

# *Characterization Transmutation in Game-to-Animation Adaptation: a Case Study of Arcane (Arcane: League of Legends)*

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**Abstract:** This paper employs Tripartite Characterization Theory proposed by Lajos Egri, investigating dimensional disparities in cross-media character adaptation, specifically analyzing interdimensional shifts between ludic and animated representations and applied methodologies for implementing the three-dimensional framework (physiological-sociological-psychological) in transmedia contexts. It aims to establish operational principles for character dimension utilization in game-to-animation adaptations, thus providing conceptual guidelines for cross-media characterization. Prior researches based on the same theory conclude that game characters, being player-oriented, predominantly exhibit physiological dimensions while lacking substantial sociological and psychological dimensions. In contrast, animation characters serve narrative purposes, consequently developing more comprehensive dimensional profiles with growth potential. Notably, psychological dimensions emerge as interactive products of physiological and sociological dimensions. The study shows that when a character is adapted from a game to an animation, it is essential to add social and psychological dimensions based on the original physiological dimensions from the game. Furthermore, when creating characters with psychological traits, these traits must match the corresponding social attributes and physiological characteristics.

## 1. Introduction

The advent of the metaverse has precipitated a paradigm shift in media convergence, effectively dissolving traditional boundaries between gaming, film and variety entertainment. Within this emerging ecosystem, game-to-film adaptations have emerged as particularly salient, with industry reports documenting over 50 such cross-media productions [1]. This phenomenon predominantly manifests through character-centric adaptations, where in original game avatars undergo significant dimensional transformations to accommodate narrative-driven media requirements. For example, the Japanese game *Dynasty Warriors*, adapted into a film, was criticized by netizens for the significant differences between the game and the film's characters, leading to its shift to streaming service [2] only after just six days in theaters. Similarly, the film adaptation of the game *Journey to the West* was also criticized for its exaggerated character designs and received widespread negative

reviews. In contrast, *Arcane: League of Legends*, based on the MOBA game *Arcane*, has been paid worldwide attention for its character design [3]. It won the prestigious Annie Award for Best Animated Feature, the first time this award was given to a game adaptation. According to FlixPatrol, after its release, the animation quickly rose to the number one spot on Netflix's global charts.

In the process of game-to-animation adaptation, the source medium emphasizes gameplay mechanics and interactive engagement, whereas the adapted medium prioritizes visual representation and narrative construction. Thereby this fundamental divergence in media characteristics generates distinct multidimensional manifestations of the same characters. These character dimensions demonstrate both temporal evolution and cross-media transformation. A systematic framework for analyzing dimensional attributes facilitates more rigorous comparative studies of character portrayals across gaming and animation platforms.

Based on Lajos Egri's Tripartite Characterization Theory(1946), this paper deconstructs the constituent elements of character dimensions, examines intermedial dimensional variances of identical characters from a production perspective and develops methodological applications of the tripartite theory for game-to-animation adaptation processes. Through comparative case analysis, this research establishes operational principles for character dimension utilization in game-to-animation adaptations, thus providing conceptual guidelines for cross-media characterization. Therefore, applying Tripartite Characterization Theory, this paper will analyze, using *Arcane: League of Legends* as a case study, character dimensional differences before and after adaptation from game to animation.

## 2. Tripartite Characterization Theory

### 2.1 Tripartite Characterization Theory Overview

In *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri, an American playwright, posits that characters constitute the fundamental essence of narrative construction. He establishes character transformation as the central paradigm of storytelling, asserting that comprehensive character understanding can only be achieved through mastery of the tripartite dimensional framework.

The physiological dimension(Ludic avatar design) is the most fundamental and visually perceptible influence of character construction, including gender, age, hairstyle, skin, appearance, defects and behaviors. The sociological dimension (Narrative worldbuilding) refers to the character's environment, requiring systematic development through structural analysis of social determinants such as class statuses, occupational specializations, educational backgrounds, familial relationships, social networks and personal avocations. The psychological dimension (Audience-perceived depth) emerges as the product of intersecting physiological and sociological dimensions, whose synergistic interactions generate character logical attributes including ambition, frustration, temperament and perspective. Moreover, these three dimensions maintain a progressive developmental relationship: primary physiological attributes facilitate sociological development, which subsequently interacts with physiological foundations to generate psychological complexity. Consequently, characters possessing specific psychological attributes must exhibit corresponding sociological and physiological characteristics that demonstrate dimensional consistency [4].

### 2.2 Game vs. Animated Characters Building Upon Tripartite Characterization Theory

Game-to-animation adaptation is a form of art that involves transforming a rule-based, interactive entertainment medium into a digitally captured and post-produced visual narrative. Thereby, given animation's unidirectional communication paradigm, it necessitates greater emphasis on multidimensional character construction compared to games. Grounded in the

Tripartite Characterization Theory [5], this study conducts a comparative analysis of game and animation characters across physiological, sociological and psychological dimensions.

The physiological dimension encompasses attributes such as gender, age, hairstyle, skin, appearance, defects and behaviors. In games, character age is typically unspecified and, even if nominally defined, remains static as time goes. Gender is functionally determined by combat roles, while hairstyle and skin color are designed in accordance with gender and personality traits to establish visual identity—features that remain immutable throughout gameplay. Given that game characters are player-controlled, "defects" generally refer to deliberately imposed skill limitations intended to enhance depth, whereas "behaviors" are restricted to combat mechanics. In contrast, in animation, characters are often assigned explicit and narratively progressive ages. Gender is narratively contingent, whereas hairstyle, skin, appearance, defects and behaviors are influenced not only by inherent character traits but also by contextual narrative demands—all of which may undergo dynamic evolution in tandem with plot development.

The social dimension comprises class statuses, occupational specializations, educational backgrounds, familial relationships, social networks and personal avocations [6]. In games, this dimension is contingent upon design objectives: where character interaction is emphasized, systemic mechanics must facilitate its expression. If in gameplay prioritizing individual achievement over social dynamics, this dimension may be omitted. Regardless, occupational skills constitute a character's most invariant and defining attribute.

Conversely, in animation, social stratification reflects narrative roles. Characters may exhibit multiple professions or hobbies to underscore their multifaceted nature. Education often derives from formative narrative influences, while familial and social relationships emerge organically from the story's relational framework.

The psychological dimension includes personality traits, achievement motivations, attitude schemas and psychological traumas. In games, it is mediated entirely by player role-playing. Characters themselves lack endogenous psychological states, though combat mechanics may obliquely suggest personality traits. While in animations, psychological complexity arises from the interplay of physiological and social dimensions, generating character's personality traits, achievement motivations, attitude schemas and psychological traumas that develop in tandem with narrative arcs.

In conclusion, the divergence between game and animated characters across dimensional constructs operates as follows: Physiologically, game characters maintain static designs rigidly tied to combat roles and skill systems, whereas animated characters exhibit temporally adaptive traits synchronized with narrative evolution; Sociologically, game characters display social attributes that are either optional or mandatory, while animated characters develop intricate social architectures through plot dynamics; Psychologically, game characters lack endogenous mental states, relying wholly on player embodiment, while animated characters generate psychological complexity through bio-social dialectics. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates that game characters, as player-oriented constructs, prioritize physiological functionality at the expense of sociological and psychological depth, whereas animated characters, serving narrative imperatives, necessitate comprehensive dimensional integrity for storytelling plausibility, as shown in Figure 1.

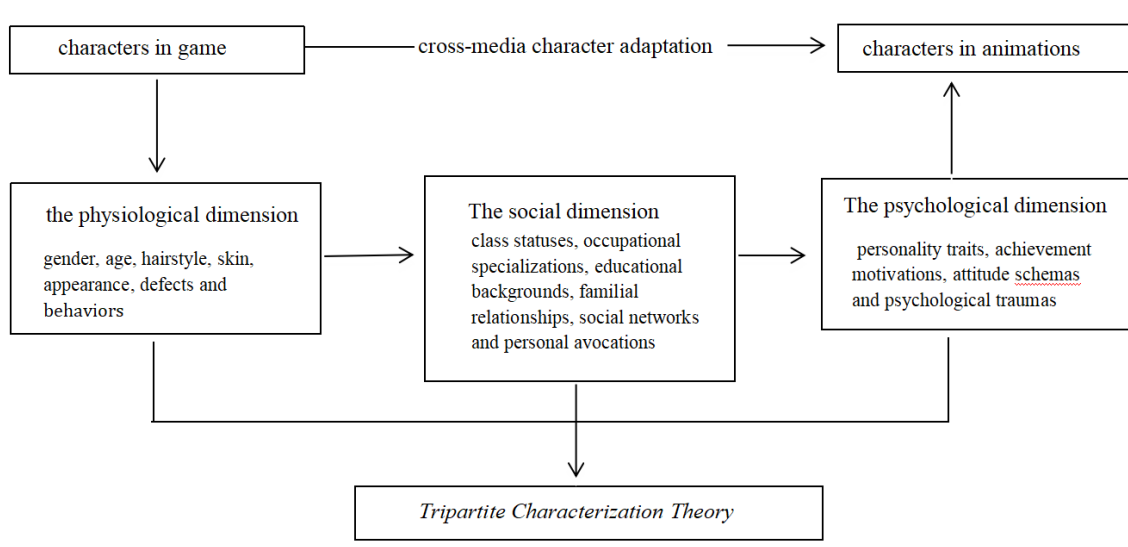


Figure.1 theoretical flowchart

### 3. The application of Tripartite Characterization Theory in Game-to-Animation Adaptation: A Case Study of Arcane: League of Legends

Focusing on the protagonist Jinx from both the game and animation, this paper examines the application of Tripartite Characterization Theory in the game-to-animation adaptation process. The analysis provides referential frameworks for future character adaptations across media.

#### 3.1 Triaxial Characterization Analysis of Jinx in Arcane: League of Legends

##### 3.1.1 Physiological Dimension

Game characters maintain static physiological attributes, whereas animated adaptations incorporate dynamic developmental processes. The case of Jinx exemplifies dynamic character evolution through her transformation from a nurtured figure to an abandoned outcast, marked by physiological shifts (appearance transitioning from benign innocence to manic aggression), behavioral changes (progression from compliance to defiance) and psychological deterioration (manifested through narrative development). This animated adaptation significantly enriches the original game's static characterization by introducing temporal dimensions, thereby enhancing audience engagement through observable growth trajectories that bridge gameplay and narrative storytelling modes—ultimately fostering deeper emotional investment from both gaming and viewing audiences.

##### 3.1.2 Sociological Dimension

Games emphasize combat proficiency and player achievement, largely omitting social context. Arcane reconstructs Jinx as an autonomous anti-establishment radical, embedding her within complex social matrices (class statuses, occupational specializations, educational backgrounds, familial relationships, social networks and personal avocations). These added dimensions explain her physiological transformations while fostering audience empathy through recognizable social conflicts.

### 3.1.3 Psychological Dimension

In game environments, characters function primarily as vessels for player agency and emotional projection, necessitating the absence of autonomous psychological dimensions to maintain ludic functionality. By contrast, the animated adaptation of Jinx demonstrates a tripartite developmental arc: (1) sociologically, her identity evolves from a cared-for child to an orphan traumatized by accidental fratricide and paternal abandonment; (2) physiologically, this triggers visible transformations from benign features to manic-aggressive phenotypes; (3) behaviorally, her actions shift from compliance to defiance. These cumulative bio-social disruptions ultimately crystallize into psychological trauma—a catalytic event that reconfigures her aspirational framework, personality constructs and attitudinal dispositions, thereby completing the character’s narrative maturation through interdependent dimensional interplay.

### 3. 2 Triaxial Differential Analysis (Table 1)

The emergent psychological dimension interacts bidirectionally with physiological and sociological aspects. This interdependent triad creates Jinx's psychological growth arc in the animation, allowing audiences to comprehend her internal conflicts. Key differentials are systematized in Table 1 below.

Tab.1 Triaxial Differential Analysis

Demension	features	Jinx's characterization in the game	Jinx's characterization in the animation	Game vs. Animated Characters
Physiological Dimension	age	Without transformations	With transformations	With transformations
	gender	female	female	Without transformations
	hairstyle, skin	blue-gray long hair and eyes	blue-gray short hair to long hair;blue eyes to red one	With transformations
	appearance	madness	From kindness and naivety to madness and irritability	With transformations
	behaviors	combat	From obedience to combat	With transformations
Sociological Dimension	class statuses	Without it but having faction	From lower class to upper class	With procedural trait generation
	occupational specializations	Sagittarius	Anti-government members	With procedural trait generation
	educational backgrounds	Depending on players	Influenced by the non-government	With procedural trait generation
	familial relationships	Without it but having teammate	Having foster father and sister	With procedural trait generation
	social networks	Unfixed enemy and teammate	Enemy: Caitlyn;	With procedural trait generation
	personal avocations	no	Drawing, creation and sabotaging	With procedural trait generation
Psychological Dimension	personality traits	Without psychological mood and thoughts	From gentleness to irritability	With procedural trait generation
	achievement motivations		reprisal	With procedural trait generation
	attitude schemas		hostility	With procedural trait generation
	psychological traumas		Losing friends and foster father	With procedural trait generation

The animated Jinx's physiological dimension builds upon her game counterpart's established traits while incorporating developmental progression, ultimately converging with the game's definitive physiological state. The sociological dimension, absent in the original game, emerges to contextualize behavioral and aesthetic transformations. Crucially, the interplay between physiological and sociological dimensions facilitates psychological depth development. This tripartite adaptation framework demonstrates that successful game-to-animation transitions require preservation of core physiological attributes, strategic addition of sociological contexts and organic development of psychological complexity that remains consistent with established physiological and sociological traits.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper employs Tripartite Characterization Theory to analyze dimensional transformations of characters adapted from games to animation, revealing that while game characters must maintain consistent physiological traits to preserve player recognition, their animated counterparts require enriched sociological and psychological dimensions to achieve narrative depth. The findings establish a transmedia adaptation framework wherein animated versions should retain the original physiological foundations, integrate dynamic social attributes and develop psychologically coherent traits that align with established bio-social parameters. Such multidimensional expansion enhances characterization through three mechanisms: first, animation-specific techniques amplify visual nuance; second, layered psychological portrayals increase audience empathy; third, balanced ludonarrative design satisfies gamers' expectations while fulfilling cinematic storytelling demands. Ultimately, this approach resolves the adaptation paradox between maintaining ludic identity and enabling diegetic growth, demonstrating that strategic dimensional augmentation—when grounded in the original physiological blueprint—yields characters with greater emotional resonance, social complexity and developmental authenticity across media.

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