HEARTS, CLUBS, DIAMONDS, SPADES: PLAYERS WHO SUIT MUDS

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MUD = Multi User Dungeon

- Often text-based

- Combines role-playing, hack and slash, player vs player, interactive fiction,and online chat

- Most popular during the late 1980s-1990s

A Simple Taxonomy

1. Achievement within the game context. (Achiever)

Players give themselves game-related goals, and vigorously set out to achieve them. This usually means accumulating and disposing of large quantities of high-value treasure, or cutting a swathe through hordes of mobiles (ie. monsters built in to the virtual world).

2. Exploration of the game. (Explorers)

Players try to find out as much as they can about the virtual world. Although initially this means mapping its topology (ie. exploring the MUD's breadth), later it advances to experimentation with its physics (ie. exploring the MUD's depth).
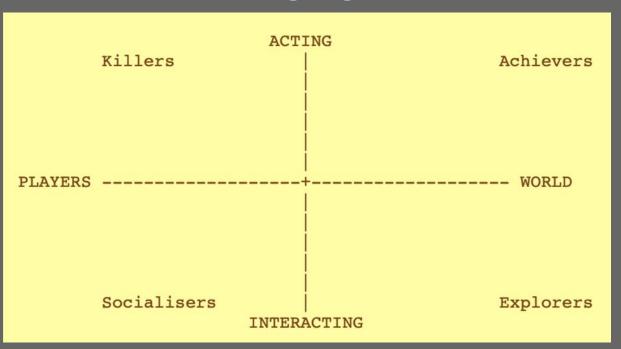
A Simple Taxonomy

3. Socialising with others. (Socialisers)

Players use the game's communicative facilities, and apply the role-playing that these engender, as a context in which to converse (and otherwise interact) with their fellow players.

4. Imposition upon others. (Killers)

Players use the tools provided by the game to cause distress to (or, in rare circumstances, to help) other players. Where permitted, this usually involves acquiring some weapon and applying it enthusiastically to the persona of another player in the game world.

INTEREST GRAPH

CHANGING THE PLAYER TYPE BALANCE

PLAYERS

Provide the system with lots of communication commands and precious little else.

The more the scales are tipped towards players, though, the less of a MUD you have and the more of a CB-style chatline. Beyond a certain point, the game can't provide a context for communication, and it ceases to be a viable virtual world.

WORLD

Make World so big and awkward to traverse that no-one ever meets anyone in it. If players do meet up, then there are very few ways in which they an interact.

Anyone can rack up points given time, but there's not the same sense of achievement as when it's done under pressure from competing players.

CHANGING THE PLAYER TYPE BALANCE

INTERACTING

Restricting the freedom of players to choose different courses of action is the mechanism for implementing it, so they can only follow a narrow or predetermined development path.

Player sit there being entertained, but not actually participating much. You may feel like you're in a world, but it's one in which you're paralysed.

ACTING

If the graph is redrawn to favour doing-to over doing-with, the game quickly becomes boring. Tasks are executed repeatedly, by rote. There's always monotony, never anything new, or, if these is something new, it's of the "man versus random number generator" variety.

Ways to emphasise PLAYERS over WORLD

- add more communication facilities
- add more player-on-player commands (eg. transitive ones like TICKLE or CONGRATULATE, or commands to form and maintain closed groups of personae)
- make communication facilities easy and intuitive
- decrease the size of the world
- increase the connectivity between rooms
- maximise the number of simultaneous players
- restrict building privileges to a select few
- cut down on the number of mobiles
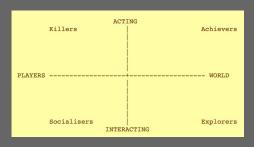
Ways to emphasise WORLD over PLAYERS

- have only basic communication facilities
- have few ways that players can do things to other players
- make building facilities easy and intuitive
- maximise the size of the world (ie. add *breadth*)
- use only "rational" room connections in most cases
- grant building privileges to many
- have lots of mobiles

Ways to emphasise INTERACTING over ACTING

- make help facilities produce vague information
- produce cryptic hints when players appear stuck
- maximise the effects of commands (ie. add *depth*)
- lower the rewards for achievement
- have only a shallow level/class system
- produce amusing responses for amusing commands
- edit all room descriptions for consistent atmosphere
- limit the number of commands available in any one area
- have lots of small puzzles that can be solved easily
- allow builders to add completely new commands

Ways to emphasise ACTING over INTERACTING

- provide a game manual
- include auto-map facilities
- include auto-log facilities
- raise the rewards for achievement
- have an extensive level/class system
- make commands be applicable wherever they might reasonably have meaning
- have large puzzles, that take over an hour to complete
- have many commands relating to fights
- only allow building by top-quality builders

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                                ACTING
         Killers                   |                    Achievers
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                                   |
                                   |
PLAYERS -------------------------+------------------- WORLD
                                   |
                                   |
                                   |
         Socialisers               |                    Explorers
                            INTERACTING
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THE SOCIAL VERSUS GAMELIKE DEBATE

- Players tend to categorize MUDS as "social" or "gamelike"
  - <u>Social</u>: games are heavily weighted to the area below the x-axis (Interacting)
  - <u>Gamelike:</u> games are heavily weighted above the x-axis (Acting)
- Debate: Some social MUDders separate themselves from MUD label as to them MUDs are combat-orientated/game-like/too competitive
- Social MUDs are still MUDs with both killers, even w/o explicit combat, & achievers (ie: people who view building as a competition)
- Game-like MUDs can obv. still allow rich social interactions
- Binary = counter-intuitive?

PLAYER INTERACTIONS (ACHIEVER)

ACHIEVERS V. ACHIEVERS:

- Competition (often friendly)
- Respect for high achievers but will cite bad luck or lack of time for not being as advanced as them
- Often cooperate and may form intensely strong bonds
- Do not need presence of other player types as long as there's still a challenge

ACHIEVERS V. EXPLORERS:

- Achievers view explorers as losers, good explorers could be used for information
- # of explorers have marginal effect on # of achievers
- # of explorers affects the rate of advancement of achievers

ACHIEVERS V. SOCIALISERS:

- Achievers tolerate socializers, may speak to them condescendingly
- Flame wars
- # of socializers have no effect on # of achievers

ACHIEVERS V. KILLERS:

- Don't like killers but believe they are necessary for challenge
- Being attacked by killers may make achievers kill too however the risk is often too high for them to act
- Inverse population relationship

PLAYER INTERACTIONS (EXPLORER)

EXPLORERS V. ACHIEVERS:

- View achievers as beginner who haven't figured out that life is more than pursuing meaningless goals
- Explorers like to provide them information through cryptic clues
- Sometimes achievers get in the way of experiments but otherwise friction free relations
- # of explorers not affected by achievers

EXPLORERS V. EXPLORERS:

- Respect each other but don't like bad explorers (ie: those who give out incorrect info)
- Believe they could follow the achievement path to glory but have reasons for not doing so, but it could also be that they are too theoretical and don't have the skills to put their ideas into practice
- Enjoy company of other explorers & will play more often
- # of explorers are hard to increase

EXPLORERS V. SOCIALISERS:

- Socialisers are people they can impress so if socialisers don't appreciate them, explorers won't talk to them
- # of explorers are not directly affected by socialisers

EXPLORERS V. KILLERS:

- Explorers have a grudging respect for killers because they know their trade well
- If an explorer is riled up by a killer and decide to jump a killer, this could destroy a killer's reputation
- Often don't care about being killed but may play less if it happens often
- # of explorers very slightly affected by killers

PLAYER INTERACTIONS (SOCIALISER)

SOCIALISERS V. ACHIEVERS:

- Like achievers because they provide content (about their feats and about the achievers themselves) to talk about
- Too many achievers may lead to socialisers believing MUD to be too achievement focused and will leave
- Too little achievers will provide them less to talk about and will leave

SOCIALISERS V. EXPLORERS:

- Sad characters who need a life
- Both like to talk but about different things
- # of socialisers are not affected by explorers

SOCIALISERS V. SOCIALISERS:

- Direct population relationship

SOCIALISERS V. KILLERS:

- Don't like killers
- Could be argued that killers give socialisers something to talk about and no good w/o evil
- Inverse population relationship

PLAYER INTERACTIONS (KILLER)

KILLERS V. ACHIEVERS:

- Achievers are natural prey because they are good fighters but not as good as killers → thrill of chase; but may lead to being jumped by achievers for revenge
- Killer subclass who fight achievers to test their ability to advance to higher levels
- Direct population relationship

KILLERS V. EXPLORERS:

- Tend to leave explorers alone as sometimes they are formidable opponents w/ obscure tactics or they just don't care about being attacked
- Long term-wise if killers are defeated by an explorer they are less likely to return because of shame
- Increasing # of explorers will slightly decrease # of killers

KILLERS V. SOCIALISERS:

- Like to harass socialisers
- Increasing # of socialisers will increase # of killers, increased # of socialisers will not remain

KILLERS V. KILLERS:

- Don't like to fight unless in organized match
- Occasionally work in teams short term
- Indirect relation as more killers reduce the # of potential victims

Dynamics

To increase/decrease the number of ACHIEVERS:

- Decrease/ increase the number of killers, but not by too much.

To increase /decrease the number of EXPLORERS:
- Increase # of explorers
- Massively increase # of killers

To increase/decrease the number of SOCIALISERS:
- Slightly decrease/increase # of killers
- Increase/decrease # of socialisers
- Massively increase or decrease # of achievers

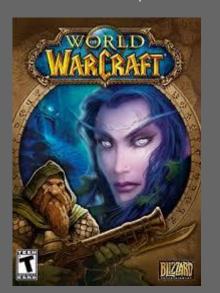To increase/decrease the number of KILLERS:
- Increase/decrease # of achievers
- Massively decrease/increase # of explorers
- Increase/decrease # of socialisers

Types of Stable MUDs & Return to Social/Gamelike Debate

1) Killers and achievers in equilibrium; game-like

- Socialisers will leave game because they are killed off or there aren't interesting (to them) to talk to
- Explorers potter around, unaffected

2) A MUD dominated by socialisers; social

- Software changes are made to discourage/not allow killing
- Achievers and explorers still exist but swamped by # of socialisers
- More socialisers = further increase in # of socialisers

3) A MUD where all groups have a similar influence (although not necessarily similar numbers); can be both social and gamelike

- Extremely difficult to attain but can hold onto players the longest
- Game nurtures explorers who increase in # & keep # of killers in check, killers prevent socialisers from mass spawning, and provide achievers enough challenge for their achievements to have meaning

4) A MUD with no players

- Killers scared everyone off
- A MUD structured for socialisers but never took off

Examples of Player-Type Gameplay

These player types can be applied and expanded on outside of MUDs to other games (ie: their successor, MMORPGs).

Pokemon ?:
Achievers: complete dex, speedrunners, nuzlockers, competitive battle, shiny breeders (?)
Killers: ? people who send out trash pokemon in wonder trade
Explorers: lore people, battle testers, exploit finders
Socialisers: ? people who just play the main story, almost all socializing happens outside the game

Tips to Apply In Our Game Design

- Overbalancing a MMO in favor of a single type can result in basically making a single player game, book, chatline, or an arcade game.
- Design games with possible player types in mind to create a diverse community

Thank You!