Games, Toys, and Play

Foundations of Interactive Game Design
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Upcoming Assignment: Gamelog

- Due Friday (1/12): Gamelog of a game of your choice
- How to do this assignment:
  - Pick a game
  - Play it for at least 45-60 minutes
  - Go to www.gamelog.cl (GameLog web site)
  - Create account on the site (or login)
    - Click “Want to sign up?” in upper left corner
  - Browse some existing Gamelogs
    - Click “Logs”
    - “Newest Gamelogs” and “Recently Closed” show recent site activity
  - Create new Gamelog entry
    - Click “New GameLog” in upper left corner (will appear after login)
    - Fill in forms with details about your gameplay session
    - Then, write your initial gamelog entry
      - Click “Write an entry for a GameLog you’ve created”
GameLog Assignment (Part 2)

• Now that you have Gamelogged the first game session...
• Play the same game again for at least 45-60 minutes
• Then, return to the GameLog site (www.gamelog.cl)
  › Login
• View your currently active GameLogs
  › Click “View Open GameLogs”
  › You will see the GameLog you started at bottom of page
• Click “Add Log Entry” to create new GameLog
  › Also need to update GameLog
    › Click “Edit or Update” from Open GameLogs page
    › Modify current status (Finished playing, stopped playing, occasional play, etc.)
    › Also add your opinion about the game
• On Friday, bring your gamelog.cl login id to class
  ‣ You will write this next to your name on a class roster
  ‣ Will connect you to your gamelog entries
• If you have questions about the assignment
  ‣ Ask in class on Wednesday
  ‣ Send TAs or Professor email
    ❖ Email addresses on course website (ejw@cs.ucsc.edu)
    ❖ http://www.soe.ucsc.edu/classes/cmps080k/Winter07/
  ‣ Found a bug, hit a technical problem?
    ❖ Email Jose Zagal (jpzagal AT gmail DOT com)
• Collaborate!
  ‣ We encourage you to read other entries, and comment on them
• Internalize
  ‣ Feel free to use this site for all of your ongoing gameplay
• Goal of today’s class: explore different definitions of games, toys, and play
• We all share strong intuitions about these concepts
  ‣ But often have difficulty expressing these intuitions
• Purpose of developing definitions:
  ‣ To be more precise and articulate about these concepts
  ‣ Provide a framework for analyzing games and toys
    ❖ That is, definitions give you interesting questions to ask
  ‣ Points in new directions
    ❖ By understanding what is generally considered to be a toy or a game, can push against the boundaries, and explore new game and toy concepts
  ‣ Develop understanding of ingrained biases about games
    ❖ Costikyan’s definition of games states that games are art—are they?
Briefly, Play

- Children often play, a free-form activity that is mostly not rule-based
  - A child playing with dolls, trains, trucks, blocks, running around with friends
  - Often some rules
    - That baby is sleeping (so don’t wake it!)
    - Avoid the boiling hot lava rocks!
  - Sometimes fixed goals
    - Building a specific structure (fire station for a fire truck)
  - But, mostly marked by fluidity of rules and goals
    - Children have fickle minds and short attention spans
Games, Play, Toys

- A rough distinction between games and toys
  - Games are rule-based, toys are not
  - But, doesn’t address toy-like computer games that have rules but not strong goals

- Games and play
  - Play is free-form
  - Games are a subset of play that is rule-based

- But, games make it possible to play them
  - So play is a part of games
Traditional Definitions

- Traditional view of definitions
  - Express a series of characteristics
  - Items matching all characteristics belong to the category
  - Miss a single characteristic: not part of category
  - Characteristics create firm boundaries
    - Provide necessary and sufficient conditions
  - All members of category meet all definitions

- Example: chair
  - must have surface for sitting
  - must have surface for supporting back
  - must be supported off of floor

Chair or fountain?
Prototype Theory

• Some members of a category are more central than others
• Eleanor Rosch study
  ‣ Cognitive Representation of Semantic Categories, 1975
  ‣ Asked 200 college students to rank, on scale of 1 to 7
    ❖ Whether they considered items to be good representatives...
    ❖ ... of the class of furniture
  ‣ Resulting ranks:
    ❖ 1 chair
    ❖ 1 sofa
    ❖ 3 couch
    ❖ 3 table
    ❖ ...
    ❖ 50 stove
    ❖ 54 refrigerator
Are these games?

- Consider these activities:
  - Children playing with dolls
  - Jumping rope
  - Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - Russian roulette
  - Playing Monopoly
  - Driving

- Take a moment and give each a number from 1 to 7
  - 1: is very strong example of a game
  - 7: is very weak example of a game

- Poll class for results

Kaba Kick: Russian roulette “for kids.” Instead of bullets, a pair of feet come out the barrel. If gun doesn’t fire, player earns points.

Source: 209.180.204.251/russian-roulette/index.html
Challenges in creating definitions of games

• What are unique qualities that make a game a game?
• How to differentiate games from play, conflict, and merely rule governed activities?
• Some qualities of games
  ‣ Has rules
  ‣ Has a goal
  ‣ Involves decision making
  ‣ Safe, outside of ordinary life
  ‣ Voluntary
  ‣ Outcome is uncertain
• Ideally, definitions of games should address these
• In *Serious Games*, Clark C. Abt defines games as follows:

  Reduced to its formal essence, a game is an *activity* among two or more independent *decision-makers* seeking to achieve their *objectives* in some *limiting context*. A more conventional definition would say that a game is a context with rules among adversaries trying to win objectives.

• Key elements of definition
  
  ‣ **Activity**
    ✤ Game is a series of actions taking place over time
  
  ‣ **Decision makers**
    ✤ People playing the game are actively making decisions
  
  ‣ **Objectives**
    ✤ There is a goal to the game, a desired outcome
  
  ‣ **Limiting context**
    ✤ Rules exist that structure and limit the activity of the game
Reduced to its formal essence, a game is an *activity* among two or more independent *decision-makers* seeking to achieve their *objectives* in some *limiting context*.

- How does this definition apply to the six activities from earlier this lecture?
  - Children playing with dolls
  - Jumping rope
  - Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - Russian roulette
  - Playing Monopoly
  - Driving

- Which of these would Abt consider to be a game?
Costikyan Definition

A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in pursuit of a goal.

• Key elements
  ‣ Art
    ❖ Games are a form of art, hence creating culture
  ‣ Decision making players
    ❖ Players actively participating and making choices
  ‣ Resource management
    ❖ Decisions made depend on resources available, and manipulate resources
  ‣ Game tokens
    ❖ Representation of the state of the game, affordances for user action
  ‣ Goal
    ❖ Objective of the game
Costikyan Definition Applied

A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in pursuit of a goal.

• Apply to class list of activities
  ‣ Children playing with dolls
  ‣ Jumping rope
  ‣ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  ‣ Russian roulette
  ‣ Playing Monopoly
  ‣ Driving

• Which of these would Costikyan consider to be a game?
Jesper Juul’s Classic Game Definition


- **Rules**
  - Games are rule-based

- **Variable, quantifiable outcome**
  - Games have varying endings, with different numbers assignable to specific outcomes

- **Valorization of outcome**
  - The different potential outcomes of the game are assigned different values, some positive and some negative

- **Player effort**
  - The player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome
    - Games are challenging
• **Player attached to outcome**
  ‣ The player is emotionally attached to the outcome of the game in the sense that a player will be a “winner” and happy in case of a positive outcome, but a loser and “unhappy” in case of a negative outcome.

• **Negotiable consequences**
  ‣ The same game [set of rules] can be played with or without real-world consequences.
  ‣ **Examples**
    ❖ Poker: Can play this game without betting real money. Once money is bet, the game has real-world consequences.
Application of Juul’s Classic Game Definition

• Juul’s Classic Game Definition (overview):
  ‣ Rules
  ‣ Variable, quantifiable outcome
  ‣ Valorization of outcome
  ‣ Player effort
  ‣ Player attached to outcome
  ‣ Negotiable consequences

• Apply to set of six activities
  ‣ Children playing with dolls
  ‣ Jumping rope
  ‣ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  ‣ Russian roulette
  ‣ Playing Monopoly
  ‣ Driving