

Today in the virtual world of gaming media essay



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From this, we can acclaim on the fact that Bartle's model provides a general knowledge for communicating ideas with other designs. It is a model which is able to originate the thought of what people find 'fun' and their motivations of playing in the virtual world. Designers who want to create a virtual world but don't have a genuine user foundation can classify it using the model to get some idea of how the players might think to a certain aspect meaning that the model can be used for important design consideration; the model may also act as a guide on how projected changes can be received by existing players.

The Bartle Test of Gamer Psychology (although not exactly made by Bartle), manages to support Bartle's player type model. Based on a player's preference, it delivers a series of questions and a scoring method that arranges a player of online multiplayer games into a group using the four different player types defined by Bartle. This helps to propose Bartle's model as the results from each individual may have reflected on their attributes in real life as well as their gaming preferences. Due to this test being taken by a lot of computer gamers we cannot argue that the results of the test may be valid to some extent which demonstrates some usefulness in Bartle's model.

The player types in Bartle's model suggest that it is based and dependent on a person's personal lifestyle. Those who have a desire to achieve in the real life world may be reflected as an 'achiever' in their in-game personalities too; or those who are physically violent in the real world may prefer to be fitted into the 'killers' player type. These psychological motivations that Bartle states shows a relationship between a player's real life behaviours and

their virtual world personalities; and hence proposes the view that lifestyles can be mirrored into psychological motivations that defines a player's value and attitude in the virtual world. [3]

Bartle considers that achievers and killers are seen as dynamic whereas explorers and socialisers are seen as passive. To simply explain this, Bartle only derives his model into what I believe 'Hard-core Gamers vs. Casual Gamers.' From this, we can criticise that his player type labels are incredibly simplistic, we cannot possibly guarantee that all players only have one motivation in playing games; however, Bartle's model constrains and forces players to only be in one player type or the other. It does not allow them to be in more than one category, yet these types may interlink with each other depending on the game itself. For example, in a shooting game such as Call Of Duty, players may need to kill in the multiplayer world in order to achieve a certain goal. This already overlaps the player types 'killer' and 'achiever'. In addition, distinctive player types depend on the specific game or genre a player is playing, for example, the player type between a shooting game may be very different from a role playing game. Therefore, we cannot simply generalise the findings from Bartle's test of gamer's psychology with all games that a player plays. With the story depending on the game itself, different player types may evolve from this.

When Bartle mentions about the 'Killers' player type, he believes that the only way to gain satisfaction is to cause stress to other players.

Nevertheless, can we possibly say that this is definitely the motivation in why these player types play? Can there not be any other reasons that explain why people play? Perhaps domination is the way to 'achieve' for

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certain players and not that they actually want to kill for enjoyment. It could be that the 'achieving' motivation is directly causing players to kill in the virtual world; it may be compulsory to 'kill' in order to 'achieve' their goal or award in the virtual world.

The 'Socialiser' player type described by Bartle is said that players find enjoyment by interacting and communicating with others in the virtual world and that they prefer working as a team to accomplish an objective. However, would this player type be established from gender differences and past stereotypical interpretations? According to Nick Yee's (2006) analysis, male and female players may have different perspectives when playing in the virtual world. Results showed that although males and females socialise just as much, they socialise because of different purposes [4]. This may suggest that females socialise for the purpose of making a friendship or purely feel more comfortable in communicating and co-operating with each other to achieve an overall goal in the game. Males on the other hand, may be socialising for an entirely different purpose to females as the majority of male players have a keen stereotypical view that they are too 'strong' and 'tough' to be needing help from others in the virtual world. Comparing Yee's (2006) results with Bartle's (2004) model, Bartle didn't have any convincing or empirical evidence therefore we do not know whether this 'socialiser' player type in the model is gender biased or do the mainstream of players fit into this category regardless of being male or female.

Factors that are also worth considering in Bartle's player types model are whether we prefer certain types of games based on our individual personality traits or do we put our real life personalities to a 'halt' in turn to

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accordingly match the game we are currently playing. Some players may have a particular player type due to their distinctive personality and consequently favours in only playing a specific genre of a game. Therefore if they only play these types of games, would their player type be reliable with reference to Bartle's model? Or will their player type only be generalised to those limited genre of games they play? This again questions whether Bartle's player type model is accurate or not.

In regards to the ' Achiever' player type, Nicholas Yee (2002) stated that,

“ Bartle focused on points accumulation...The underlying motivation is to gain a sense of power within the construct of the game.” [5]

Players may not necessarily be looking for points, trophies and awards in the game but rather, the enjoyment of ' killing' in order to satisfy their personal, social achievement. This leads to Bartle's model into being open to misinterpretation as players may not always be able to judge their own player styles respectively, meaning that although they are physically performing one of the player type, it could actually be another. However, we cannot deny the fact that achievements identified in Bartle's ' achievers' player type in gaming are not a form of enjoyment. Taking the Xbox achievement system into consideration, it does indeed use a point system to accumulate scores for players. [6] Although in reality, the points that these individuals collect means nothing to anyone other than themselves, players may still find that the higher their points of achievement, the greater the sense of individual satisfaction will be accomplished or for those to be able to boast about their scores to friends as it demonstrates their skill in achieving.

The whole achievement system and gamer score surely engages gamers' egos and offers an acknowledgement for gaming successes. This shows a connection between both Bartle and Yee's statement, therefore showing that 'achiever' player types are looking for the accomplishing fun in playing games regardless it is a point based system or to gain power in the game.

The 'Explorer' player type is also doubtful. There is evidence to show that exploration is a key to progression in most games. It requires players to explore a certain area of the game in order to progress with the storyline regardless to whether the player themselves want to do or not. These role playing games does not offer the opportunity for the players to choose and therefore generates queries as to whether Bartle's model can definitely define a player's playing style effectively. Furthermore, this player type can also be associated with the 'killers' player type as some players may be using exploration in a form of finding to 'kill' enemies. Exploring a certain area in the game may bring the player into discovering more enemies and thus is able to 'kill' more in the virtual world. We can call exploration as a fundamental factor for all player types that Bartle had stated and again, emphasises the point of simplicity in Bartle's player type model.

Nicholas Yee (2005) commented on Bartle's model as merely theoretical and does not suggest any practical or empirical methods and findings to judge users in relation to player types. [7] This greatly expresses the weakness of Bartle's player type model because there are no statistical results that evident the links between players and their player type. Even though the 'Bartle's Test of Gamer Psychology' exists, it is unable to truly validate Bartle's player type model because it still allocates a person and limits them

to only one player type overall and as a result, instead of assessing the model, it continues with its theories of Bartle's player types.

Yee (2005) adopted Bartle's model as well as offered useful alternatives by listing the motivational factors for players in game. Not only does Yee's alternative have three main motivational components [8], it also has numerous sub-groups which give a more in-depth relationship between player types and allow players to be categorised in more than one type. This way, it provides empirically, quantitative data to support his answers and by putting a test into practice, it gives more validity to his results. This is greatly seen as more effective than Bartle's model as players would be able to feel comfortable to not be labelled in only one player type but instead, multiple sub-player types. In comparison to Bartle's player type model, it delivers a wider range of player types so that it provides a broader option for those who are unsure of their player type.

Reference from Lazzaro (2004) on the other hand, believes that there are emotional factors in which player possess for playing games. Lazzaro's motivational factor in play includes:

" Hard fun - emotion created by overcoming challenges and obstacles." [9]

" Easy fun - involves pure enjoyment from the experience of game activities." [9]

" Altered state - emotions of excitement and relief." [9]

" The people factor - the enjoyment of playing with others." [9]

So how does this work with Bartle's model and Yee's findings? The emotions stated by Lazzaro relate to the player types of Bartle's as it shows that both emotional and motivational factors participate in an important role of influencing players to play, making the two have a parallel connection to each other. For example, 'hard fun' from Lazzaro's emotional factor works greatly with Bartle's 'achiever' player type. The two demonstrate a similar feature whereby players play because they believe in their own capabilities of achieving the goal. The sense of achievement in Lazzaro's emotional factor leads onto a substantial in-game achievement that is portrayed in Bartle's 'achiever' player type. So either way, we can tell that if Bartle and Lazzaro's models were to be combined, it would successfully correspond to both a player's state of mind and the sense of satisfaction in the virtual world.

In relation to Yee's (2002) findings that developed the model into 5 motivational factors including relationship, immersion, grief, achievement and leadership, Lazzaro's emotional factors can also be correlated with it. For instance, Lazzaro's 'people factor' is very similar to Yee's relationship factor. Both factors transmit the player's pleasure in the virtual world by conversing and talking with other players as well as enjoying the experience of making a friendship online to further develop the co-ordination and proficiency of teamwork in the virtual world. These factors show that certain elements in Yee's and Lazzaro's models overlap with each other and again show that there is a correlation between the two.

In conclusion, from the points summarised above, the models and findings from Bartle, Yee and Lazzaro show a huge relationship between the three.

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Although each of the three gives a different perspective of what is believed to be the 'desired' personality of a player, they each have their own benefits and flaws. Finally, we can see that the player types in which Bartle originally mentioned are connected with each other one way or another. It is extremely hard to debate whether individuals play for those separate motivations or do they play because of ALL those motives?? Although we cannot entirely declare that Bartle's player type model is incorrect as these are certainly the main motivations in why we play games, nevertheless, we need to bear in mind that Bartle doesn't allow players to be in more than one player type. This means that it is difficult for players who struggle to be convinced in a particular player type in the virtual world when they also possess another type. If a person is able to have several emotions and personality traits in the real world, then why can't they have a combination of several player types in the virtual world too? Surely there are multiple motivations in why people play and therefore must not be fixed into a precise type!