Foundations of Interactive Game Design (80K)

week five, lecture one
We’re through talking about rules in isolation
Increasingly, we’re talking about *players*
Today

• Following up on Mitchell visit, Taylor reading
• Preview of MMO “Gold Farmers” documentary
• Start of MMO conversation
• Conflict and cooperation in games — as time allows
MMO documentary preview
Chinese Gold Farmers:
Inescapable Realities of the Virtual World

Ge Jin aka Jingle
A Presentation for Serious Play, Feb. 8, 2007

Documentary by Ge Jin ("Jingle")
UCSD PhD student
Your thoughts on Gold Farmers / Professional Players?
Play Between Worlds
(some topics)
Boundaries

• Online and offline social groupings (servers at the con)

• Online and offline game structures (live quests and human NPCs)

• Online and offline economics (not just for gold farmers)
Taylor

• “My hope is to show that the very notion of being able to bound off what is game and not game is not a particularly fruitful way of understanding these spaces — either as games or via their status as a cultural space”

• “[T]his book tries to understand the ways not only the artifact of the game, but the production of play within it, are multiply constituted by a variety of actors located in particular social contexts”
Taylor’s intervention

- Online life is not a bounded-off zone of experimentation,
- nor simply a place to work out offline issues.
- The game “itself” is as social as it is a technological artifact or set of rules.
Taylor’s history

- A basically good overview
- Textual: *MUD I*, *TinyMUD*, *MOO*, etc
- Graphical: *Habitat*, *AlphaWorld*, *The Palace*, *Ultima Online*, etc
- The question of user/author roles (gaming, socializing, building)
- But no *Adventure*, *Zork*, Infocom, etc
EverQuest as social space

- Some things built in: “/y” and the necessity of grouping
- Some emerging social norms: shouting “train” and not griefing
- Some things change: introducing the raid tool and changing how porting works
Groups and guilds

• Reputation: Getting into groups and guilds, getting benefit from them, being seen as a leader, signaling to others on the server

• Trust: Risking characters’ lives for each other, borrowing from bank, account access

• Responsibility: Being “there” when expected, improving ability at pace, choosing the character that will help others
Game design and social interaction

• “Players now see charging for buffs as a way of recouping their costs. Requests to be buffed for free are met with replies about the high price of obtaining the spell.”

• “We can see in the shift from a gift to market economy around buffs how the design choices ... produced a companion effect in social behaviors.”
Bartle’s player typology

• Achievers, explorers, socialisers and killers
• Memory device: “achievers are Diamonds (they're always seeking treasure); explorers are Spades (they dig around for information); socialisers are Hearts (they empathise with other players); killers are Clubs (they hit people with them).”
ACTING

PLAYERS

Killers

WORLD

Achievers

Socialisers

INTERACTING

Explorers
Of course, players aren’t just one thing.

Nick Yee’s model of player motivations:

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<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Immersion</th>
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<td>Exploration, Lore,</td>
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<td>Finding Hidden</td>
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<td>Roles, Fantasy</td>
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<td><strong>Competition</strong></td>
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• “The vast majority of virtual worlds, whether commercial or hobbyist, are game-like (Dorothy) worlds, the leading title at the moment being *World of Warcraft*...

• “However, there are also social (Wendy) worlds of some significance, the most important of which is *Second Life*...
Bartle’s world typology

- “The players of those few balanced (Alice) worlds that remain usually consider them to be game-related, while nevertheless recognizing that they're somehow different than Dorothy worlds” (Ultima Online, EVE)

- “[T]he designer constructs a world with no storyline, but with a lush capacity for interaction. This results in a framework for the creation of story by the players”
Taylor & power gamers

• “We need expansive definitions of play to account for the variety of participants’ pleasurable labor and activity.”

• Just saying “fun” glosses over what we need to examine

• Power gamers focus on: efficiency, dynamic goals, understanding underlying structures, technical and skill proficiency
Taylor on women

- Women underrepresented in game development, play, and consumption
- “Pink games” — playing stereotypes of female activities — only answer the last
- Women’s attention to social process in MMOs may code as “feminine” — but it’s also a way to be powerful active agents
When we say “women don’t like fighting” it is as if the “experiences of women who right now do play... who have played for years, are hidden off in a corner lest they overly complicate our notions” (113)

Maybe more attention to what women who play talk about — like less sexualized avatar choices?
Taylor on ownership

• Does it make sense for game companies to entirely control what players make in their games? (*Second Life* and player creativity.)

• Gold farming, power leveling, RMT, etc

• “We increasingly live in a world in which opting out of technological systems is more and more difficult and yet participation within those systems pushes us to accept structures we might oppose.” (135)
This week

- Work breakdown due in section
- Prototype work ongoing
- There could always be another reading quiz