Player Types – A Meta Synthesis

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Note:
We do not formally reference the paper or its own references directly unless a portion of text cannot be referred to in another simple fashion

Context & Background

- A literature review discussing the existing methods used to **segment**, *or categorize,* player bases

- Published in 2014
    - Most of the referenced papers were published within five years of this paper
    - There has almost certainly been significant related advancement since publication

- Discussed papers cover almost exclusively MMOs and MUD games
    - Only one single-player game: *Tomb Raider Underworld*
    - No focus on competitive games, sandbox games, and many other genres
    - Should not be expected to be all-encompassing

Segmentation

- Originally a marketing strategy, it describes the process used to categorize consumers
  - **Geographic** factors, *based on location*
  - **Demographic** factors, *formed from personal description (age, education, occupation, etc.)*
  - **Psychographic** factors, *related to interests, lifestyles, beliefs*
  - **Behavioral** factors, *depends on how a product is interacted with*
  - Each category of consumer can be tailored to directly in the product and advertising
- In games, segmentation can help to describe the various player types within the player base
- This helps to understand player motivations and design game mechanics to fit them
  - Ex. Players that enjoy being social in multiplayer games would benefit from a clan feature

Motivational Factors

- Determine how player-types are formed
- To maintain simplicity, they are sometimes all-or-nothing traits
  - In reality, this is almost never the case
  - i.e. competitiveness, patience, talent, social tendencies
- Yee (2007)
  - Characterized specifically online games
  - Achievement
  - Social
  - Immersion
- There can often be difficulty in measuring and incorporating these factors into player-types

Player Types

- **Hardcore vs Casual**? *(criticized for simplicity, metrics)*
    - Can be a standalone type or incorporated into a more complex description
    - A measurement of engagement, dedication, knowledge? All are possible
    - Pigeonholes players into categories which are spectrums in reality *(a common problem)*
- Tomb Raider Specific
    - **Veterans**, which *die rarely and move quickly*
    - **Solvers**, *who take their time to solve puzzles*
    - **Pacifists**, *that die mostly to enemies as opposed to the environment*
    - **Runners**, *with an aim to finish quickly*

Player Types (cont.)

- The Four Archetypes
  - A two-axis categorization based on a player's social tendencies and preference to acting or interacting with the environment
  - What happens if these motivations change over time, or depend on the context?
  - In reality, there are also more motivations than this…
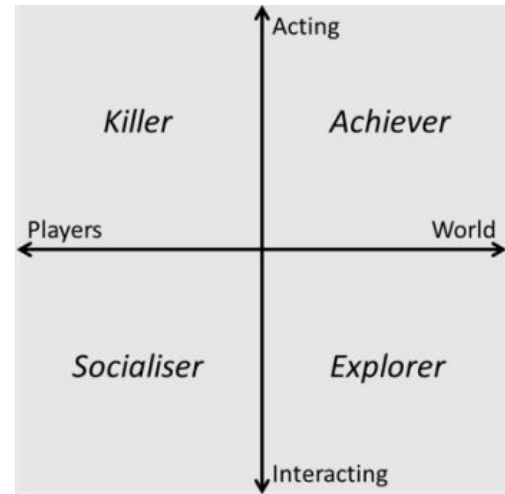
Player Types (cont.)

- Zachariasson et al. (2010)
  - Progress & Provocation
  - Power & Domination   → Achievement
  - Helping & Support
  - Friends & Collaboration   → Social
  - Exploration & Fantasy
  - Story & Escapism   → Immersion

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

- Once developers begin using player-types during development, they end up designing games in such a way which reinforces the respective player types

Player Types (cont.)

- Leo Whang & Chang (2004)
  - **Single-oriented**, *focuses on the individual experience*
  - **Community-oriented**, *embraces social aspects*
  - **Off-real world**, *focuses on personal gains at any cost*
    - Combative, as opposed to single-oriented

Player Types (cont.)

- Kallio et al. (2011)
  - Players cannot be placed into rigid boxes
  - Playstyles depends on the game played, the people played with, available time, etc.
  - Proposes not player types, but player mentalities with different sub-mentalities
    - **Social** *(playing with children/mates/company)*
    - **Casual** *(killing time/filling gaps/relaxing)*
    - **Committed** *(gaming for fun/immersion/entertainment)*
  - Most digital gaming takes place between 'casual relaxing'' and "committed entertaining,'

In-game demographic

- A categorization of players based on their character and behaviors within the game itself
  - A different method of segmentation
- Can include factors such as
  - The progression level of characters
  - Types of avatars selected (priest or warrior etc.)
- **Marketers might have better luck targeting their products towards the avatars** *instead of players.*

Common concepts

- There are many attempts to segment player-types, but some of these are more prevalent and more often discussed.
- The concepts of **Achievement and Sociability** are the most frequently discussed in the reviewed literature. The concepts of **Exploration, Domination and Immersion** are also common. The use of **In-game demographics is particularly rare**, *appearing in only a few studies.*

Biggest Criticisms

- Oversimplification (putting a player in a rigid box)
- Static categorization
- Dichotomous thinking
- Empirical validation
- Applicability across game types

Implications for game studies

- **Enhances quantitative game studies** by providing insights into player traits. This assists researchers in creating better tools to study how players behave in different types of games and on various platforms
- **Informs qualitative game studies** by highlighting the shortcomings of current player type models and suggests using these models as a starting point to explore player experiences more deeply. This can lead to a better understanding of how players interact with games.

Implications to Game Design and Marketing

- Existing segmentation methods can be used to better understand the player base and to develop more sophisticated methods to do so
- Developers now have the awareness of common behavioral and motivational factors which influence players, and can design their games with them in mind. Also allows game companies to better market to their target audience.

The End ¯_(ツ)_/¯