Players and Characters: The Social-Psychology of Games

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Overview

- Richard Bartle - 4 player types
- Nick Yee - 3 motivation types 3-4 sub-types
- Marc Hassenzahl - Hedonic and pragmatic products
- Gary Allan Fine - Play frames
- My work
Player Types, and Motivation

- The grouping of players based on the primary factors of enjoyment
- Online multiplayer games
Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs

- Richard Bartle
- A MUD is a Multi-User Dungeon
- Text based
The 4 Player Types

- Achiever
- Explorer
- Socialiser
- Killer

the voices are telling me to kill you
The Achiever

- The easiest to qualify
- Players like to:
  - Collect items
  - Gather points
  - Level-up or gain abilities
  - Achievements

“Three guesses who just got the XP for killing a Balrog single-handed”
The Explorer

- Explorers want to know how everything works and see everything there is.
- They look for easter-eggs.
- Reverse engineer functionality.

\[ A_b = \frac{D_b}{R_d} + (F_s - l \times 5) \times 0.04 \]

\[ d = \frac{u \cdot C_d}{u + k \cdot C_d} \]
Socialisers

• Use the game as a backdrop for social interaction

• Are interested in developing, and maintaining personal connections
Killers

• Players who enjoy imposing themselves on others

• A busy-body or do-gooder

• Annoy, harass, and kill
Bartle’s Impact

• Axes represent players interest

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<th>ACTING</th>
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<td>Killers</td>
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Nick Yee and the Daedalus Project

- The daedalus project surveyed 35,000 MMORPG players over a 5 year period
- Explored many topics
- We will look at the player motivation model

http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/
# Player Motivation

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<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
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<td>Numbers, Optimization, Templating, Analysis</td>
<td>Personal, Self-Disclosure, Find and Give Support</td>
<td>Story Line, Character History, Roles, Fantasy</td>
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<td><strong>Competition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teamwork</strong></td>
<td><strong>Customization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenging Others, Provocation, Domination</td>
<td>Collaboration, Groups, Group Achievements</td>
<td>Appearances, Accessories, Style, Color Schemes</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Escapism</strong></td>
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<td>Relax, Escape from RL, Avoid RL Problems</td>
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</table>
Achievement

- Advancement
- Progression junkies
- Mechanics
- Min-maxers
- Competition
- Enjoy human opponents
Social

- Socialising
  - Chatting, helping, and meeting others
- Relationships
  - Friendships, Real-life topics
- Teamwork
  - Prefer to work with others rather than alone
Immersion

• Discovery
  • World explores, rare item collectors

• Role-Playing
  • Create and play a character

• Customization
  • Treat avatars as barbies

• Escapism
  • Use the game to avoid real-life
YOUR PARTY ENTERS THE TAVERN.

I GATHER EVERYONE AROUND A TABLE. I HAVE THE ELVES START WHITTILING DICE AND GET OUT SOME PARCHMENT FOR CHARACTER SHEETS.

HEY, NO RECURSING.
Differences Between Bartle and Yee

- To determine the subcomponents Yee preformed a factor analysis on survey data.
- Yee’s motivation categories are supported with empirical data, while Bartle’s player types are found through observation.
- Bartle’s model describes MUD players where Yee’s describes MMORPG players.
World of Warcraft

Player Type Self Categorization

- Achievers: 53%
- Explorers: 19%
- Killers: 13%
- Socialisers: 8%
- Other: 7%
Identifying with a Character

• Sociological and psychological examination of how players view their characters
• Related to player motivation
• The interactive nature of games makes them fundamentally different from other forms of media, such as movies.
Character vs. Avatar
Marc Hassenzahl

- Product attributes
- Pragmatic vs. Hedonic
  - Practical vs. emotional
- Independent of each other but combined form a product’s character
Strong Hedonic

- If a product is strongly hedonic but weakly pragmatic then the product represents SELF
- Low functionality
- High personal value
Strong Pragmatic

- A strongly pragmatic, but weakly hedonic product provides represents an ACT
- Provides great functionality
- But low personal value
Desired

- If a product is both strongly hedonic and pragmatic then it is greatly desired
- buying a brand-name
- personal investment
Are Characters Hedonic or Pragmatic?

- Both
- However, it dependant on an individual player
  - Some players view characters primarily as tools
  - Some players view characters as personal objects or as beings
Shared Fantasy

• In 1983 Gary Alan Fine wrote a book to explore his experiences in tabletop RPGs.

• He explored many interesting topics, specifically:

• Frames
Frames and Games

- Fine was interested in the way people move between realms of action
- Fine identified 3 levels of meaning, or frames
  - Primary Framework
  - Game Context
  - The Character
Primary Framework

• This is the real world

• “The commonsense understanding that people have of the real world”

• All other frames are sub frames of this primary frame.

• People are *people* in this frame
Game Context

- Playing a game requires adhering to rules.
- Similar to the concept of the magic circle.
- Actions are governed by what is allowed in the game regardless of what is allowed in the primary framework.
- People are *players* in this frame.
The Characters

• Within the game context players becoming the character

• Player knowledge is superseded by the characters knowledge

• character knowledge is not the same as player knowledge

• Players are *characters* in this frame
Frame Switching

- Switching between frames happens regularly and quickly
- Sub-frames are unstable compared with their parent frames
- A conscious or sub-conscious change in awareness
My Work

• What’s the connection?

• Is there a correlation between how a player identifies with their characters and the actions performed in the game?

• Does this relate to player types or motivations?

• If a designer wishes to provide a certain experience or cater to a specific player type, what gameplay elements would provide the best support?