Conflict

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Outline

- Admin
- Conflict
  - Types of goals
  - Systems of conflict
Admin

- Due Today
  - Reaction paper
- Upcoming deadlines
  - Wednesday: Quiz #1
  - Monday: Homework #2 Due
  - Next Wednesday: Rules paper due
Conflict

- results from the attempt to achieve a goal in the presence of some obstacle or opposition
Conflict

- Somewhat obvious
  - "artificial conflict" is part of the definition
  - a game is a **system** in which **players** engage in an **artificial conflict** defined by **rules** that results in a **quantifiable outcome**

- We expect games will involve conflict
  - can take different forms
Sources of conflict

- Other players
  - vying for mutually exclusive goal
    - Any sport

- Game rules
  - attaining game goal may be arduous, uncertain
    - World of Warcraft

- Game operations
  - playing well may just be hard
    - strength, reflexes, etc.
Player conflict

- Single player vs. single player
  - Chess, Boxing, Warcraft III
- Group vs. group
  - Football, Battlefield 1942, Counter-Strike
- One against many
  - Tag, Most action-adventure and FPS games
- Every man for himself
  - Footrace, Risk, Mario Kart
Rule conflict

- Single player vs. game
  - Tetris, solitaire
- Group of single players vs. game
  - Blackjack
- Group against the game
  - Lord of the Rings board game
  - Cooperative mode in Star Wars Battlefront, Gears of War, etc.
Operational conflict

- Conflict with the game's operational requirements
  - not usually a part of board or card games
  - more associated with sports
- But common in video games
  - hand-eye coordination
  - button combinations
  - speed of execution
Example
Games and goals

- Conflict is striving for a goal in the face of opposition
- Goals are generated by players
  - May not be the same for everybody
  - May not be the one’s imagined by designers
- Single game may support multiple goals
  - From the player’s point of view
Example: Asteroids

- Single player mode
  - Do well against the game
  - Beat your personal best
  - Get on the high score list

- Two player mode
  - Beat your opponent
  - Get on high score list

- Compete against friend to get on the high score list
Example: Joust

- Single player mode
  - Players compare scores

- Two player mode
  - Battle mode
    - player vs player
    - with computer distractions
  - Cooperation mode
    - players vs. computer
Example: Gauntlet

- Single player mode
- Multi-player mode
  - Cannot attack each other
  - Real time display of scores
  - Trying to jointly explore territory
- But
  - Players compete for “food”
  - Allow most needy to eat or be greedy
  - Compete for spending money
Direct vs indirect conflict

- Direct conflict
  - when players are interacting each trying to achieve a goal at the expense of the other

- Indirect conflict
  - players are trying to achieve relative success, but are not interacting
Examples

- Arm-wrestling, Chess
  - direct conflict
- Figure skating, Downhill skiing
  - indirect
- Mario Kart?
- Gran Turismo?
Example: Multiplayer WarCraft III

- Mixed conflict type
- In early stages of a match
  - players accumulate resources and build assets
  - there may not be any direct conflict
- In later stages
  - the units produced by each player combat each other
  - efficiency in production helps
  - but tactics also important
Pig

- **Object**
  - to be the first to reach 100 points

- **On each turn**
  - a player rolls a single die as many times as desired
    - accumulates a score
  - can continue as long as desired
    - when player decides to stop, score is added to player's point total
      - next player's turn
  - if a 1 is rolled,
    - score is set to zero
    - next player's turn
Play
Forms of conflict?
Game goal

- The goal of a game generates its conflict
- Goal
  - focuses player interest
  - organizes strategy
  - defines the endpoint
- When we describe a game, we say
  - the object of the game is...
Meaningful play

- Actions are meaningful
  - if players can see their connection to the game goal
- There may be multiple levels of goals
  - I have to solve this puzzle to get the key
  - With the key, I can get into the weapon locker
  - Then, I can get the grenade
  - Which is the only way to get past the guard without losing too much health
  - Which is the only way to get to the boat, which takes me the princess's island
  - Which is the only way to rescue her
  - Which is the goal of the game
- Danger
  - making the goal chain too deep
  - players don't understand why they have to do what they are doing
  - especially a problem if the actions aren't that fun in themselves
Systems of conflict

- Games exhibit conflict at multiple levels
  - Local goals contribute to larger goals
- Conflicts at different levels work together to create a system
  - The interrelatedness of the conflicts determines if any given conflict seems meaningful
Example: Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

- Largest conflict
  - evil sorcerer, Gannon
- Intermediate conflict
  - defeat level
- Local conflict
  - solve puzzle
  - defeat particular enemy
  - master particular skill
Wind Waker, cont'd

- Conflict system
  - each level is crafted to introduce new skills
    - which are essential to succeeding in this and later levels
  - each level features enemies with certain common characteristics
    - essential to defeating the boss

- Game logic links conflicts
  - hero must collect pearls to defeat Gannon
  - pearls are obtained by defeating a boss enemy
  - boss enemies are found at the innermost room of each dungeon
  - exploration of the dungeon requires defeating enemies and solving puzzles
  - exploration also requires weapons, tools and power-ups
  - items found by exploring the dungeon
Example

- Madden 2005
- Questions
  - what are the levels of conflict?
  - how do these conflicts interact?
Level playing field

- The consideration of "fairness" ends up being very important
  - many game procedures are designed to achieve this
    - coin toss
  - actually quite hard to achieve
- Sometimes it is best to go first
  - chess
- Sometimes it is better to go last
  - bridge
  - croquet
  - pig
- Players use many informal mechanisms to achieve fairness
  - advantages
  - handicaps
- Computer games can theoretically do a better job of achieving fairness
  - but generally lack the informal flexibility
Conflict system may fail

- Game lacks meaningful play
  - if players do not perceive the links between conflicts

- Example
  - Kingdom Hearts
    - goal is to protect various "worlds"
    - travel between worlds is done through a 3-D space shooting game
    - no coherence between this local conflict and the global one
      - it feels tacked on and rather pointless
Competitive vs. cooperative

- All games are competitive
- Can they be cooperative at the same time?
  - Adherence to the Magic Circle
  - Players on a Basketball team
- "Artificial conflict"
  - Conflict within a cooperative framework
Cooperative games?

- "New Games" Movement
  - Dragon
    - conflict between head and tail
    - mediated by players with uncertain stakes
  - Stand-up
    - conflict with gravity / stability
- UN Food Force game
  - mission = help refugees
  - conflict with terrain, elements, limited budgets, logistics
Conflict

- Essential
  - Part of our definition of a game
- For games of any complexity
  - There is a system of interrelated conflicts
- Play is more meaningful
  - If the player sees the overall shape of these conflicts
  - If the conflicts relate to each other in a "natural" way
Wednesday

- Quiz on "Rules Unit"
  - 30 minutes
- You should be familiar with
  - general
    - ludus / paideia
    - definition of a game
  - information
    - private / public / hidden
  - cybernetics
    - positive and negative feedback
  - uncertainty
    - different types
  - conflict
    - types of conflict
- Also Case Study
  - Guitar Hero 2