

Response to Between Collaboration and Competition

This talk discussed several issues centered on finding a form of serious games somewhere between collaborative games and competitive games. The talk brought up some interesting topics and explained several examples carried out in a classroom environment.

One interesting example explained in the talk involved a game called Shape Factory. In the game each player would be responsible for a factory which generated geometric shapes. Each factory specialized in one kind of shape but could produce each kind of shape. The factories produced their specialized shape for a much lower price when compared to producing the other pieces. The game progresses by each factory being given an order in the form of several shapes to be made. The factories have to either make all the pieces themselves or negotiate with the other factories in order to outsource some of the work to specialized factories. The game is interesting itself however the game resulted in some unique psychological results as well. The game consisted of ten players, five of which were in the same room and five of which were each in their own room. The players in the same room could communicate verbally to each other and over the internet to the players in other rooms. The players in their own rooms could only communicate via the internet. It was found that the people in the same room tended to trade with themselves rather than those outside of the room. In doing so they formed two groups, those in the room and those outside of the room forced to work together by not being allowed to trade with those in the same room. It was later found that trying to force these two groups to trade was difficult since the group in the room had “Burned” the other group making negotiations difficult. This is a very realistic situation.

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Some companies would prefer to outsource work to companies in the same area of a city rather than one in another city which may be more qualified.

The talk mentioned several other experiments dealing with such issues as similar versus different backgrounds in team development. The experiments were carried out again in the form of games centering on trade. The games showed that teams formed from similar backgrounds (for instance a team of students from the same Fraternity) would trade with one another more easily and think of themselves as group rather than individuals. The teams formed from different backgrounds had not been tested against the trading game but it was hypothesized that trading would be more difficult to work out.

This talk brought up several interesting points which were demonstrated through serious games in a classroom. Continuing this line of research will lead to the potential to make games which accurately simulate social dilemmas, like trade agreements, rather than the typical zero-sum competition games.