players were also grouped into the category of game related bad behaviors as these were actions that used intended community safeguards in potentially harmful ways. For example, Studio Wildcard's code of conduct for Ark Survival Evolved states: *"When reporting others, please ensure that you are genuine. Reports made to harass other players or for restricting their gameplay when no codes of conduct have been broken are deemed punishable by Studio Wildcard"*.

4.2.3.2 Actions Against Other Players

Probably the most common category of bad behaviors and collections of rules we found in the codes of conduct concerned intentional actions against other players. While game related bad behaviors might influence the gameplay experience of other players, actions against other players included bad behaviors intentionally aimed at other players. A number of codes of conducts featured terminology that specifically highlighted actions such as harassment and stalking as behaviors that were not tolerated in-game. These messages often called out the use of sexist, racist and other offensive and hateful language as instances of types of harassment and hatred that companies would not tolerate. NC Soft's code of conduct outlines many of these beliefs as *hate mongering*: *"You may neither organize nor be a member of any pledges or groups within the Services that are based on or espouse any racist, sexist, anti-religious, anti-ethnic, anti-gay, or other hate mongering philosophies"*. Messages around harassment and attacks were also framed around maintaining a safe and fun environment for all players. Riot Games' Community Code for Valorant communicates a dedication to allow players to play without being attacked: *"You deserve to be able to play each match free from harassment, hatred, and abuse"*.

Another common bad behavior outlined by the codes of conduct concerns misleading other players and included rules dissuading players from impersonating and scamming others. Impersonation of moderation staff, celebrities, and notable figures were highlighted as prohibited activity for players to engage with, but this definition was also commonly extended to the act of logging into someone's account without their permission. There were many types of scams detailed in the codes of conduct, including financial scams and trade-scams that involve the trade of assets included in online multiplayer games. As Epic Games' community guidelines for Fortnite state: *"Do not take advantage of fellow players. Scams or deceptive practices are prohibited, including seeking account information, and buying or selling accounts or personal information."*

There were also categories of bad behaviors that involved direct and intentional disruption to the normative flow of gameplay, such as trolling, griefing, and other types of gameplay that negatively affected the play experience of other players. Many codes of conduct paired disruptive play with the malicious content previously discussed (harassment, stalking, discrimination, etc.), but often what constituted disruptive play was left undefined and broadly applied. Krafton INC.'s Rules of Conduct for Player Unknown Battleground goes as far as telling players *"...do not play the game abnormally"*, a guideline that is perhaps especially difficult for players new to the game to follow.

4.2.3.3 Individual Sharing

The last category of bad behaviors related to rules around content that individuals could share and included rules that dissuaded players from distributing content that was not in keeping with the game play and social values of the game. Content such as illegal or offensive assets were often narrowed in as inappropriate material to distribute, with some codes naming pornography and propaganda as discouraged examples. In documents like Ubisoft's Rules of Conduct, the restriction

of explicit content was often used as examples to keep the game's content appropriate and safe for minors.

However, the restriction of what content was deemed inappropriate varied between codes of conduct. For example, Wargaming's rules World of Warships dissuaded players from distributing or engaging with content that was no longer available, while Bethesda warns players against public discussion of moderation action and recommends players only discuss such topics with the moderation staff. Such variety in prohibited content speaks to the individualized nature of these codes and suggests that there are limited standards about what constitutes inappropriate content sharing.

Individuals were dissuaded from sharing any type of content that sought to monetize aspects of the game, such as the selling of accounts or in-game items that weren't meant to be sold or traded. These categories also extended to advertisements and promotion involving a monetary gain for the player. Although advertisements of community groups were mentioned as acceptable behavior, advertisements of out-of-game aspects were commonly labeled as instances of spam and irrelevant content.

Players were also dissuaded from discussing personal information in general. Often framed as rules meant to protect a player's real-world privacy and account information, many codes featured guidelines that specifically called out not giving out personal information like passwords, location, or identity. Digital Extremes' guidelines for Warframe highlight codes meant to prevent this unsafe practice: *"Do not publicly post any form of real-life information of yourself or another user on the forums. Real life information includes, name, phone number, address, email address, private/email message content, personal pictures, IP address and anything else that may identify you or a user to the community in some way."*

4.2.4 Moderation

The moderation theme was applied to statements in codes of conduct that had to do with how game companies communicated reporting procedures and punishments from violating aspects of the bad behaviors and rules outlined in the previous section. These procedures varied in terms of who they were aimed at and for what reason, but generally were used to communicate specific language about the importance of following the rules for players.

4.2.4.1 Punishment Information

The most common approach taken by game companies were direct statements about the disciplinary steps that will be taken if a player breaks the rules. Statements about terminations, restrictions, and banning often accompanied lists of prohibited behaviors to give players a direct understanding of how misconduct will be punished. While the language used was often broad and vague about how punishment would be enacted for specific actions, codes like Krafton INC.'s Rules of Conduct for Player Unknown Battleground explicitly lay out actions and the resulting disciplinary action that will follow if players undertake them, as shown in figure 1.

PENALTY CRITERIA TABLE FOR MISCONDUCT	
PENALTY CRITERIA FOR MISCONDUCT	MAXIMUM PENALTY PERIOD
Use, develop, advertise, trade or distribute Unauthorized Programs and Hardware Devices	Permanent Ban
Investigate the use of Unauthorized Programs and Hardware Devices	3-day Ban
Modification of Game Client, Servers and Game Data (packet, etc.)	Permanent Ban
Exploiting Bugs and Glitches (Major)	Permanent Ban
Use of Inappropriate Language	30-day Ban

Figure 1: Screenshot of the punishment table taken from the code of conduct for Player Unknown Battlegrounds (PUBG) (URL: <https://na.battlegrounds.pubg.com/roc-steam/> [Accessed May 2022])

In instances like the table in figure 1 players are informed of the various levels of moderation their actions will occur, providing insight into how severe the moderation team sees certain actions and behaviors. This form of escalation of punishment was common among many of the codes analyzed and reflects tiered approaches to how moderation teams deal with different levels of offenses from players. However, not all descriptions of punishment information were as detailed, with some codes of conduct, including statements that emphasize the choice to punish being at the discretions of the company, such as those found in EA’s Positive Play Charter, listing that “ *If you break any of our Community Guidelines or violate our User Agreement, we may place restrictions on your account and revoke your access to certain or all EA Services*”. While other codes of conduct included statements leaving both the choice to punish and the punishment up to the discretion of the game company, such as those found in Amazon Games’ code of conduct stating “*...we reserve the right to penalize any account or take other disciplinary actions at any time for any conduct that we determine to violate the spirit of this Code of Conduct or otherwise find to be inappropriate or harmful to the community*”.

4.2.4.2 Justification

An interesting category that we identified concerned how codes of conduct featured discussions around the justifications for the need of disciplinary action as crucial to the wellbeing of the players and the game. For example, Mojang’s community standards for Minecraft state: “*We want to ensure players have the same, inclusive and welcoming game experience when playing any of our games under the Minecraft franchise. We also want to ensure that if players choose to not follow the Community Standards in one of the Minecraft franchise games, we can protect players across the franchise and in our community*”.

The justifications also included information about how each moderation decision and discipline was done with consideration of the values of the game companies. For instance, Amazon Games’ code of conduct discusses how the company does not take the act of disciplining players without remorse: “*please know that we do not make these decisions lightly. We take these actions because we*

want to ensure the community stays welcoming for everyone". In these statements the game company not only reaffirms the values expressed in their code of conduct, but helps the player understand why heavy moderation and restrictions apply.

Occasionally the justifications included the importance of moderation and disciplinary action lies in their power to teach players how to conduct themselves. Riot Games' Community Code for instance uses the term "*reform*" in their codes to indicate that their moderation practices are meant to rehabilitate and get the offender back on the right course, rather than prevent them from ever playing the game again. While Innersloth's code of conduct for Among Us pushes that idea further, with the game company promoting for punitive punishment as a chance to think through what caused the player to be punished. They state: "*use this time to reflect on the behavior that led to this restriction. We hope we can see you learn and grow from it!*". While this sort of reform-based justification was rare among the codes analyzed, these instances suggest there are more opportunities for a better way of justifying the need for moderation.

4.2.4.3 Report Procedures

Many codes of conduct featured language about the importance of "speaking up" and included clear statements about how a player was to file a report if they engaged with inappropriate content or they experienced something negative. Interestingly, this language would imply it was players who would be actively monitoring in-game interactions and not the moderation team. Nintendo's community guidelines stress the importance of letting the moderation know: "*Speak up. If you encounter any behavior or content that violates these guidelines, let us know. Many of our online services and games have built-in reporting features, or you can contact Nintendo Customer Services if you see someone engaging in inappropriate behavior or sharing content that is obscene, illegal or otherwise inappropriate*".

The procedures for reporting frequently featured links to support pages, emails for players to report, mentions of in-game report tools, and sometimes included steps for what will occur after a report was filed. However, not all codes of conduct featured clear language and transparent procedures about what would happen to players if bad behaviors occurred. Often broad statements about reserving the right to terminate, restrict, and discipline players accompanied many codes of conduct. As with other nonspecific language, these vague claims are likely due to these documents regularly being unspecific to the game at hand.

4.2.4.4 Legal Power

Many of the codes of conduct included terminology about the legal power to enforce rules on their own terms and expressed the ability to make changes to these rules at any time. While such statements evoke a commitment to not approach all cases as the same, these statements run the risk of implying that certain players may receive more favorable consequences over others for the same infractions. They also imply changes to the guidelines might occur at any time. For example, ArenaNet's NCSoft code of conduct features such a statement: "*We reserve the right, in our sole and absolute discretion, to change, modify, add, or remove portions of this Code of Conduct at any time, with or without notice*." These statements suggest further challenges concerning players being aware of the expectations placed on them.

4.2.5 Document Structure

The last major theme that we created was concerned less about the content included in the document and more about the structure and presentation of the codes of conduct document. The manner in which the codes were structured, and language used communicated very different things to players depending on its style.

4.2.5.1 Presentation

The presentation of the content included in the codes of conduct ranged across the various codes of conduct. In many instances we found that the style of the code of conduct affected the accessibility and readability of the document. Some common trends among these styles were grouped into community focused, rules focused, and legally orientated.

Codes of conduct that appealed to the player through discussions about values, expectations, and other communal trends were classified as community focused. In these documents the presentation was often more informal and represented a more relaxed communication with the player. For example, Innersloth's code of conduct for Among Us uses a structure of "*things we like to see*" and "*things we don't like to see*", using each category as a space to discuss and provide examples of actions and behaviors that align or do not align with the community's values.

Community focused codes of conduct could also offer many opportunities to communicate the game values and the expectations of players rather than a focus on rules and prohibited behaviors. For example, in Rare's Community Code of Conduct for Sea of Thieves they apply a three-category structure of "*Always, Remember, Never*" in which they discuss actions to continuously do, expectations to keep in mind, and actions that are strictly prohibited. These more community focused presentation styles offer many opportunities to present rules and expectations that are potentially easier for players to understand. This could lead to them being considered as more accessible styles that are welcoming to players of all backgrounds.

In contrast to the more informal community focused codes, many of the codes of conduct analyzed were presented as rules focused or legal documents that strictly communicated policies and rules. The most extreme example of a legally focused code of conduct can be seen in Zenimax's (Bethesda) code of conduct's introductory statement, where the first few lines state: "*This Code of Conduct ("Code of Conduct") is effective as of the date You accept this Code of Conduct, by and between ZeniMax Media Inc., on its own behalf and on behalf of its affiliates and subsidiaries, (collectively "ZeniMax" or "We") and You, an individual, serving as an account holder ("You"). Your participation on Bethesda.Net, The Elder Scrolls Online, our forums...*". While this Zenimax example is one of the most legal focused documents we observed, the type of contractual presentation about legal rights and obligations was a common trend among many of the codes analyzed.

4.2.5.2 Language

A common trend across the language used in many codes of conduct was both technical and legal. Frequent mentions of "agreements" to state and federal laws indicate that these documents are routinely used as forms of legal contracts between a player and the game company. Often the language was not specific to the game in question and there were many opportunities for games to improve in these areas. For example, Rare's Pirate Code for Sea of Thieves uses the language and lore of the game's pirate world to discuss specific types of actions and rules. Riot's Code of Conduct for League of Legends similarly draws upon the game specific dynamics to fill out its code of conduct, making direct references to the team and match-based style of the game to highlight specific team dos and don'ts players should follow. In these cases, the code of conduct communicates the expectations and values of the game companies through curated and thoughtful examples and scenarios that are grounded in the context and world the player is encountering.

4.2.6 Summary Table

Table 2 provides a summary that includes our five major themes along with the dimensions and subcategories we identified

Table 2: Summary of Themes, Dimensions and Categories

Theme	Dimensions	Categories
Company Values	Gameplay	Focus on The Game; Fun; Fairness
	Social	Community; Inclusivity; Respect; Safety; Responsibility; Individual Freedom
Expectations of Players (Expected to behave in...)	Around Gameplay	Support Teamwork; Play fairly within the rules; Compete to win; Value others for in game contributions; Be a good sport, win or lose;
	Respectful Attitudes	Respect individual differences & cultural norms; Respect Other Play Styles & Players; Treat others as they would like to be treated; Encourage perspective taking
	Community Interaction	Have a helping attitude; Share clean content; Be Kind; Welcome others; Think inclusivity; Public space
	Personal Responsibility	Protect team and community; Use common sense; Maintain safety and security; Practice self-care; Manage emotions; Curate experiences
Bad Behaviours/Rules (You will be punished if...)	Game Related	Abusing moderation; Bad gameplay; Exploits, hacking and cheating
	Actions Against Others	Scams; Impersonation; Disruption to play; Harassments & threats; Discrimination
	Individual Sharing	Offensive & illegal content; Monetization of in game assets; Advertisements; Personal information; Moderation discussions; Unavailable content
Moderation	Justification	Discipline bad players; Encourage reform; Protect community; Opportunity to reflect
	Report Procedure and Guidelines	Outlines reporting process
	Punishment Information	Restrictions of content; Range of punishments
	Legal Power	Change at any time; Discretion to enforce ‘unfair play’
Structure of the Document	Presentation	Legal Contract; Value and expectations; Rules focused; “Always, Remember, never”; Example driven
	Language	Game related; Legal; Definitions; Range of examples; Framing

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Where are codes of conduct located on popular multiplayer games’ official websites?

One of the most problematic findings from the click test was the large number of games without standalone codes of conduct documents. While almost all of the games included either a EULA or a TOS, many had no code of conduct document. Despite many instances where companies suggest they value communities and players, our findings align with work that suggest game companies prioritize video games as legal spaces and the governance documents serve as the contracts between players and companies [20, 38]. It is also important to note that EULA and TOS documentation were often found on the homepage and could be located with one click by the user, while the majority of codes of conduct documentation were hidden in the back sections of the website on the support, legal, or even publisher’s website.

It is also problematic that many of the standalone codes of conduct, documents intended to inform the user about the norms of conduct in a virtual space, are difficult to access and not promoted on the homepages of the game's website. One of the suggested benefits of having a code of conduct is for it to communicate norms and behavior to players and to help reduce toxic interactions [11, 31, 37], but the non-existence or obscure locations of the documents makes them harder for players to find and engage with. If we consider the first click test usability principle that states that if the user gets the first click wrong then there is a much lower chance they will complete the action they intended to do [5, 30], then we can also assume that even players who are searching for the code of conduct are likely to give up after the first or second click fails to lead them to the right document. Our click test data show that only a small number of codes of conduct could be found within one click and are unlikely to be found by even the most committed players. Our findings around the lack of accessibility of a code of conduct also align with accessibility issues found with other governance documentation [6, 8, 12, 18].

5.2 What content is being communicated in the codes of conduct of popular multiplayer games?

The content in the codes of conduct reflected expectations that linked with personal responsibility of the player, as there were multiple types of expectations that game companies ask of the players. Some of these expectations were focused on the individual, such as ensuring they protect themselves online and manage their own emotions, while other expectations were focused on maintaining community standards and moderating other players. Our findings are in line with earlier research that identified a similar trend around taking personal responsibility within the context of League of Legends and World of Warcraft [10]. We build on and add support towards work on the individual responsibility companies place on players by explicitly highlighting how a number of codes of conduct adopt similar expectations around personal responsibility.

While it's not uncommon for institutions to have expectations about individual responsibility around things like security and safety online and reporting illegal or offensive content [19] it is less common to expect individual users and players to play an active role in the maintenance of the online community. The expectation across different games is also something to note, as some games supported passive reporting and others encouraged players to take a more active role when witnessing interactions that violated the rules. There are also players who support the idea that the responsibility for maintaining safety in virtual worlds falls into the domain of the player and not the company [36]. The inconsistencies surrounding who is responsible point to a lack of standardization around the expectations that game companies should have for players.

While we don't think expectations around being personally responsible for safety are necessarily problematic, we do think there needs to be more guidance given to the players about what it means to be an active community member and what the specific values are that the game companies are trying to promote. Although, expectations about users moderating communities do become more problematic when we speculate about the challenges around community management in multiplayer game spaces. Previous studies have shown how community managers are typically under-resourced and games industry professionals are often overworked [1, 9]. If the expectations of user to moderate community spaces is linked to game companies being reluctant to improve community management resources, then this finding becomes far more problematic.

5.3 How do codes of conduct compare to existing guidelines for creating a code of conduct?

In comparing our themes with the existing guidelines set out by The Fair Play Alliance and Ethical games [14, 15] we notice a number of areas where codes of conduct could be improved. The first area companies could address is to bring the codes of conduct out from the back of websites and place them onto the homepage. Ethicalgames.org recommends players engage with the code of conduct prior to play and that they should not be hidden in the back of websites [14]. The second area relates to the language used in the codes of conduct, where we found many codes included hard to understand legal language or long lists of generic nongame specific rules. According to the guidelines, companies should include more game specific examples and use language that is easy for players to understand [14, 15].

The last area relates to improving clarity around both bad behaviors and information on the consequences for these behaviors. While many of the codes provide information on bad behaviors and rules, they are often presented as long lists of 'prohibited actions. The guidelines suggest that the presentation of rules should include specific examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors that are specific to the game context [14, 16]. Consequences for unacceptable behavior should also be clearly communicated and easy to access rather than a single line stating the company has the discretion to decide what to punish and how.

When comparing the values of the game companies from our study with the values outlined by the AnyKey organization we notice some alignment. AnyKey states that codes of conduct should be structured to incorporate values of compassion, integrity, respect, and courage [23] and we found instances of all of these values within the codes of conduct we analyzed. Gameplay values associated with respect and fairness align with the AnyKey's values of integrity and respect as they are concerned with playing within the rules and being respectful of other players. AnyKey's values for compassion and courage align with the social values we identified for respect and community, as compassion relates to treating others the way you would like to be treated and courage lines up with ideas around protecting the community. While it is good sign that the values expressed by AnyKey are similar to those included in the codes of conduct, there were only a small number of codes that actually included these values and even fewer structured the codes in a format that links values with the expectations of players, which is a design recommendation made by the Fair Play Alliance report around how to present a code of conduct.

While the guidelines presented by the nonprofit organizations are a useful tool for companies to use to help put together a user facing and ethically inclined code of conduct, they do fall short in helping companies identify different ways to design and present a code of conduct for a specific game context. Many of the guidelines are vague and not tailored to be game specific which makes it hard for companies with different games to identify the right structure and content for their code of conduct. Our content analysis identified a number of different ways that companies might design the code of conduct and we provide some of these examples in the subsequent design guidelines section below.

6 DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The two most important recommendations we make is first, for game companies to create a player facing standalone code of conduct document that use game specific and simple language to convey values, expectations, consequences, and moderation information to the player. Second, we recommend that the code of conduct needs to be made available on the homepage of the game's official website and should be accessible with one click from that homepage. At the end of this

section, we provide more recommendations for the design of each of the components that should be included in a code of conduct, along with a step-by-step process to think about the design of a code of conduct. However, we believe the two recommendations of (1) creating a standalone document and (2) linking it on the homepage are the most important recommendations, especially given the large number of games that do not have standalone codes of conduct located on the homepage.

Table 3: A Code of Conduct Design Process

Process	Description	Design Recommendation
Step 1: Develop game specific values.	Values are the foundational layer for any code of conduct and should be considered first. All other components build off of them.	Consider what gameplay and social values you want to emphasize in the context of your game. AnyKey values provides a great starting point with values around integrity, compassion, respect, and courage but make sure to link these to the context of your game
Step 2: Identify the expectations of players based off values.	The expectations of players should represent the attitudes and broad behaviors that an ‘ideal’ player of your game would possess	Use the game specific values you identified in step one to derive the expectations of players. Ask yourself how a player who embodies the values might think or act in your game.
Step 3: Develop rules for players based on expectations of players. Include examples of both bad and good behaviors.	Rules should be presented as examples of both good and bad behaviors in the context of the specific game they are for.	Once expectations of players have been defined, you can ask what behavior would occur given these expectations. Include examples of acceptable behavior complemented with examples of unacceptable behavior. Examples should be specific to the game context
Step 4: Develop moderation information, including tiered punishments for unacceptable behaviors and information about reporting procedures	Moderation information should include tiered and transparent punishment information explaining consequences for unacceptable behavior. Include details about how to report instances of unacceptable behavior	Use the rules and examples developed in the previous steps to identify unacceptable behaviors that might have consequences if committed by players. Determine the consequences and ensure there are tiers of punishments. It might also be useful to help players understand the decisions around moderation practices and help them learn from instances of unacceptable behavior rather than banning them.
Step 5: Determine the structure, language, and presentation of the code of conduct.	Structure and presentation should be easy to understand and accessible to all players. However, the structure requires that content in steps 1-4 be developed first.	While it might be tempting to decide on a structure for the document first, it might lead to generic template specific language rather than game specific ones. We recommend starting with the other components. Once you have established all of the content for the code of conduct then you can decide how to structure it. Find other codes of conduct to draw from if you’re getting stuck on the structure (e.g., Always, Remember, never structure from Sea of Thieves)

There were also several examples of codes of conduct that aligned with the guidelines expressed by the nonprofits. For instance, Electronic Art’s Positive Play Charter does a good job at linking values with expectations and behaviors, despite the charter not being specific to each game

context. Riot Games' codes of conduct for League of Legends and Valorant are framed around learning from play and provide extensive details about teamwork and how to participate within the context of a team game. Innersloth's codes of conduct for Among Us provides a practical informal structure to ignite communication and expectations between players and game companies. Lastly, Rare's Sea of Thieves Pirate Code and Community Code of Conduct serve as exemplary models for how to differentiate between publisher and game specific codes of conduct and they also highlight how a code of conduct can link expectations and values around fun and gameplay together.

The above-mentioned codes of conduct examples often had a structure linking values and expectations together with examples of behavior and moderation information. While there were other designs associated with codes of conduct, we felt that codes of conduct that follow this structure aligned well with the recommendations around values and expectations mentioned in the nonprofit guidelines. However, as mentioned before, the guidelines don't always have the best recommendations for designing a game specific code of conduct and are sometimes not clear on how companies might start creating value focused codes of conduct. We have provided a design tool below in table 3 that outlines a simple process for developing a value focused code of conduct that includes expectations of players, examples of good and bad behaviors, and moderation information.

7 FUTURE WORK

Our paper has laid the foundations to continue exploring the role of codes of conduct in the context of multiplayer games and online community governance. Our findings provide others with a lens to understand the type of content that might be included in a multiplayer game's codes of conduct document. While our work was limited to identifying the codes of conduct on the websites of popular multiplayer games, future research could consider ways to explore the relationship between a code of conduct and the actual content located within the game system. There are many opportunities to consider the relationship between the type of gameplay a game might provide and the necessary structure and content of its code of conduct. This is especially important given that we, along with other guidelines on code of conduct creation, advocate that these documents be tailored to the context of a specific game. Another opportunity would be to explore the tensions around game company values and expectations of players, especially those linked to individual responsibility to maintain company values. Finally, doing a usability study to understand how different structures and designs of codes of conduct might be perceived by different stakeholders, such as game companies, content creators, and players, will reveal more insights surrounding how different stakeholders perceive these documents.

8 CONCLUSION

Online multiplayer games are increasingly becoming sites of social interaction and the need for clear and effective rules and regulation around conduct are more important than ever. Our findings around the location and content of codes of conduct for popular multiplayer games contributes to the growing area of research exploring community management and governance practices in online spaces. Our content analysis on codes of conduct revealed how documents meant to guide and inform players of expectations and rules are often inaccessible and filled with hard to understand legal and policy related language. Without clear standards for where these documents should be located and what content they should cover, many game companies miss

opportunities to directly communicate with players. We advocate that game companies create more accessible, game specific and communicative codes of conduct, and companies should leverage them as opportunities to help players negotiate the complex social situations they are met with in online spaces. We hope that our work leads to game companies reflecting upon the opportunities documents like codes of conduct provide for supporting inclusive online spaces and improving the way values and expectations are communicated to players of multiplayer games. Codes of conduct should not just function as policies of misconduct but rather should serve as a foundation for creating a shared understanding between game companies and their communities.

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