

# PLAYER TYPE THEORY

USES AND ABUSES

7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012

CASUAL CONNECT, HAMBURG

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## INTRODUCTION

- THIS TALK IS ABOUT THE APPLICATION OF **PLAYER TYPE** THEORY
- PLAYER TYPE THEORY IS **OFTEN** CALLED "THE **BARTLE** TYPES", BUT MY **BEING** BARTLE MEANS I **DON'T** CALL IT THAT
  - MUCH AS PETER HIGGS IS **ALONE** IN NOT CALLING THE HIGGS BOSON THE **HIGGS BOSON**
- TODAY, I'LL JUST CALL THEM **PLAYER TYPES**
- DON'T WORRY, I STILL HAVE **PLENTY** OF OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT...

## BIG BIRD

- THIS IS A BIG BIRD:



## WHY TYPES?

- MY **AIM** WHEN I WROTE ABOUT PLAYER TYPES BACK IN **1996** WAS TO STOP **DESIGNERS** MAKING GAMES THAT **THEY** WANTED TO PLAY AND START MAKING GAMES THAT **PEOPLE** WANTED TO PLAY
- I IDENTIFIED **FOUR** AREAS THAT DESCRIBE **WHY** PEOPLE PLAY VIRTUAL WORLDS AND SHOWED THEM TO BE **INTER-DEPENDENT**
  - THESE WERE **TEXTUAL** WORLDS, BUT THE THEORY STILL APPLIES TO TODAY'S **GRAPHICAL** ONES

## SOME TIME

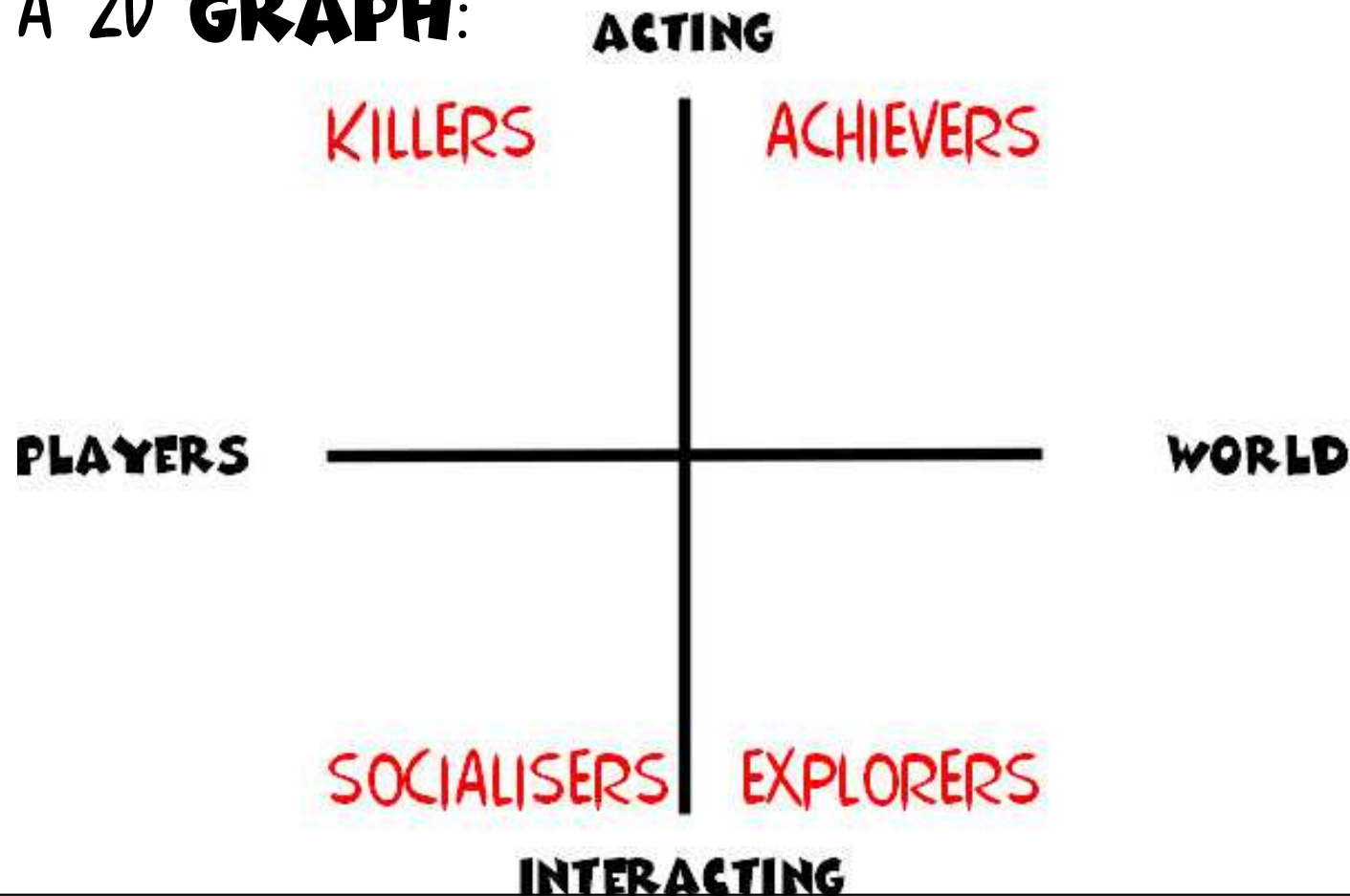
- I'D ACTUALLY **KNOWN** THIS THEORY FOR SEVERAL **YEARS** BEFORE I WROTE IT UP
- I'D PUT IT TOGETHER IN **1990** FOLLOWING A SIX-MONTH **EMAIL** DISCUSSION AMONG THE SENIOR PLAYERS OF MY GAME WORLD, **MUD2**
- THE PLAYERS WERE DESCRIBING WHAT **THEY** LIKED ABOUT VIRTUAL WORLDS AND WHAT THEY THOUGHT **OTHER** PEOPLE LIKED
- I **SUMMARISED** THEIR DISCUSSION, BUT SPOTTED **COMMONALITIES** IN THEIR REPLIES

## 4-TYPES

- THE **RESULT** WAS BASIC PLAYER TYPES THEORY
- THIS POSITS THAT THERE ARE **FOUR** TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO PLAY VIRTUAL WORLDS FOR **FUN**:
  - ACHIEVERS
  - EXPLORERS
  - SOCIALISERS
  - KILLERS
- OTHER PEOPLE **DO** PLAY, BUT **NOT** FOR FUN
  - DESIGNERS, JOURNALISTS, RESEARCHERS, GOLD FARMERS, CUSTOMER SERVICE REPS, ...

## GRAPH

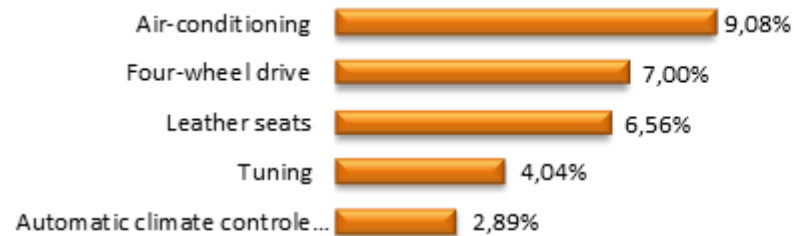
- PLAYER TYPES ARE **NORMALLY** SHOWN AS A 2D **GRAPH**:



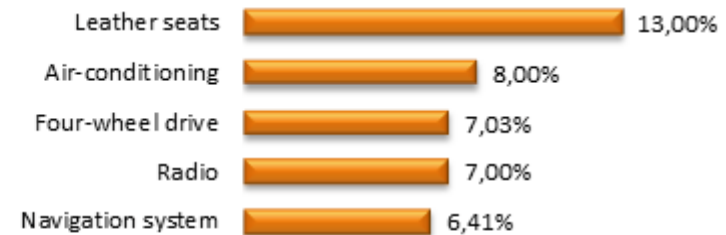
## TOP 5

- HERE ARE THE **TOP 5** FEATURES IN A **USED CAR** AS REQUESTED BY EUROPEAN DRIVERS

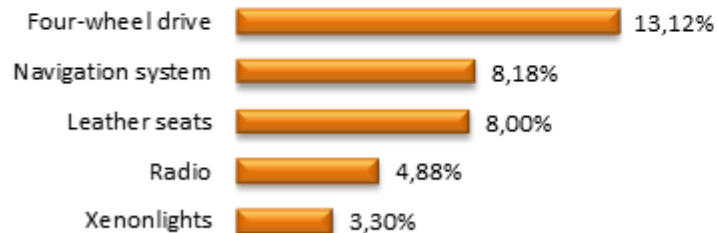
### Top Features: Germany



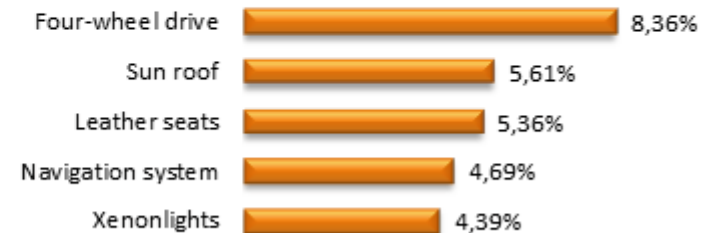
### Top Features: France



### Top Features: Italy



### Top Features: Spain



- [HTTP://WWW.AUTOSCOUT24.COM/](http://www.autoscout24.com/) VIA [HTTP://WWW.CARSONTHEWEB.BE](http://www.carsontheweb.be)



## APPLICATION

- THIS **4-TYPE**, 2D GRAPH HAS BEEN **SUCCESSFULLY** APPLIED IN MMORPG DESIGN SINCE *ULTIMA ONLINE* IN 1997
- IT'S NOW REGARDED AS **STANDARD** FOR MMOS
  - ALL MMO DESIGNERS KNOW THE PLAYER TYPES!
- OCCASIONALLY, PEOPLE WILL ANGRILY TELL ME THAT THE THEORY IS **SO OBVIOUS** THAT I HAVE **SOME NERVE** CLAIMING TO HAVE DISCOVERED IT
- ITS **MAIN** STRENGTH IS THAT IT **WORKS**

## EXAMPLE

- **GOPETS** WAS A 2005 CASUAL WORLD THAT **CARPET-BOMBED** THE SOCIAL QUADRANT
- THEY DID **OK**, BUT **THEN** THEY ADDED SOME SIMPLE CONTENT FOR ACHIEVERS
- THEY **DOUBLED** THEIR REVENUE IN **7 DAYS**
  - THEIR ACHIEVERS WERE **44X** MORE PROFITABLE THAN THEIR SOCIALISERS
  - THEIR EXPLORERS WERE **64X** MORE PROFITABLE!
- HISTORICAL NOTE: ZYNGA BOUGHT **GOPETS** IN 2009
  - IT WAS SWIFTLY CLOSED FOR ZYNGA'S LAUNCH OF **PETVILLE**

## ELSEWHERE

- PLAYER TYPE THEORY HAS SUCCESSFULLY BEEN APPLIED **ELSEWHERE**, TOO
- AMY JO KIM HAS BEEN USING IT FOR **WEB SITE** DESIGN FOR OVER A DECADE
  - WITH **GREAT** RESULTS!
- IT'S **ALSO** BEEN ADOPTED FOR **OTHER** TYPES OF ONLINE GAME, FOR **GAMIFICATION**, FOR FACE-TO-FACE RPGS, FOR **CASUAL** GAMES, ...
  - PLUS IN SOME MORE **UNEXPECTED** AREAS SUCH AS NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

## THEORY

- AN **IMPORTANT** FEATURE OF PLAYER TYPES THEORY IS THAT IT **IS** A THEORY
  - **NOT** SIMPLY A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS
- IT HAS THEORETICAL **BACK-UP** THAT EXPLAINS **WHY** IT WORKS
  - DON'T **PANIC**, I'M NOT GOING TO EXPLAIN IT TODAY
- IT LINKS INTO **OTHER** GENERALLY ACCEPTED THEORIES OF **IDENTITY** AND COGNITION
  - NOT **ALL**, THOUGH. IF YOU TRY MAP IT TO MYERS-BRIGGS YOU'RE **WASTING YOUR TIME**

## AND YET...

- THIS **SHOULD** BE **EXCELLENT** NEWS, BUT IT'S **NOT**
- REASON: THE THEORY **ONLY** EXPLAINS WHY PEOPLE PLAY **MMOS** FOR **FUN**
- IT SAYS **NOTHING** ABOUT PEOPLE PLAYING **NON-MMOS**, OR PLAYING **NOT** FOR FUN
  - OR INDEED, NOT **PLAYING** AT ALL
- THERE IS **NO REASON** WHY PLAYER TYPES THEORY SHOULD WORK FOR **ANYTHING** EXCEPT **VIRTUAL WORLDS**

## HAMMER

- THIS IS A  
HAMMER  
AND A  
SCREW:



## NEVERTHELESS

- SOME SOCIAL/CASUAL GAME DESIGNERS **APPLY** THE THEORY **ANYWAY** TO GET **RESULTS**
- THEY DON'T CARE **WHY** IT WORKS, JUST THAT IT **DOES** WORK ... OR **MAY** WORK
  - ITS LIKE A *magic formula*
- LO AND BEHOLD, THEY **DO** FIND THAT IT WORKS
  - THEIR **PLAYERS** FIT THE THEORY **EXACTLY!**
  - ANALYSIS SHOWS **ALL** THE DIFFERENT TYPES EXIST
- EXCEPT, **OF COURSE** THEY EXIST!
  - THEY **HERDED** THE PLAYERS INTO THE TYPES!
  - ITS **SELF-FULFILLING** DESIGN!

## BEYOND LIMITS

- SOME PEOPLE **KNOWINGLY** APPLY THE THEORY **BEYOND** ITS LIMITS
- THEY SEE AN **ANALOGY** BETWEEN WHAT THEY'RE DOING AND WHAT THE THEORY **SAYS**  
– “HEY, **THESE** GUYS THINK LIKE ACHIEVERS. Hmm...”
- SOMETIMES, THIS **DOES** SEEM TO BE USEFUL
- THE **DANGER** COMES IF YOU BEGIN TO TREAT **ANALOGY** AS IF IT WERE **IDENTITY**
- AN AEROPLANE IS **LIKE** A BIG BIRD, BUT IT **ISN'T** A BIG BIRD...



## BANDWAGON

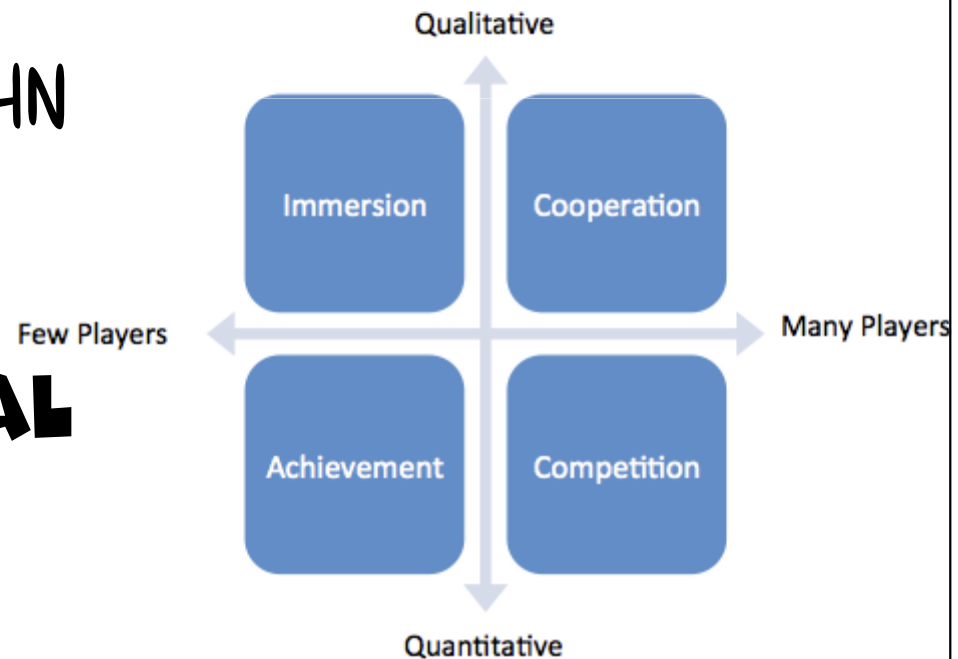
- OTHER PEOPLE APPLY THE THEORY FROM ONLY A **SUPERFICIAL**, BULLET-POINT **READ** OF IT
  - FOR THEM, IT'S A **BANDWAGON**
- WE SEE THIS WITH **GAMIFICATION**
  - GIVING **ACHIEVER** REWARDS TO **EXPLORERS...**
- THE THEORY'S **USE** IN GAMIFICATION **BEGAN** AS AN **ANALOGY**-STYLE MAPPING
  - "PEOPLE PLAY MMOS FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, SO PERHAPS IT WORKS IN GAMIFICATION?"
- SURE, BUT **ADAPT** IT TO FIT THE **CONTEXT**
  - DON'T USE A COOKIE CUTTER TO CUT SHEET METAL!

## FURTHERMORE

- PLAYER TYPE THEORY WAS DEVELOPED FOR THE USE OF MMO **DESIGNERS**
  - **NOT** FOR PLAYERS
  - **NOT** FOR MARKETERS
- THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY **CAN'T** USE IT
- IT SIMPLY MEANS THAT IT **MAY** BE THE **WRONG** TOOL FOR THE **JOB**
  - ITS USERS NEED TO BE **AWARE** OF THIS
- IT'S ONLY BEING **USED** BECAUSE THERE ARE **NO** OTHER **TOOLS** IN THE **TOOLBOX**

## TOOLS

- YET ... THERE **ARE** OTHER TOOLS IN THE BOX
- SOME SUCH AS NICOLE LAZZARO'S 4 KEYS **MAP ONTO** PLAYER TYPE THEORY BUT HAVE ADDITIONAL **DEPTH**
- SOME, SUCH AS JOHN RADOFF'S **MOTIVATIONS**, ARE **ORTHOGONAL** TO IT



## RATIONALE

- FEW SUCH APPROACHES HAVE ANY **THEORY** EXPLAINING **WHY** THEY WOULD WORK
  - THEY'RE DERIVED FROM **OBSERVATIONS**
- THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU **CAN'T** OR SHOULDN'T **USE** THEM THOUGH
- IT JUST MEANS YOU NEED TO BE **CAREFUL**
- JUST BECAUSE AN IDEA MAKES **SENSE**, THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S **ALWAYS** WISE TO USE IT
  - RADOFF'S TYPES APPLY TO **ANY** GAME, BUT WHAT DO THEY **MEAN** FOR **YOUR** GAME?

## SO WHAT?

- ASK YOURSELF **TWO** INITIAL **QUESTIONS** WHEN CONSIDERING GAME DESIGN TOOLS
  - WHAT **IS IT** THAT I WANT TO DO?
  - WHAT WILL **HELP** ME DO THAT?
- YOU CERTAINLY SHOULD **NOT** BE ASKING
  - WHAT CAN I USE **THIS** FOR?
  - WHICH IS THE **BEST** MODEL?
    - BEST **FOR THIS JOB**, YES; JUST **BEST**, NO
- TO **DO** THE ABOVE, YOU NEED TO ENSURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT A MODEL IS **TELLING** YOU

## EXAMPLE

- NICK YEE QUESTIONED **3,200** MMO PLAYERS AND FOUND 10 BASIC **MOTIVATIONS**
- ➔ OF THESE APPEAR IN THE **8-TYPES** MODEL
  - 1 OF THEM **CONFLATES** 2 OF MY TYPES
- THE REMAINING **3** CONCERN **IMMERSION**
  - IN PLAYER TYPES, IMMERSION **EMERGES** FROM PROGRESSING **THROUGH** TYPES
- NICK'S CATEGORIES (LEGITIMATELY) **OVERLAP**
  - YOU CAN BE BOTH IMMERSED **AND** AN EXPLORER
- HIS MODEL IS FOR **SOCIAL SCIENTISTS**

## DANGERS

- NICK'S TYPOGRAPHY IS **FINE** IF YOU **READ** WHAT HE'S **WRITTEN** AND NOT JUST GRAB THE **TYPE NAMES** FROM A **SUMMARY**
- SOME TYPOGRAPHIES **AREN'T** FINE
- PLAYER TYPE THEORY HAS BEEN AROUND FOR SO **LONG** THAT SOME PEOPLE FEEL IT'S "**TIRED**"
  - I.E. THEY HAVE AN IDEA FOR A MODEL OF THEIR OWN
- BUT THAT'S **GREAT!** I **WANT** TO SEE A BETTER MODEL
  - BECAUSE THEN WE GET BETTER **GAMES!**

## ANALOGY

- SADLY, MOST NEW MODELS ARE **FAR WORSE**
- AS AN ANALOGY, IT'S LIKE ASKING DRIVERS 5 THINGS THEY WANT **MOST** IN A USED **CAR**
- POPULAR ANSWERS CONCERN **UPHOLSTERY**, SOUND SYSTEM, A/C, SATNAV, 4WD
- SOME PEOPLE **MAY** SAY **ENGINE SIZE**
  - VAN DRIVERS FOR **POWER**, TEENAGERS FOR **SPEED**, SALES PEOPLE FOR **FUEL** EFFICIENCY
- FEW WOULD SAY **BRAKES**, YET THEY REALLY, **REALLY** NEED GOOD BRAKES...



## GAMES

- SO IT IS FOR **GAMES**
- PEOPLE WILL PLAY **DIFFERENT** GAMES FOR THE **SAME** REASONS AND THE **SAME** GAMES FOR **DIFFERENT** REASONS
- THEY SAY THEY WANT FEATURES THEY **DON'T** WANT THEN **MOAN** WHEN YOU DELIVER THEM
  - IGNORING CRITICAL FEATURES LIKE **GAMEPLAY**
- CLASSIC EXAMPLE: THEY SAY THEY WANT FRESH, **NEW** GAMES THEN ONLY **BUY** ONES WITH **NUMBERS** AT THE END OF THEIR NAME

## YOU

- IF **YOU'RE** THINKING OF APPLYING PLAYER TYPE THEORY TO **YOUR** GAME, OR WEB SITE, OR HYPNOTHERAPY PRACTICE:
  - FIGURE OUT THE **PROBLEM** TO WHICH PLAYER TYPE THEORY IS THE **SOLUTION**
  - ASK WHETHER IT IS **INDEED** A PROBLEM
  - ASK WHETHER PLAYER TYPES IS **INDEED** A SOLUTION
  - LOOK AT **OTHER** POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
- DON'T BLAME THE THEORY IF **YOU** MISAPPLY IT!

## CONCLUSION

- PLAYER TYPE THEORY IS LIKE A **HAMMER**
  - THE BEST THERE IS FOR **NAILS**
  - VASTLY **INFERIOR** TO A **SCREWDRIVER** FOR **SCREWS**, BUT **STILL** MUCH BETTER THAN POUNDING THEM WITH YOUR **FIST**
- JUST BECAUSE “EVERYONE **ELSE**” IS USING IT, THAT DOESN'T MEAN **YOU** SHOULD USE IT
- WHATEVER YOU **DO** USE, READ THE THEORY
  - IF IT DOESN'T WORK, YOU'LL KNOW **WHY**
- IF IT HAS **NO** THEORY, JUST **HOPE** IT WORKS!