 Foundations of Interactive Game Design

08: Player Types & Targeting a Market

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Targeting a Market

Three Possible Routes

- Making a game for yourself.
- Making a game for someone you are not.
- Making a game for yourself + someone you are not.
Making a game for yourself.

- Best scenario
- Likes
- Dislikes
- Skills
- Abilities
We can see who games get made for.
Making a game for someone you are not.

See Chapter 11

- Significantly impacts all design decisions.
- Can they read?
- Do they understand icons?
- What is their learning curve?
- Are they patient?
Imagine +
Making a game for someone you are not.

See Chapter 11

- What is their learning style?
- What can they handle physically? Sports, board games, etc.
Come On, Video Games, Let’s See Some Black People I’m Not Embarrassed By

I’ve never played as a black video game character who's made me feel like he was cool. Worse yet, I've never played a black video game character who made me feel like I was cool. Instead, I’ve groaned and rolled my eyes at a parade of experiences that continue to tell me video games just don't get black people.
Make a brownish color which shall apply to all people who are not white.
Pink Poison

*a brief history of the girls’ game movement in the U.S.*
McKenzie & Company

1995
“Why should we make games for girls?”
Barbie Fashion Designer

1996
“How do we make games for girls?”
A Wave of Titles - 1997
Still going… 1997-1999
Still going... 1997-1999
Buyers Fail to Show Up

- Big Pink Buys Purple Moon
  - March 1999
- Mattel Sells Interactive Division
  - Oct 2001
“See? We told you girls don’t play computer games!”
Why did this happen?

- The industry took an entire market of women and defined it as a genre of “fashion, shopping, and makeup games for girls ages 6-10.”
Women did appear...
So what’s the problem?

- Computer game revenues have topped 9.4 billion dollars, outranking Hollywood box office receipts.

Salon magazine.
So what’s the problem?

- The traditional target market of males ages 15-25 is not growing as fast as the games industry.

Salon Magazine
Today, females between the ages of 15 and 25 control over 14 billion dollars a year in disposable income.

—Newsweek Magazine
A missed opportunity

- The average console gamer is a 33-year-old male.
- The average “everything else” gamer is a 43-year-old mom.
The Cycle
How do we get girls to play?

Girls don’t play games
What doesn’t work
What doesn’t work
What does work?

- We can identify and remove the barriers that prevent women from accessing the titles we are making today.
Where do barriers exist?

- Learning styles
- Avatar representation
# Gender Differences in Learning Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Risk-takers</td>
<td>- Want to know how it works first</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Explorative</td>
<td>- Modeling/Imitative</td>
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Most of the tutorials in today’s games are designed to appeal to an explorative learning style.
Improving Avatar Selection

Avatar \textit{\textbackslash Av\'a*tar"\textbackslash}, n.
1. An image representing a user in a virtual reality space.
Because they represent “heroes”, male and female avatars will often exhibit exaggerated physical signals of youth strength, and fertility/virility.
Youth, Strength and Fertility/Virility

**Males**
- Large Shoulders
- Slim waists
- Slim hips
- Large thighs and calves
- Long, thick hair

**Females**
- Large breasts, placed high on the chest
- Slim waists
- Round derrières
- Long, thick hair
Very often female avatars display exaggerated physical signals of sexual receptivity.

Male avatars rarely display these signals.
Avatar Depiction in Games

- Red, full lips
- Heavy lidded eyes
- Heavy breathing (usually indicated by a slightly open mouth)
Avatar Depiction in Games
Avatar Depiction in Games
Solutions

- Design tutorials that use imitative models as well as evaporative models
- Use educational software as models
- Make your female characters heroic, but do not hypersexualize them
- Use female athletes as body models
The Cycle

Girls don’t make games
Sometimes the best man for the job is a woman

- The game industry isn’t on women’s career radar
- Must recruit in non-traditional areas
- Build today for employees tomorrow
Production Environment

- Quality of life issues
  - Women have less leisure time
  - Benefits are very important

- Physical space
  - Keep it “clean”
  - Appropriate facilities
Solutions

- Understand you will have to recruit women – and get creative in your recruiting
- Address quality of life issues in your office including - but not limited to – over time, benefits, and actual physical space
The Cycle

Girls don’t like games
Traditional channels do not reach female consumers
Boxes & Ads Repel Women
Where to Start

- Adjust tutorials to allow for modeling learning styles
- Consider forgiveness for error rather than punishment
- Make female avatars attractive, but not hypersexual
- Clearly state you intend your audience to contain females
- Seek out qualified female candidates