

Game Community Study Assignment

In this paper, we will examine *Destiny: The Game*'s online community using the official Destiny site. One aspect of this community is the online forum designed to facilitate discussions over the current state of the game (new topics are explored with every update to the game), point out glitches, and give general feedback that developers can explore and potentially patch/fix. The community also has a "Looking for a Group" (LFG) subsection where players can find teams for in-game activities such as 6v6/4v4 competitive player vs. player (PvP) modes, and 3-6 person player vs. environment (PvE) raid teams. When looking through the LFG subsection of the community, there are evident cases of team creation through the lens of one's status. Status, in *Destiny*, is defined in two areas: kill/death (K/D) ratio for PvP activities, and the number of activity completions (raid, strikes) for PvE activities. Thus, many players that make an LFG post have requirements where they are looking for other high-caliber players, while "lower-tier" players are usually kicked from these groups. The forum side, however, is a different story. Players who have genuinely good questions are met with rapid and constructive answers, posts notifying players of issues/glitches in the game are praised for their usefulness, and discussions aimed at possible game changes/future content additions are taken into serious consideration by other players and even the developers. While the LFG and forum sides of the community differ in many aspects, they do offer critical analyses of gaming through the scope of scholarly material.

On several occasions when analyzing Destiny's forum community, I came across posts aimed at either recruiting members to join a clan or posts from players who were looking for clans themselves. One player, for example, made a post looking for an active clan that specializes in higher-level activities. This post was met by four separate clan invites. Another post welcomed new players to join their clan in what was labeled a "stress-free" environment. This post also had many player requests to join. These kinds of clan posts are aimed at gathering a vast number of players in order to have the same members play with one another, help one another, and hopefully become friends with one another. This directly ties into the idea that games can lead to stronger social networks, the belief that "games build stronger bonds and lead to more active social networks" (McGonigal, *Reality is Broken*, p.82). The creation of clans makes this belief a reality, since players who join a clan will continuously play together in the various activities offered by the game. In addition to clan posts, discussions on how certain bugs/exploits are used in the game by players to progress in activities captured the dichotomy between the formalist and structuralist definitions of a game. In particular, there is currently an exploit within the game that allows users to finish the last boss encounter of a raid in a fraction of the time that it would normally take to complete. The discussion revolved around competing viewpoints on whether or not this type of exploit should be used in the game. Many argued that because finishing the encounter so quickly wasn't what the developers had intended, players should not take advantage of it. Others argued that because it is a part of the game, it should be used without any moral repercussions. These viewpoints are summed up well in the idea that "some players see every level and activity in a game as worthwhile...while others derive value from particular parts and seek to avoid or minimize other game elements" (Consalvo, *There is no magic circle*, p.412). One side takes the formalist viewpoint, while the other takes the structuralist viewpoint.

Interestingly enough, a player pointed out how this exploit has yet to be fixed in the two months of its introduction, which makes you wonder what side the developers are on. More than likely, however, the fix is just taking longer than expected.

Because *Destiny* is a multiplayer game that expects players to keep playing even after they have finished the main campaign, LFG's are utilized to gather players to play certain activities in the "end-game". From raids to 6v6 matches, players that join a group all work together in an effort to achieve some overall goal. For McGonigal, this strive to some goal is one of the defining traits of a game. Particularly, "the goal provides players with a sense of purpose" (*McGonigal, Reality is Broken, p.21*). In regards to *Destiny*, if there were no goals after players finished the main campaign, no "end-game", then there would be no purpose in utilizing an LFG. It is because of the game's implementation of an "end-game" that gives players a reason to come back, team up, and reach some goal. And there are many categories within the LFG subsection of the forum for each of the end-game activities, allowing players to determine what goal a player wants to go for on any given day.

Overall, analyzing *Destiny's* community left me feeling mixed. While there are some obviously beneficial aspects such as discussions on glitches, future implementations for the game, and even a system for players to join together for some activity, there were also displays of negativity, specifically in the LFG side of the community. As mentioned before, there is a sense of superiority in many of the players creating groups in that they are only looking for other players who meet their expectations. Sometimes, these expectations borderline on the ridiculous such as LFG posts with a 3.0 K/D requirement for PvP activities (these groups never get engagement from other players). These expectations shut out many members of the community who play the game for fun and want to play with other members as well. Instead, these groups

are meant for the hardcore players that take the game seriously, yet this mentality excludes a majority of the community. One thing that was interesting, and hilarious, was that (after a bit of digging) most of the players who create these lofty groups don't even meet their own requirements. All things considered, one of the most important takeaways from analyzing this community, was how important it is for a game to have a defined community for it to still have an active player base past the initial couple months of the games release. These communities allow player input to potentially change the course of the game for the betterment of everybody, seeing as how developers take part in community discussions. Even having an LFG subsection and clan posts that lets players team up, allow the game to thrive through the connections formed between players. These communities make or break a game, and I believe developers understand this...power to the people and all.