FGD – CHAPTER 4 AND 5
UNDERSTANDING THE PLAYER AND MACHINE
PLAYER PERSONALITY
DOMAINS OF PLAY

• Mix of psychology and expert designer opinion

• Attempts to classify what might attract players to different types of games
  • In other words, what aspects of games do players seek out

• In general – you can't appease everyone, but you should know your target audience!
DOMAINS OF PLAY

- Novelty vs familiarity
- Challenge vs "sandbox"
- Stimulation (social vs solo gaming)
- Harmony (cooperative vs competitive)
- Threat (unpleasant vs pleasant emotions)
- Storytelling

- Where do you lie in these 6 domains?
PLAYER DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES
DO YOU HAVE STEREOTYPES?

• What do you think is the difference between genders as it relates to games?
• What about age?

• Keep these in mind as we discuss, and you may learn you have some misconceptions
• Additionally, the following information is representational of the current state of gaming; so (1) it may have bias and (2) it may change in the future
MEN AND WOMEN

• Fact – women represent a large portion of the gamer market
  • More adult women than teenage boys actually

• Gender inclusiveness – you don’t need to specifically design for stereotypically feminine interests

• Avoid
  • Hypersexualized female avatars
  • Repetitive play
  • Play without meaningful goals
  • Solitary play (or just be aware of this turn-off)

• A minority of men keep pushing various stereotypes; ignore them
  • Example: female protagonists won’t sell
MEN AND WOMEN

• A few generalities about gender differences (general trends, not rules!):
  • Learning
  • Attitudes toward risk
  • Degree of socializing
  • Conflict resolution style
  • Mental challenges
  • Customization
  • Leisure time and money

• Design rule: women are a market, not a genre!

• Consider inclusion of avatars/main characters of various genders
  • Remember to include differences so that female characters aren't simply a different skin on an inherently male oriented character
CHILDREN

• General categories
  • Preschool and Kindergarten (3-6)
  • Early elementary (5-8)
  • Upper elementary (7-12)
  • Middle and high school (13 and up)
  • Late teens to mid-20s – brains still developing

• Each group has own interests and abilities
• As with gender, these are generalities, not rules
CHILDREN

• Consider
  • Hand-eye coordination
  • Logic development
  • Systemic thinking
  • Immediate vs long-term goals
  • Visual design
  • Linguistic complexity
  • Experimentation
  • Reading
  • Appropriate content

• Kisses of death for children’s entertainment
  – big misconceptions:
    • Kids love anything sweet
    • Give them what is good for them
    • All you do is have to amuse them
    • Always play it safe
    • All kids are created equal
    • Explain everything
    • Be sure characters are wholesome
A NOTE ON GAMES FOR GIRLS

• Boy's and girl's interests diverge widely (for better or for worse)

• Many early efforts failed if the publisher let them attempt it at all
  • Caused by gender stereotypes!

• Look at places with market success, e.g., Mattel or Blitz
A NOTE ON GAMES FOR GIRLS

• To make more inclusive strive for gameplay that allows
  • Characterization
  • Context
  • Control
  • Customization
  • Creativity

• Misconceptions
  • Girls don't like computer games because its techie
  • Girls don't like violence
  • Girls want everything sweet and happy
  • Girls don't like to be scared

• Remember that you don't need to enforce societal gender stereotypes for men, women, boys, or girls
GAMER DEDICATION

- Many aspects of gamer dedication level
  - Technology savvy
  - Owns high-end gear
  - Willingness to pay
  - Preference for violence/action
  - Preference for depth/complexity
  - Plays over many long sessions
  - Seeks game-related information
  - Discusses games online
  - Plays for completion (winning)

- Tolerant of frustration
- Engaged in competition
- Started playing at a young age
- Knowledge of the industry
- Early adoption
- Desire to modify/extend games
DANGERS OF BINARY THINKING

• Cant make a game for everyone
• Reason statistically about the various factors we discussed
  • Avoid thinking in binary
• Design rule: Keep exclusionary material out of your game
  • Don't try to attract everyone
  • Strive for inclusiveness and avoid repelling people away from your game
UNDERSTAND THE MACHINE

A GAME CONCEPT IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT A DESCRIPTION OF THE MACHINE
HOME GAME CONSOLES

• Typical use
  • Placed in living room, player away from screen
    • Small text is bad idea
  • Controller
    • Limited inputs (possible motion sensor)
  • Excellent for local multiplayer games
  • Long usage
  • Dedicated hobbyists

• Internal workings are a trade secret and you need a license to develop (consoles protect their brand)
PERSONAL COMPUTERS

• Typical use
  • On a desk, operated by one person
    • Supports small text and complex user interfaces
  • Keyboard and mouse (maybe joystick/controller)
    • Much richer input modality
• Anyone can develop but no two machines are alike
• Stand-alone vs browser-based games
PORTABLE DEVICES

- Typical use
  - Carried around by single person
  - Size varies from small mobile phones to tablets
  - Screen realty is premium
    - Need simple interface
  - Player must hold device while playing
  - Touch screens or limited buttons on input

- Cartridge platforms necessitate small games

- Typical play is for a few minutes at a time
  - Play can be interrupted easily

- Mobile phones!
  - App store restrictions
OTHER DEVICES

- Think of the following industries
  - Airlines?
  - Casinos?
  - Theme parks?
- Many other niche markets
SUMMARY

• Design for inclusiveness — avoid binary thinking
  • Don’t try to attract everyone, instead work to avoid repelling players

• Understand your machine and how it affects gameplay