

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Game is Made for a *Player*

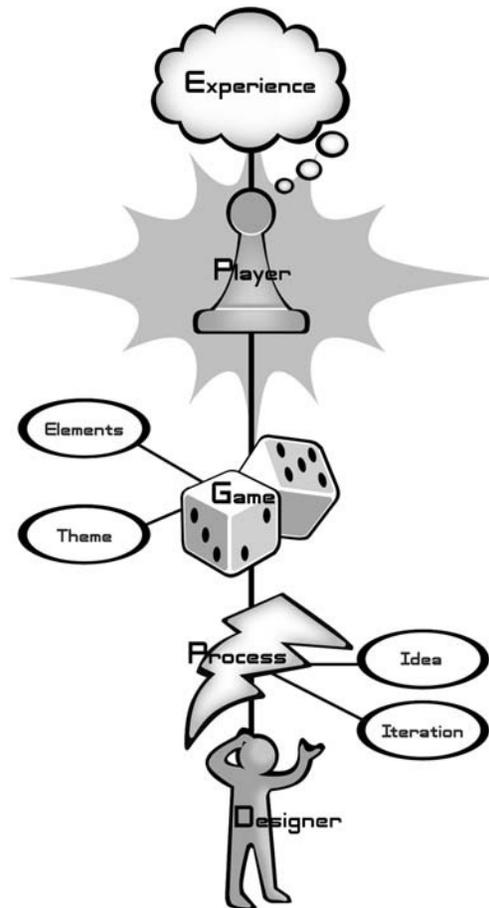


FIGURE 8.1

Einstein's Violin

At one point in his career, Albert Einstein was asked by a small local organization to be the guest of honor at a luncheon and to give a lecture about his research. He agreed to do so. The luncheon was quite pleasant, and when the time came, the host anxiously announced that Albert Einstein, the famous scientist, was here to talk about his theories of special and general relativity. Einstein took the stage, and looking out a largely non-academic audience consisting of mostly old ladies, he explained to them that he certainly could talk about his work, but it was a bit dull, and he was thinking perhaps instead the audience would prefer to hear him play the violin. The host and audience both agreed that it sounded like a fine idea. Einstein proceeded to play several pieces he knew well, creating a delightful experience the entire audience was able to enjoy, and surely one they remembered for the rest of their lives.

FIGURE
8.2



Einstein was able to create such a memorable experience because he *knew his audience*. As much as he loved thinking and talking about physics, he knew that it wasn't something that his audience would be really interested in. Sure, they asked him to talk about physics, because they thought it would be the best way to get what they really wanted — an intimate encounter with the famous Albert Einstein.

To create a great experience, you must do the same as Einstein. You must know what your audience will and will not like, and you must know it even better than they do. You would think that finding out what people want would be easy, but it isn't, because in many cases, they don't really know. They might think they know, but often there is a big difference between what they think they want, and what it is they will actually enjoy.

As with everything else in game design, the key here is a kind of listening. You must learn to listen to your players, thoroughly and deeply. You must become intimate with their thoughts, their emotions, their fears, and their desires. Some of these will be so secret that your players themselves are not even consciously aware of them — and as we discussed in Chapter 5, it is often these that are the most important.

Project Yourself

So, how can you do this kind of deep listening? One of the best ways is to use your power of empathy (discussed further in Chapter 9) to put yourself into their place. In 1954, when Disneyland Park was being constructed, Walt Disney would frequently walk around the park inspecting the progress. Often, he would be seen to walk for a distance, stop, and suddenly crouch to the ground, peering at something in the distance. Then he would get up, walk a few steps, and crouch again. After seeing him do this repeatedly, some of his designers asked what he was doing — was something wrong with his back? His explanation was simple: how else could he know what Disneyland would look like to children?

In retrospect, this seems obvious — things look different at different eye heights, and the perspective of children at Disneyland is just as important, if not more, than the perspective of adults. And physical perspective is not enough — you must adopt their mental perspective as well, actively projecting yourself into the mind of your player. You must actively try to become them, trying to see what they see, hear what they hear, and think what they think. It is very easy to get stuck in the high and mighty mind of the designer and forget to project yourself into the mind of the player — it is something that requires constant attention and vigilance, but you can do it if you try.

If you are creating a game for a target audience that you used to be part of (a woman creating a game for teen girls, for example), you have an advantage — you can get in touch with your memories about how you thought, what you liked, and how things felt when you were that age. People are surprisingly good at forgetting what things were really like when they were younger. As a designer, you can't afford to forget. Work hard to bring back your old memories, and make them vivid and strong again. Keep these old memories well oiled — they are some of your most valuable tools.

But what if you are making something for an audience that you have never been a part of, and perhaps never will be (a young man creating a game for middle-aged women, for example)? Then you must use a different tactic — you must think hard about people you have known who are in the target demographic, and imagine what it is like to be them. Like a cultural anthropologist, you should spend time with your target audience, talking with them, observing them, imagining what it is like to be them. Everyone has some innate power to do this — but if you practice it, you will improve. If you can mentally become any type of player, you can greatly expand the audience for your games, because your designs will be able to include people that other designers have ignored.

Demographics

We know that all individuals are each unique, but when creating something meant to be enjoyed by vast numbers of people, we have to consider ways that groups of

people are the same. We call these groups *demographics*, or sometimes *market segments*. There is no “official” means of establishing these groups — different professions have different reasons for grouping them differently. For game designers, the two most significant demographic variables are age and gender. We all play differently as we get older, and males and females play differently than one another at all ages. What follows is an analysis of some of the typical age demographics that a game designer has to consider.

FIGURE
8.3



- **0–3: Infant/Toddler.** Children in this age bracket are very interested in toys, but the complexity and problem solving involved in games is generally too much for them.
- **4–6: Preschooler.** This is the age where children generally show their first interest in games. The games are very simple, and played with parents more often than with one another, because the parents know how to bend the rules to keep the games enjoyable and interesting.

- **7–9: Kids.** The age of seven has long been called the “age of reason.” At this age, children have entered school, are generally able to read, are able to think things through, and solve hard problems. Naturally, they become very interested in game playing. This is also the age where children start making their own decisions about what kinds of toys and games they like and dislike, no longer just accepting whatever their parents choose for them.
- **10–13: Preteen or “Tween”.** It is only recently that marketers have started to recognize this group as distinct from both “kids” and “teens.” Children this age are going through a period of tremendous neurological growth and are suddenly able to think about things more deeply and with more nuance than they were a few years back. This age is sometimes called the “age of obsession,” because children this age start to get quite passionate about their interests. For boys especially, these interests are often games.
- **13–18: Teen.** The job of a teenager is to start getting ready for adulthood. At this age we generally see a significant divergence between male and female interests. Boys continue to be interested (and often get more interested) in competition and mastery, whereas girls become more focused on real-world issues and communication. This makes boy and girl game interests very different at this age. Teens of both genders are very interested in experimenting with new kinds of experiences, though, and some of those can happen through gameplay.
- **18–24: Young Adult.** This is the first “adult” age grouping, and the mark of an important transition. Adults, in general, play less than children do. Most adults do continue to play, but at this point, with their teenage experiments out of the way, they have established certain tastes about the kind of play and entertainment they enjoy. Young adults usually have both time and money on their hands, which makes them big consumers of games.
- **25–35: Twenties and Thirties.** At this age, time starts to become more precious. This is the age of “peak family formation.” As the responsibilities of adulthood start to add up, most adults in this age bracket are only casual game players, playing games as an occasional amusement, or playing games with their young children. On the other hand, “hardcore gamers” in this age bracket — that is, people for whom playing games is their primary hobby — are an important target market because they purchase a lot of games, and are often quite vocal about what they do and don’t like, potentially influencing the buying decisions of their social network.
- **35–50: Thirties and Forties.** Sometimes referred to as the “family maturation” stage, most adults in this bracket are very caught up in career and family responsibilities and are only casual game players. As their children become older, adults in this age group are often the ones who make decisions about expensive game purchases, and when possible, they look for game playing opportunities the whole family can enjoy together.
- **50+: Fifties and Up.** Often called the “empty nesters,” adults in this age bracket suddenly have a lot of time on their hands — their children have moved out, and

they will soon be facing retirement. Some return to games they enjoyed when younger, and others, looking for a change, turn to new game experiences. Adults in this age group are particularly interested in game experiences that have a strong social component, such as golf, tennis, bridge, and online multiplayer games.

There are other ways to break up groups by age, but these nine groups are how the game industry usually does it, because they reflect changes in play patterns. It is interesting to consider the transitional experiences that separate each group from the next. Most of the younger groups are separated by periods of mental development, while the older groups are primarily separated by family transitions.

Something important to remember when creating games for any age group: all play activities are connected to childhood, since childhood is centered around play. Therefore, to create games for someone of a particular age, you must be in tune with the games and themes that were popular when they were children. To put it another way: to truly communicate with someone, you must speak the language of their childhood.

The Medium is the Misogynist?

PETER PAN: We have fun, don't we? I taught you to fly and to fight! What more could there be?

WENDY: There is so much more.

PETER PAN: What? What else is there?

WENDY: I don't know. I guess it becomes clearer as you grow up.

Males and females are different. They have different interests, different tastes, and different skills and abilities. Which of these are innate and which are learned is often difficult to say — and to a designer, it doesn't much matter — what matters is acknowledging and designing for these differences.

These differences show up in sharp relief when one examines videogame sales. The majority of videogames are played by boys and men. Some have suggested this is largely because of the male-oriented aesthetics of these games, which often feature aggressive male characters, graphic violence, and hyper-sexualized female characters. But experiments to change these aesthetics, while maintaining the same core gameplay mechanics, have largely failed. It would seem there are some deeper quality of games is the driving factor.

Raph Koster, in his book *A Theory of Fun*, suggests that the core of playing and winning games is mastering abstract formal systems, which is something generally enjoyed more by boys and men than it is by girls and women. If this is the case (and it does seem to be true), then games at their core are an inherently more male than female activity.

So how can we explain the fact that some games are very popular with girls and women? The answer is that just because games contain abstract formal systems at their core, it does not mean that finding and mastering these systems is the

only experience that games can create. Instead, this core can support a wide variety of experiences that appeal to both genders, such as story, creativity, learning, and socialization. In this way, games are like apples: you can still enjoy the fruit even if you don't like the core.

Entire books have been written about the differences between how males and females play, and there is great debate about which kinds of play are really “more male” or “more female.” There is certainly no definitive master list of what each gender prefers. The important thing is that you realize that there are some important differences, and that you carefully consider whether your game has the right features to delight the audience you are designing for. What follows is a short list of a few of the strongest differences between how males and females like to play. These are generalizations, certainly not true for every individual, but when making games for large audiences, generalizations are useful.

Five Things Males Like to See in Games

If you are a woman and you don't understand men, chances are you are thinking too hard.

– Louis Ramey

1. **Mastery.** Males enjoy mastering things. It doesn't have to be something important or useful — it only has to be challenging. Females tend to be more interested in mastery when it has a meaningful purpose.
2. **Competition.** Males really enjoy competing against others to prove that they are the best. For females, the bad feelings that can come from losing the game (or causing another player to lose) often outweigh the positive feelings that come from winning.
3. **Destruction.** Males like destroying things. A lot. Often, when young boys play with blocks, the most exciting part for them is not the building, but knocking down the tower once it is built. Videogames are a natural fit for this kind of gameplay, allowing for virtual destruction of a magnitude far greater than would be possible in the real world.
4. **Spatial Puzzles.** Studies have shown that males generally have stronger skills of spatial reasoning than females, and most people would agree that this matches anecdotal evidence. Accordingly, puzzles that involve navigating 3D spaces are often quite intriguing to males, while they can sometimes prove frustrating for females.
5. **Trial and Error.** Women often joke that men hate reading directions, and there is some truth to that. Males tend to have a preference for learning things through trial and error. In a sense, this makes it easy to design interfaces for them, since

they actually sometimes prefer an interface that requires some experimentation to understand, which ties into the pleasure of mastery.

Five Things Females Like to See in Games

Females want experiences where they can make emotional and social discoveries that they can apply to their own lives.

– Heidi Dangelmeier

1. **Emotion.** Females like experiences that explore the richness of human emotion. For males, emotion is an interesting component of an experience, but seldom an end in itself. A somewhat crass but telling example of this contrast can be found at the ends of the “romantic relationship media” spectrum. At one end are romance novels (one-third of all fiction books sold are romance novels), which focus primarily on the emotional aspects of romantic relationships, and are purchased almost exclusively by women. At the other end of the spectrum is pornography, which focuses primarily on the physical aspects of romantic relationships, and is purchased almost exclusively by men.
2. **Real World.** Females tend to prefer entertainment that connects meaningfully to the real world. If you watch young girls and young boys play, girls will more frequently play games that are strongly connected to the real world (playing “house,” pretending to be a veterinarian, playing dress up, etc.), whereas boys will more frequently take on the role of fantasy characters. One of the all-time best-selling computer game titles for girls was *Barbie Fashion Designer*, which lets girls design, print, and sew custom clothes for their real-world Barbie dolls. Compare this to *Barbie as Rapunzel*, an adventure game in a fantasy setting. Although it featured the same character (Barbie), it did not have a real-world component, and was not nearly as popular.

This trend continues through adulthood — when things are connected to the real world in a meaningful way, women become more interested. Sometimes this is through the content (the Sims games, for example, have more female players than male, and their content is a simulation of the day-to-day life of ordinary people), and sometimes it is through the social aspects of the games. Playing with virtual players is “just pretend,” but playing with real players can build real relationships.

3. **Nurturing.** Females enjoy nurturing. Girls enjoy taking care of baby dolls, toy pets, and children younger than themselves. It is not uncommon to see girls sacrifice a winning position in a competitive game to help a weaker player, partly because the relationships and feelings of the players are more important than the game, but partly out of the joy of nurturing. In the development of Toontown Online, a “healing” game mechanic was required for the combat system. We

observed that healing other players was very appealing to girls and women we discussed the game with, and it was important to us that this game work equally well for males and females, so we made a bold decision. In most role-playing games, players mostly heal themselves, but have the option of healing others. In Toontown, *you cannot heal yourself* — only others. This increases the value of a player with healing skill and encourages nurturing play. A player who wants to can make healing their primary activity in Toontown.

4. **Dialog and Verbal Puzzles.** It is often said that what females lack in spatial skills they make up for in increased verbal skills. Women purchase many more books than men do, and the audience for crossword puzzles is mostly female. Very few modern videogames do much very interesting or meaningful with dialog or verbal puzzles at this point in time, and this may be an untapped opportunity.
5. **Learning by Example.** Just as males tend to eschew instructions, favoring a trial-and-error approach, females tend to prefer learning by example. They have a strong appreciation for clear tutorials that lead you carefully, step-by-step, so that when it is time to attempt a task, the player knows what she is supposed to do.

There are many other differences, of course. For example, males tend to be very focused on one task at a time, whereas females can more easily work on many parallel tasks, and not forget about any of them. Games that make use of this multi-tasking skill (the Sims, for example) can sometimes have a stronger female appeal. You must look closely at your game to determine its strengths and weaknesses on a gender basis. Sometimes this leads to fascinating discoveries. The designers of Hasbro's *Pox*, a wireless electronic handheld game, knew that their game was going to be an inherently social experience, and so they reasoned that it should have features that girls would like as well as boys. As they observed children playing in playgrounds, however, they noticed something very interesting: girls almost never play games spontaneously in large groups. There is no female equivalent of a pick-up game of touch football. On the surface, this is strange — girls tend to be more social, so you might expect that games involving large gatherings would appeal to them more. The problem seems to lie in conflict resolution. When a group of boys play a game, and there is a dispute, play stops, there is a (sometimes heated) discussion, and the dispute is resolved. At times, this involves one boy going home in tears, but despite that, play continues. When a group of girls play a game, and there is a dispute, it is a different story. Most of the girls will take sides on the dispute, and it generally cannot be resolved right away. Play stops, and often cannot continue. Girls will play team sports when they are formally organized, but two informal competing teams puts too much stress on their personal relationships to be worth the trouble. The Hasbro designers realized that though their game concept was social, it was also inherently competitive, and ultimately they decided to design it for boys only.

The introduction of digital technology has done a great deal to make clear gender differences in gameplay. In the past, most games were very social, played in the real

world, with real people. The introduction of affordable computers gave us a type of game that:

- Had all social aspects removed
- Had most verbal and emotional aspects removed
- Was largely divorced from the real world
- Was generally hard to learn
- And offered the possibility for unlimited virtual destruction

It is hardly surprising that early computer and videogames were primarily popular with a male audience. As digital technology has evolved to the point that videogames can now support emotional character portrayals, richer stories, and the opportunity to play against real people while talking to them, the female audience for videogames has been commensurately growing. It will be interesting to see which upcoming technological and design advances attract even more female gamers.

Whether you consider age, gender, or other factors, the important thing is that you put yourself in the perspective of the player, so you can carefully consider what will make the game the most fun for them. This important perspective is Lens #16.

Lens #16: The Lens of the Player

To use this lens, stop thinking about your game, and start thinking about your player.

Ask yourself these questions about the people who will play your game:

- In general, what do they like?
- What don't they like? Why?
- What do they expect to see in a game?
- If I were in their place, what would I want to see in a game?
- What would they like or dislike about my game in particular?

A good game designer should always be thinking of the player, and should be an advocate for the player. Skilled designers hold The Lens of the Player and the Lens of Holographic Design in the same hand, thinking about the player, the experience of the game, and the mechanics of the game all at the same time. Thinking about the player is useful, but even more useful is watching them play your game. The more you observe them playing, the more easily you'll be able to predict what they are going to enjoy.

When developing *Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Buccaneer Gold* for DisneyQuest, we had to consider a wide range of demographics. Many arcades and interactive location-based entertainment centers have a somewhat narrow demographic: teenage boys. DisneyQuest's goal was to support the same demographic as the Disney theme parks: pretty much everybody, particularly families. Further, DisneyQuest's goal is to get the whole family playing games together. With such a broad range of skill levels and interests within any given family, this was quite a challenge. But by carefully considering the interests of each potential player, we found a way to make it work. Roughly, we broke it down this way:

Boys: We had little worry that boys would enjoy playing this game. It is an exciting “adventure and battle fantasy” where players can pilot a pirate ship, and man powerful cannons. Early tests showed that boys enjoyed it a great deal, and tended to play offensively — trying to seek out and destroy every pirate ship they could find. They engaged in some communication, but always stayed very focused on the task of destroying the enemy as skillfully as possible.

Girls: We were not so confident that girls would like this game, since they don't usually have the same zeal for “blowing up bad guys.” To our surprise, girls seemed to like the game a great deal, but they played it in a different way. Girls generally tended to play more defensively — they were more concerned about protecting their ship from invaders than chasing down other ships. When we became aware of this, we made sure to create a balance of invading ships and enemies that could be chased to support offensive as well as defensive play. The girls seemed very excited about the treasures you could gather, so we made sure to pile them up conspicuously on the deck and make them visually interesting. Further, we designed the final battle so that flying skeletons would charge the ship and snatch the treasures off of the deck. This made the skeleton shooting task much more important and rewarding to the girls. The girls also seemed to enjoy the social aspects of the game more than the boys did — they would constantly shout warnings and suggestions to each other, occasionally having face-to-face “huddles” where they would divide up responsibilities.

Men: We sometimes joked that men were just “tall boys with credit cards.” They seemed to like the game in the same ways the boys did, although they tended to play the game in a slightly more reserved way — often carefully puzzling out the optimal way to play the game.

Women: We had very little confidence that women, mothers in particular, would find much to enjoy with this game. Mothers tend to have a different theme park experience than the rest of the family, because their main concern is not how much fun they personally have, but how much fun the rest of the family has. In early tests of *Pirates*, we noticed that women, and mothers in particular, tended to gravitate toward the back of the ship, while the rest of the family moved toward the front. This usually meant that the family members manned the cannons, and that mom steered the ship, since the ship's wheel was in the back. At first, this seemed a recipe for disaster — mom doesn't have much videogame experience, and a poorly steered ship has the potential to ruin the experience for everyone.

But this isn't what happened at all. Since mom wants to see everyone have a good time, she suddenly has a vested interest in steering the ship as well as possible. Being at the helm, which has the best view, she has a chance to keep an eye on everyone, to steer the ship to interesting places, and to slow things down if her family is overwhelmed. Further, she is in a good position to manage her crew, warning them of oncoming dangers, and giving orders ("Dylan! Give your sister a turn on that side!") designed to make sure everyone has fun. This was a great way to make mom really care about how the game turned out.

Accepting the fact that women would be steering the ship more often than boys, girls, or men meant that we had to be sure that steering the ship was easy for someone who was not a frequent videogame player, but this was a small price to pay to include a key part of our audience. Frequently, we would hear kids comment when coming off the ride: "Wow, Mom, you were really good at that!"

By paying close attention to the desires and behaviors of our various target demographics, we were able to balance the game to suit all of them. In the beginning, we just had ideas about where there might be problems making the game appeal to all four of these groups — it was only through attentive prototyping and playtesting that we started to realize the possible solutions to these problems. We watched closely to see how each demographic group tried to play our game, and then we changed it to support each group's style of play.

Psychographics

Of course, age and gender aren't the only ways to group potential players. There are many other factors you can use. Demographics generally refer to external factors (age, gender, income, ethnicity, etc.), and those can sometimes be a useful way to group your audience. But really, when we group people by these external factors, we are trying to get at something internal: what each group finds pleasurable. A more direct approach is to focus less on how players appear on the outside and more on how they think on the inside. This is called *psychographics*.

Some psychographic breakdowns have to do with "lifestyle" choices, such as "dog lover," "baseball fan," or "hardcore FPS player." These are easy to understand, since they are tied to concrete activities. If you are creating a game about dogs, baseball, or shooting people in tunnels, you will naturally want to pay close attention to the preferences of each of these lifestyle groups.

But other kinds of psychographics aren't so tied to concrete activities. They have more to do with what a person enjoys the most — the kind of pleasures they look for when participating in a game activity, or really, any activity. This is important, for ultimately, the motivation for every human action can be traced back to some kind of pleasure seeking. It is a tricky business, though, for there are many kinds of pleasures in the world, and no one seeks only one kind. But it is certainly true that people have their pleasure preferences. Game designer Marc LeBlanc has proposed a list of eight pleasures that he considers the primary "game pleasures."

LeBlanc's Taxonomy of Game Pleasures

1. **Sensation.** Pleasures of sensation involve using your senses. Seeing something beautiful, hearing music, touching silk, and smelling or tasting delicious food are all pleasures of sensation. It is primarily the aesthetics of your game that will deliver these pleasures. Greg Costikyan tells a story about sensation:

As an example of the difference that mere sensation can make, consider the board game *Axis & Allies*. I first bought it when it was published by Nova Games, an obscure publisher of hobby games. It had an extremely garish board, and ugly cardboard counters to represent the military units. I played it once, thought it was pretty dumb, and put it away. Some years later, it was bought and republished by Milton Bradley, with an elegant new board, and with hundreds of plastic pieces in the shapes of aircraft, ships, tanks, and infantrymen — I've played it many times since. It's the sheer tactile joy of pushing around little military figures on the board that makes the game fun to play.

Sensory pleasure is often the pleasure of the toy (see *Lens #15*). This pleasure cannot make a bad game into a good one, but it can often make a good game into a better one.

2. **Fantasy.** This is the pleasure of the imaginary world, and the pleasure of imagining yourself as something that you are not. We will discuss this pleasure further in Chapters 17 and 18.
3. **Narrative.** By the pleasure of narrative, LeBlanc does not necessarily mean the telling of a prescribed, linear story. He means instead a dramatic unfolding of a sequence of events, however it happens. We'll be talking more about this in Chapters 14 and 15.
4. **Challenge.** In some sense, challenge can be considered one of the core pleasures of gameplay, since every game, at its heart, has a problem to be solved. For some players, this pleasure is enough — but others need more.
5. **Fellowship.** Here, LeBlanc is referring to everything enjoyable about friendship, cooperation, and community. Without a doubt, for some players, this is the main attraction of playing games. We will discuss this further in Chapters 21 and 22.
6. **Discovery.** The pleasure of discovery is a broad one: any time you seek and find something new, that is a discovery. Sometimes this is the exploration of your game world, and sometimes it is the discovery of a secret feature or clever strategy. Without a doubt, discovering new things is a key game pleasure.
7. **Expression.** This is the pleasure of expressing yourself and the pleasure of creating things. In the past, this is a pleasure that was generally neglected in game design. Today, games allow players to design their own characters, and build and share their own levels. Often, the “expression” that takes place in a game does

little to achieve the goals of the game. Designing new outfits for your character doesn't help you advance in most games — but for some players, it may be the very reason they play.

8. **Submission.** This is the pleasure of entering the magic circle — of leaving the real world behind, and entering into a new, more enjoyable, set of rules and meaning. In a sense, all games involve the pleasure of submission, but some game worlds are simply more pleasing and interesting to enter than others. In some games, you are forced to suspend your disbelief — in others, the game itself seems to suspend your disbelief effortlessly, and your mind easily enters and stays in the game world. It is these games that make submission truly a pleasure.

It is useful to examine these different pleasures, because different individuals place different values on each one. Game designer Richard Bartle, who has spent many years designing MUDs and other online games, observes that players fall into four main groups in terms of their game pleasure preferences. Bartle's four types are easy to remember, because they have the suits of playing cards as a convenient mnemonic. It is left as an exercise to the reader to understand why each card suit was chosen to represent each category.

Bartle's Taxonomy of Player Types

1. **♦ Achievers** want to achieve the goals of the game. Their primary pleasure is Challenge.
2. **♠ Explorers** want to get to know the breadth of the game. Their primary pleasure is Discovery.
3. **♥ Socializers** are interested in relationships with other people. They primarily seek the pleasures of Fellowship.
4. **♣ Killers** are interested in competing with and defeating others. This category does not map well to LeBlanc's taxonomy. For the most part, it seems killers enjoy a mix of the pleasures of competition and destruction. Interestingly, Bartle characterizes them as primarily interested in "imposing themselves on others," and includes in this category people who are primarily interested in helping others.

Bartle also proposes a fascinating graph (Figure 8.4) that shows how the four types neatly cover a sort of space: that is, Achievers are interested in acting on the world, Explorers are interested in interacting with the world, Socializers are interested in interacting with players, and Killers are interested in acting on players.

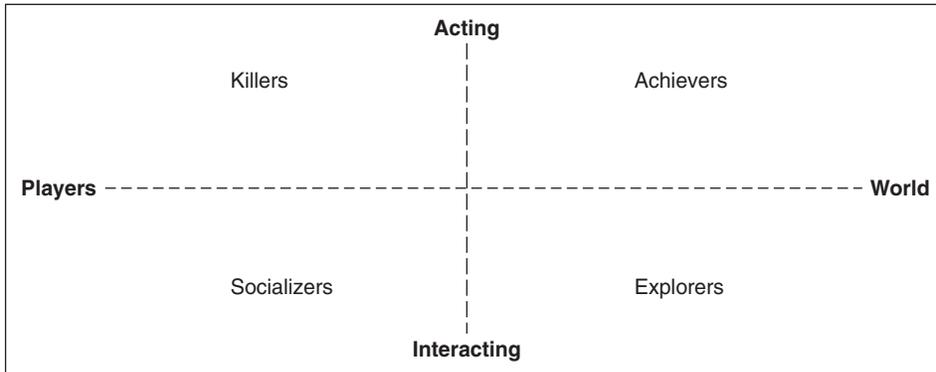


FIGURE
8.4

We must use caution when trying to make such simple taxonomies to describe something as complex as human desire. Under close scrutiny, both LeBlanc's and Bartle's taxonomies (and other similar lists) have gaps, and when misused can gloss over subtle pleasures that might easily be missed, such as "destruction" and "nurturing," which we encountered in our discussion of gender. Below is a list of a few more pleasures to be considered.

- **Anticipation.** When you know a pleasure is coming, just waiting for it is a kind of pleasure.
- **Delight in Another's Misfortune.** Typically, we feel this when some unjust person suddenly gets their comeuppance. It is an important aspect of competitive games. The Germans call it *schadenfreude* (pronounced shoddenfroyd).
- **Gift Giving.** There is a unique pleasure when you make someone else happy through the surprise of a gift. We wrap our presents to heighten and intensify this surprise. The pleasure is not just that the person is happy, but that *you* made them happy.
- **Humor.** Two unconnected things are suddenly united by a paradigm shift. It is hard to describe, but we all know it when it happens. Weirdly, it causes us to make a barking noise.
- **Possibility.** This is the pleasure of having many choices and knowing you could pick any one of them. This is often experienced when shopping or at a buffet table.
- **Pride in an Accomplishment.** This is a pleasure all its own that can persist long after the accomplishment was made. The Yiddish word *naches* (pronounced "nock-hess") is about this kind of pleased satisfaction, usually referring to pride in children or grandchildren.

- **Purification.** It feels good to make something clean. Many games take advantage of the pleasure of purification — any game where you have to “eat all the dots,” “destroy all the bad guys,” or otherwise “clear the level” is taking advantage of this pleasure.
- **Surprise.** As Lens #2: Surprise shows us, the brain likes surprises.
- **Thrill.** There is a saying among roller coaster designers that “fear minus death equals fun.” Thrill is that kind of fun — you experience terror, but feel secure in your safety.
- **Triumph over Adversity.** This is that pleasure that you have accomplished something that you knew was a long shot. Typically this pleasure is accompanied by shouts of personal triumph. The Italians have a word for this pleasure: *fiero* (pronounced fee-air-o).
- **Wonder.** An overwhelming feeling of awe and amazement.

And there are many, many more. I list these pleasures that fall outside of easy classification to illustrate the richness of the pleasure space. Lists of pleasures can serve as convenient rules of thumb, but don't forget to keep an open mind for ones that might not be on your list. The crucial perspective of pleasure gives us Lens #17.

Lens #17: The Lens of Pleasure

To use this lens, think about the kinds of pleasure your game does and does not provide.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What pleasures does your game give to players? Can these be improved?
- What pleasures are missing from your experience? Why? Can they be added?

Ultimately, the job of a game is to give pleasure. By going through lists of known pleasures, and considering how well your game delivers each one, you may be inspired to make changes to your game that will increase your players' enjoyment. Always be on the lookout, though, for unique, unclassified pleasures not found in most games — for one of these might be what gives your game the unique quality it needs.

Knowing your players intimately, more intimately than they know themselves, is the key to giving them a game they will enjoy. In Chapter 9, we will get to know them even better.