

**The Presentation of Archetype and Cultural Values in Massive Multiplayer  
Online Role-Playing Games: A Comparison between Taiwanese and  
American Games**

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By

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to compare the archetypes and quests in massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) from Taiwan and the United States to see how social structures and cultural values are reflected.

The research subject of this study consists of two MMORPGs: *Shen-Chou* and *The Dark Age of Camelot*. The former is a Taiwanese game, and the latter is American. This research draws on Carl Jung's and William Thompson's archetype theories to analyze the character archetypes. In

addition, theories concerning cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede are explored in the analysis of the quests.

On one hand, the archetype analysis concludes that both Taiwanese and American cultures endorse similar root archetypes in their games. The four basic archetypes are identified as: the Chief, Hunter, Shaman, and Fool. On the other hand, the racial distribution of the characters is divergent. With a single race represented by all characters, the Taiwanese game mirrors the homogenous nature of racial characteristics in the Chinese culture. By contrast, multiple races coexist in the American game, projecting the Western culture's relatively diverse viewpoint on racial composition in a given society.

With a focus on cultural values, the quest analysis illustrates that the Taiwanese game demonstrates more power distance, more uncertainty avoidance, more collectivism, and more femininity than the American game. The American game reinforces values of masculinity and individuality. The analysis also uncovers the different images of heroes in the two cultures. The American culture appreciates a more masculine type of hero. The Taiwanese culture approves of a hero who possesses more feminine qualities. Finally, the rewarding system embedded in the games is a critical tool for conveying and reinforcing the given cultural values. As the object of the reward differs,

so do the means and the philosophies through which the values are strengthened.

In summary, the findings in this research conclude that the cultural values reflected in the Taiwanese and American MMORPGs provide insight into the fundamental characteristics of Chinese and American cultures. The next step in studies concerning MMORPGs may include more discussions on the players' gaming behavior and its impacts.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

There is no “Thou shalt!” any more. There is nothing one has to believe, and there is nothing one has to do. On the other hand, one can of course, if one prefers, still choose to play at the old Middle Ages game, or some Oriental game, or even some sort of primitive game. We are living in a difficult time, and whatever defends us from the madhouse can be applauded as good enough – for those without nerve.

-- Joseph Campbell, 1972

Printed above is Joseph Campbell's comment regarding the impact of science and technology on myth. He lamented that myth was being replaced by science, and only those “without nerve” would still seek guidance from myth.

I take a rather different approach on the same subject. Like drinking old wine from a new bottle, myth is still everywhere around us. Myth metamorphoses into films, television shows, popular music, etc., and

continues its pedagogical mission in telling people what to do and what to believe in. The latest successful transubstantiation of myth into modern technologies, I contend, is evidenced in computer role-playing games.

Computer games have been part of my life for a long time. Little had I known I would have been addicted to this wonderful invention when my father bought me my first computer in fifth grade. I recall it being a daily ritual of mine that each day after school, I would begin my *life* by booting up the computer, inserting the disk and starting the game.

I wasn't alone.

At that time (1987), the most famous computer game was a role-playing game: The *Ultima* series published by a U.S.-based company called Origin Systems, Inc. The *Ultima* series was such a big hit that the company produced ten sequels in five years. I remember a group of classmates and I used to engage in serious discussions concerning the plots of the game, the hidden places of treasures and the best strategies to kill the ultimate bad guy, so on and so forth. We role-played the people around us as the characters in the game, with, of course, our teachers being the bad guys. We recited dialogs between the characters and secretly and relentlessly practiced killing the monsters at home in the hope of advancing to higher levels to beat our

friends' characters. The way that this role-playing game managed to dictate our lives was similar to, if not more powerful than, the influence of any other mass media on the lives of our generation.

As much as we enjoyed the *Ultima* and the fantasy elements introduced to us in this American game, my friends and I all felt that something was missing in our gaming experience. We somehow felt distanced from the devilish sorcerers and chimerical monsters and hoped to see characters and story lines associated with Chinese fantasies.

For a long period of time in Taiwan, entertainment software has been deemed as trivial, time wasting, and even demoralizing. As a result, no local company made any investment on the game industry. The consumers only had the option of playing imported games. It was years later, when Taiwanese companies began producing role-playing games based on Chinese fantasies, did such games become an overnight success. All of a sudden, all of my friends and I swarmed to these new "made-in-Taiwan" games. Some of us even totally abandoned the foreign games. Interestingly, such an overnight switch from imported to homemade did not occur on any other genre of games, such as action or strategy games.

Since then I began to wonder what the difference was between Taiwanese and American games, and the answer seemed quite obvious--the culture. On one hand, my friends and I felt alienated from the American games, not being familiar with their mythical elements. For instance, we were ignorant of the relationship between King Arthur and Merlin the magician. The words "Trolls" and "Goblins" meant nothing other than enigmatic English vocabularies to us. We also could not find the cultural values that we were imbibed with, such as social hierarchies, filial piety, the concept of shamefulness, etc. On the other hand, we were still able to navigate the games without any problem. Somehow we naturally accepted the formula that in order to create a formidable team, there must be at least a knight, a warrior, and a wizard. Through trial and error, we also learned that a knight is a mediocre guy with no specific stronghold in any attribute, a warrior is a tough fighter but is not necessarily smart, and a wizard is intelligent but usually very weak. With this basic knowledge, we managed to play the game on a level that involved purely the slaughter of monsters and the goal to become heroes.

As I contemplate this personal experience with role-playing games, two thoughts come to mind. First, there is no denying that there are cultural differences between Taiwanese and American games. Secondly, there are also similarities, or at least common denominations of the images of the basic

elements between the two. What puzzles me is, exactly what is different and in what manner do the similarities exist?

I attempt to answer these questions by first reviewing current literatures associated with archetypes and cultural values in chapter two. In chapters three and four, I will further lay out my research questions, my hypotheses, and the research methodologies employed in search of answers. Raw data and preliminary findings concerning the results of a quantitative and qualitative analysis constitute chapter five. In chapter six, I delve into an in-depth discussion on the cultural and psychological implications and ramifications of the statistics presented in chapter five. Chapter seven concludes this research and provides considerations for further work.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of this research is drawn mainly from Carl Jung's theory, as well as from Geert Hofstede's cross-national cultural value studies. Both of these studies are based on the premises that all humans share the same psyche structure, or in Hofstede's terms, "mental program," that defines a human's behavior or personality (1991). The psyche, or mental program, can be presented as a three level structure. The lowest level is human nature, the middle level is the collective, and the top level is the personality (Hofstede, 1991) (Figure 2-1).

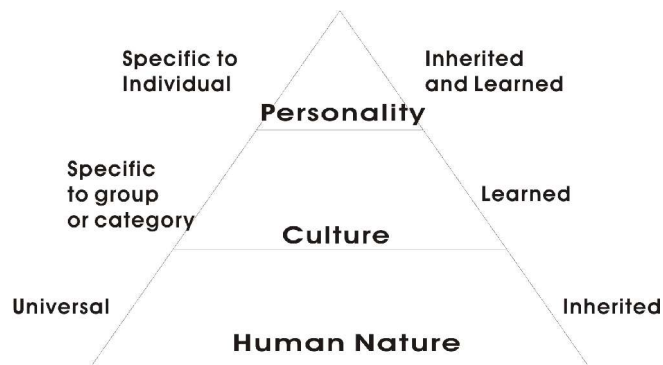


Figure 2-2.1 Three levels of human psyche

While Jung's theories focused mostly on the archetype of the collective unconscious, which is possessed by all human beings and falls under the level of human nature level, Hofstede focused on the culture's influence on the group level. This chapter will examine these theories to provide background knowledge for the present discussion.

### **Archetypal Elements**

Carl Jung is mostly known for his development of the collective unconscious, the part of the psyche that is shared across cultures and across human kind (1968b). While Freud developed the personal unconscious, Jung believed that there were universal properties that united us as people and as civilizations.

Within the collective unconscious were the archetypes. The archetypes are prototypes of our existence. They exist across many dimensions, including human relationships such as a family of mother, father, sister, and brother; within nature, such as the sun, the moon, trees, and oceans; and in other human interactions such as hero, villain (or shadow), crone, wise old man, sorcerer, sorceress.

According to Jung, we are born prewired to develop and respond to certain archetypes because they are part of our nature. The archetypes exist within the collective unconscious almost like undeveloped film. Through our experiences, the particular archetype we form for our mother, for example, is created in conjunction with these primitive, prototypical images.

Myth is fundamentally built on these archetypes. Archetypes can be and are combined in story telling. For instance, wolves howling in front of a full moon sets the stage for a scary story. These cultural myths are then reflected in our games, including our current online role-playing games where we have the opportunity to enact the various archetypal roles.

### **Archetypes and Society**

Building on Jung's theories, Thompson argued that all social structures were rooted in four basic archetypal roles: the Chief, the Shaman, the Hunter and the Fool. The four archetypes also match the four Jungian functions, in which the Chief is the thinker, the Shaman is the intuitive, the Hunter is the sensate, and the Fool is the feeler.

These four archetypes can be divided into the operational and the ideational, in which the former includes the Chief and the Hunter, and the latter

the Shaman and the Fool (Thompson, 1971, p. 77). The separation between the two immediately recalls the rational and irrational psychological functions as proposed by Jung (Hall, 1999, p. 99). Jung wrote that thinking and feeling are rational functions because they both require an act of judgment, which then becomes Thompson's operational typology; sensation and intuition are irrational functions because they require no reason, hence, ideational. The Chief and the Hunter are of the operational typology because they believe in their feeling and rational thinking. The Shaman and the Fool are of the ideational typology, because they function based on their intuition, signs of nature, and non-rational thinking.

Thompson argued that all human society was based upon the conflict and coordination that occurred between the ideational and the operational as they were articulated in terms of these four basic archetypal roles (Thompson, 1971). More specifically, Thompson believed these four roles structure the divisions of knowledge in all kinds of human societies and at all stages in human economic and civic evolution. This holds true whether it be in the context of an agrarian economy, in the realm of religion, or in a military organization. Table 2-1 displays the examples of the relations between the roles and the disciplines.

	Operational roles		Ideational roles	
	<b>Chief</b>	<b>Warrior</b>	<b>Shaman</b>	<b>Fool</b>
State	King	General	High Priest	Apologist
Military	Commander	Foot Soldier	Strategist	Warrior-hero
Religion	Bishop	Scribe	Theologian	Mystic
Art	Publicist	Artisan	Celebrant	Satirist-critic

**Table 2-2.1 The fundamental roles of society translated into four disciplines (Gray, 1996, p.208)**

Thompson used an example to explain his ideas of these four archetypes in human society:

The duplication of the original four of the tribal community in every institution in urban society thus creates a field situation of simultaneous attraction and repulsion in which the Bishop administers the religion, the Scribe serves as the technician responsible for the important tool of writing, the Theologian relates the mythic tradition to the intellectual problems of society or the astronomical problems of the sacral calendar, and the mystic dwells in the religious consciousness all the others, presumably, are striving to achieve.

-- Thompson, 1971 p, 81

These archetypal roles become articulated within various cultures. They are universal and yet could be altered by specific cultural beliefs.

## **Cultural Values**

### **1.Dimensions of Culture**

Geert Hofstede has been one of the pioneer thinkers in the practical study of cultural differences. He introduced the concept of cultural dimensions, which defined a limited number of concepts by which cultures could be described (1991; 2000). On the basis of a vast body of empirical research data, Hofstede initially identified four such dimensions: inequality, uncertainty, the relationship between the individual and the primary group, and the division of social roles between men and women. Later on, he developed them into a more complete system of four cultural dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and collectivism/individualism. Following are the definitions of the four cultural dimensions outlined by Hofstede:

#### **A.Power Distance**

Hofstede defined power distance as “a measure of the interpersonal power or influence between the superior and the subordinate as perceived by the less powerful of the two” (Hofstede, 1991). He borrowed social psychologist Mauk Mulder’s definition of power: “the potential to determine or

direct (to a certain extent) the behavior of another person or other persons more so than the other way round” (Mulder, 1977). The basic issue involved in this dimension is human inequality. Inequality can occur in areas such as physical and mental performance, social status and prestige, wealth, power, laws, right, rules, etc. Different societies put different weights among these areas.

Hofstede identified two opposing forces that can be distinguished in every society. One force is at work to eliminate status inconsistencies between the superior and the subordinate. The counter force works to maintain inequality by offsetting rank in one area against another. Power distance is the outcome of the battle between the two forces. In countries with high power distance, power is commanded by few people, tradition is valued, and both dominant behavior and hierarchy are prevalent. In countries with low power distance, the competition between groups and leaders is encouraged.

Joseph Campbell also provided insights regarding the different attitudes toward authoritative figures between cultures of high and low power distance, with the example of teacher and student relationships:

The guru in the Orient accepts responsibility for his student's moral life, and the student's aim, reciprocally, must be to identify with the guru and become, if possible, just like him. But ... students of ours lack the first virtue of the ... “perfect faith,” in the

unquestioningly revered guru. Criticism, on the other hand, and self-responsible judgment are what we have traditionally hoped to develop in students...”

- Joseph Campbell (1991)

Campbell’s observation shows that the distance between the teacher and students in a high power distance culture is maintained through the keeping of the “perfect faith” toward the teachers. The authority is not questionable, and cannot be criticized. The scenario is very different in a culture with low power distance, where criticism is allowed and self-responsibility is encouraged.

To further illustrate a high power distance culture, I will take the example of the Chinese culture. In the Chinese culture, such “perfect faith” and the image of the moral instructor exist in almost all superior and subordinate relationships. These relationships are collectively entitled *Wu Lun* – meaning the five relationships that everyone must obey, in the sequence of nature/human, emperor/people, father/son, teacher/student, and husband/wife. The consequences of obeying the *Wu Lun* are sometimes controversial, because one may be compelled to follow unlawful orders or take vengeance at the cost of other people’s lives. Although controversial, these behaviors are usually morally acceptable by the general public. For example,

as portrayed in a Taiwanese movie: *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, the protagonist Lee Mu-bai spends almost his entire lifetime hunting down Jade Fox to avenge the murder of his master. He is so determined to kill her that although we can tell in the movie that manslaughter is still an illegal behavior, everyone around him seems to approve of and even supports his actions. On the other hand, we also see in the same movie how Shou-lien, even if portrayed as a capable heroine, respects her dead husband and does not dare to betray him by expressing her feelings for Lee Mu-bai. Later in the movie she also keeps suggesting another female character, Jen, to follow her family's order to get married, even if it is against Jen's will. These plot developments highlight the traditional power distance between teacher/student, husband/wife and parents/child.

To sum up, the effects of high power distance in the Chinese culture is strong enough to even outweigh the values of the society's judicial institutions. Moreover, power distance even prevails over personal will. This is almost unfathomable in Western cultures. More details on the comparison of high and low power distance cultures are listed in Table 2-2.

High power distance	Low power distance
Inequalities among people should be minimized	Inequalities among people are both expected and desired
There should be, and there is to some extent, interdependence between less and more powerful people	Less powerful people should be dependent on the more powerful; in practice, less powerful people are polarized between dependence and counterdependence
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Children treat parents as equals	Children treat parents with respect
Teachers expect initiatives from students in class	Teachers are expected to take all initiatives in class
Students treat teachers as equals	Teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom
Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths	Might prevails over right: whoever holds the power is right and good
The use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Skills, wealth power and status should go together
Skills, wealth, power, and status need not go together	

**Table 2-2.2 Examples of the differences between cultures with high and low power distance (Hofstede, 1991)**

## **B.Uncertainty Avoidance**

The concept of uncertainty avoidance is defined as the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid them (Hofstede, 1991). The uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life, and different societies have different ways of coping with such uncertainties. Ways of coping with uncertainties belong to the cultural heritage

of societies and they are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions such as the family, the school, and the state.

The methods of avoiding uncertainties are reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society, and they in turn lead to collective behaviors. Some typical means through which people employ to avoid uncertainties include technology, law, religion, and ritual. Technology creates short-term predictability of outcomes; laws and religions attempt at making people's behavior predictable; and rituals support social cohesion and relieve stress because they concur with the values of the people involved. Although they may not really make the future more predictable, these strategies create a pseudo-certainty within which society members can continue functioning.

In cultures with strong uncertainty avoidance, the society tends to demand rigid and precise laws to regulate people's lives. More religious rituals are practiced, and students often prefer more structured learning situations with more precise objectives. By contrast, cultures with weaker uncertainty avoidance devise fewer regulations and rely more on precedents. Examples of the differences between cultures with weak and strong uncertainty avoidance are listed in Table 2-3.

Weak uncertainty avoidance	Strong uncertainty avoidance
Uncertainty is a normal feature of life and each day is acceptable as it comes	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat which must be fought
Low stress; subjective feeling of wellbeing	High stress; subjective feeling of anxiety
Aggression and emotions should not be shown	Aggression and emotions may at proper times and places be ventilated
Comfortable in ambiguous situations and with unfamiliar risks	Acceptance of familiar risks; fear of ambiguous situations and unfamiliar risks
Few and general laws and rules	Many and precise laws and rules
If rules cannot be respected, they should be changed	If rules cannot be respected, we are sinners and should repent
Citizen competence versus authorities	Citizen incompetence versus authorities
Citizen protest acceptable	Citizen protest should be repressed
Citizens positive towards institutions	Conservatism, extremism, law and order
Tolerance, moderation	

**Table 2-2.3 Examples of key differences between societies with weak and strong uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1991)**

## **C. Individualism vs. Collectivism**

The definition of individualism is for people to look after themselves and their immediate family only. The definition of collectivism is for people to be associated with in-groups, such as families, clans, or organizations.

This cultural dimension describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society. It is reflected in the way people live together – for example, in nuclear families, extended

families, or tribes. It also has many kinds of subjective value implications. In some cultures, individualism is seen as a blessing and a source of well-being; in others, it is seen as alienating. In countries with strong collective values, individuals define themselves according to their status in organizations, ethnic groups, political parties, or families. They provide their loyalty in exchange for protection from those groups. In countries with strong individualist values, individuals mainly seek their own benefits and define themselves according to their own achievements. Table 2-4 provides examples of key differences between collectivist and individualist cultures.

Countries with high collectivist values may also show cultures of shamefulness, while countries with high individualist values may show cultures of guilt (Hofstede, 1991). In a *shame culture*, persons belonging to a group from which a member has infringed upon the rules of society will feel ashamed, based upon a sense of collective obligation (Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, in order to maintain the harmony of the group and avoid that feeling of shame, people tend to avoid doing things that might cause such feeling. On the other hand, in a *guilt culture*, people who infringe upon the rules of society will often feel guilty, which is “ridden by an individually developed conscience which functions as a private inner pilot” (Hofstede, 1991).

Collectivist	Individualist
<p>People are born into extended families or other in-groups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty</p> <p>Identity is based in the social network to which one belongs</p> <p>Children learn to think in terms of “we”</p> <p>Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided</p> <p>High-context communication</p> <p>Trespassing leads to shame and loss of face for self and group</p> <p>Purpose of education is learning how to do</p> <p>Diplomas provide entry to higher status groups</p> <p>Hiring and promotion decisions take employees’ in-group into account</p> <p>Collective interest prevail individual interests</p> <p>Private life is invaded by groups</p>	<p>Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate (nuclear) family only</p> <p>Identity is based in the individual</p> <p>Children learn to think in terms of “I”</p> <p>Speaking one’s mind is a characteristic of an honest person</p> <p>Low-context communication</p> <p>Trespassing leads to guilt and loss of self-respect</p> <p>Purpose of education is learning how to learn</p> <p>Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self-respect</p> <p>Individual interests prevail over collective interests</p> <p>Everyone has a right to privacy</p>

**Table 2-2.4 Examples of the key differences between collectivist and individualist societies (Hofstede, 1991)**

## **D.Masculinity vs. Femininity**

According to Hofstede, masculinity refers to the dominant values of achievement and success; femininity refers to caring for others and concern for the quality of life (1991). The duality of the sexes is a fundamental fact with

which most societies cope in different ways; at issue is whether the biological differences between the sexes should or should not have implications for their roles in social activities. The sex role distribution common in a particular society is reproduced by socialization in families, schools, peer groups and through the media. The dominant socialization pattern is for men to be more assertive, competitive, and confident; and for women to be more nurturing, caring, and sacrificing.

Masculine and feminine cultures also foster different types of heroes (Hofstede, 1991). In a masculine culture, the image of a hero is more assertive, decisive, and “aggressive” (Hofstede argued that only in masculine cultures does this word carry a positive connotation, 1991). Masculine heroes are usually lonely decision-makers looking for facts, and they believe that “it does not hurt if he is slightly macho (Hofstede, 1991).” The robot hero in the movie *Terminator 2* is a good example – he is a lone gunner, acts on his own will, and is extremely macho. On the other hand, the hero in a feminine cultures is less visible, more intuitive rather than decisive, and is accustomed to seeking consensus. The character Lee Mu-bai, in the movie *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, is a great example of a feminine hero. He embodies the qualities of modesty, politeness, and intuition. He does not make decisions all by himself, but consults his lover Shou-lien and the government officer Sir Te

on the issue of whether he should retire. More examples of the differences between masculine and feminine cultures are listed in Table 2-5.

Feminine Cultures	Masculine Cultures
Dominant values in society are caring for other and preservation	Dominant values in society are material success and progress
People and warm relationships are important	Money and things are important
Everybody is supposed to be modest	Men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious, and tough
Both men and women are allowed to be tender and to be concerned with relationships	Women are supposed to be tender and to take care of relationships
In the family, both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	In the family, fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings
Both boys and girls are allowed to cry but neither should fight	Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back when attacked, girls shouldn't fight
Sympathy for the weak	Sympathy for the strong
Welfare society ideal	Performance society ideal
The needy should be helped	The strong should be supported
Permissive society	Corrective society
Small and slow are beautiful	Big and fast are beautiful

**Table 2-2.5 Examples of the differences between feminine and masculine societies**

## **2.Cultural Values in Taiwan and the U.S.**

Since this thesis is motivated by the interest to investigate the cultural difference between the Taiwanese and the U.S. massive multiplayer online role-playing games, Hofstede's current data regarding cultural values helped generate the hypotheses of this research.

In a national cultural study, Hofstede compares data collected from a multinational corporation's offices in 72 countries, among which are Taiwan and the U.S. He ranks all the countries according to their statistical results of the above mentioned cultural value indexes. In the power distance dimension, the higher (with one being the highest) a country ranks, the higher its power distance. In the Individualism vs. collectivism and femininity vs. masculinity dimension, the higher a country ranks, the stronger its individualist and masculine tendencies; as the ranking declines, the indexes of collectivism and femininity grow. Finally, in the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, the higher a country ranks, the stronger its tendency to avoid uncertainty.

Hofstede's analysis shows that compared to the U.S., Taiwan has higher power distance, more collectivism, more femininity, and higher uncertainty avoidance. Detailed ranking data is in Table 2-6.

	Taiwan		USA	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Power Distance (with 1 being the highest in Power Distance)	29/30	58	38	40
Individualism vs. Collectivism (with 1 being highest in Individualism)	44	17	1	91
Femininity vs. Masculinity (with 1 being highest in Masculinity)	32/33	45	15	62
Uncertainty Avoidance (with 1 being highest in Uncertainty Avoidance)	26	69	43	46

**Table 2-2.6 A comparison of cultural dimensions between Taiwan and the U.S.  
(Summarized by Sean Lai)**

## **About Role-Playing Games**

Electronic games require a broad range of immersive activities, from pure eye-hand coordination to complex deductive and strategic practices. There are literally thousands of possible aspects for researchers to investigate.

I chose role-playing games as the target of my research for four reasons. First, role-playing games create deeper and stronger emotional impacts on players. Generally speaking, both the story line and plot in role-

playing games are far more complex than in any other genre of electronic games. Therefore, players must spend more time, and must put more heart and energy into playing the game. Second, researchers may more easily obtain important data through analyzing the storylines and plots of the games. Because role-playing games put greater emphasis on the storyline, these games are often produced with greater and more accurate details on the setting, history, geography, characters and sometimes even the philosophy of the game. Third, most themes of role-playing games are rooted in fantasy novels and cultural myths. As Joseph Campbell wrote that two of the myth's functions are their socialization and pedagogical functions (1991). Looking into the cultural values embedded in the games in the forms of myths or fantasies can help us find out what they are telling us to do and what they want us to think. Finally, the players of a role-playing game have a special connection with the characters in the game. The players literally *grow* along with the characters they choose to represent themselves in the process of completing quests, earning experience points, and gaining levels. The players tend to become highly identified with the feelings and the experience of their characters. These are the reasons why massive multiplayer online role-playing games are important.

## 1.The History of Role-Playing Games

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, *role-playing game* is a game in which “players assume the roles of characters and act out fantastical adventures, the outcomes of which are partially determined by chance, as by the roll of dice.” It is played not only on personal computers, but also with cards a board game at a table. In fact, computer role-playing games evolved from table role-playing games.

In the mid 1970s, programmer William Crowther had the idea that a game similar to Gary Gygax’s popular role-playing board game *Dungeons and Dragons* could be played on a computer (Crowther and Woods; 1976; Gygax 1974). In Gygax’s strategy board game, and its many descendants, a group of adventurers explore a two-dimensional fantasy world controlled, improvised, and sometimes created by a dungeon master. The players choose among the options laid out by the dungeon master and roll dice to settle the outcome of battles between opponents and the monsters controlled by the dungeon master (Aarseth, Espen J. 1997). Based on *Dungeons and Dragons*, William Crowther and Don Wood created *Adventure*, the first computer-based text role-playing game.

For this reason, the *Dungeons and Dragons* board game is often regarded as the predecessor to computerized role-playing games. At first, computer role-playing games inherited most of the features of table role-playing games, including the structure of the game, the procedures of playing the game, the ways the characters grow, and many other settings and formulas that guide the interactions between players (Wolf, M., 1997). At this stage, the computer role-playing game was simply the computerized version of the traditional card game.

Around 1980, Richard Garriott wrote *Akalabeth*, a small hack-and-slash role-playing game for the Apple II. It was the first graphic computer role-playing game in history. A game publisher saw one of the homemade games and hired Garriott to write *Ultima*, which was essentially *Akalabeth*'s dungeon subroutine with better surface graphics and a better plot. *Ultima* was a phenomenal success, and it spawned numerous sequels, such as *Trigon Dragon* (2000). The *Ultima* series became the most popular and classic game in the history of role-playing games.

Since *Ultima*, countless role-playing games have been developed on the personal computer platform, but they have never escaped the basic form inherited from *Dungeons and Dragons*.

## 2. Computer Based Role-Playing Games

Since most computer role-playing games today inherited the structure and traditions of table role-playing games, three common systems that are characteristic of the games have been identified. They are the character attribute system, the character leveling system, and the reward system.

The character attribute system is one of the most important and the defining feature of almost all computer role-playing games. In computer role-playing games, a character is usually a humanoid avatar controlled by a player. The character serves as an agent to carry out the player's will within the virtual world of the game. The player picks a root character from a selection of characters belonging to different races and professions. Each root character has its own inherent strengths and weaknesses concerning their different skills, which can be capitalized by the player. The player *creates* his/her own unique character by further assigning the desired *attributes*, or numerical values indicating the advantages and disadvantages of the character's skills, e.g., strength, intelligence, dexterity, charisma, etc. Depending on the race and profession a root character belongs to, its attribute combination starts with different initial values – a base assignment of each attribute. Some examples of the different races are the Barbarian, the Wood

Elf, the Ogre, and Human, etc. Examples of some professions are the Warrior, the Druid, the Wizard, and the Rogue. More concretely, a warrior usually has better strength and constitution and does not have a high intelligence attribute; and a wizard usually has more wisdom or intelligence, but not so much strength. The character's gender is usually open for choice, but it has no bearing on the internal game mechanics apart from making the character visually different (Yee, 2001).

The character leveling system is also a universal feature in all computer role-playing games. It provides positive feedback to the player, which makes most of the game routines easier to tackle as players continue to play and their characters *grow*. The term "grow" refers to the way the characters advance their levels by accumulating certain amount of *experience points*, which can be earned after combats or events. As characters move up the levels, the maximum value of the character attributes are raised, enabling them to kill more powerful enemies to obtain the opponents' money and belongings, an action termed as to *loot*. With more money in hand, the characters could buy better weapons and other resources so that they can kill even more powerful enemies and gain more experience points. The cycle continues. However, as characters become stronger, "attaining levels gets exponentially more difficult and takes an exponentially larger amount of time" (Yee, 2001). This character

leveling system is also “the underlying thrust of the computer role-playing games” (Yee, 2001).

The character leveling system cannot work without the rewarding system. This system rewards a player whenever he/she successfully accomplishes a quest or a combat. Besides the experience points, other rewards also support the character leveling system, including money, weapons, armor or other items. However, only experience points are rewarded each time. The more experience points the player accumulates, the easier it is to advance to higher levels. The experience points can also enable the player to obtain better fighting gear in order to win more battles.

### **3.Types of Computer Role-Playing Games**

In contrast with other genres of computer games, computer role-playing games put more emphasis on the player’s sense of involvement and their interaction with the game. In most other genres of computer games, the line between a player and the game is clear because usually the player is competing against the computer to gain a higher score and reach the next level of the game. In computer role-playing games, a game player virtually *becomes* a character of that game. Every single decision made by that

character has its consequences and may very well alter the development of the story and plot of that game (Yeh, 1997).

In general, a role-playing game can be seen as the journey of a hero. The goal of the journey is usually to kill the ultimate bad guy and fulfill the storyline. However, in order to increase the fun and the complexity of the game, game designers usually require players to complete many other *quests* before they finally fight with the ultimate bad guy (Chou, 1999). The sequencing of the quests is like a jigsaw puzzle; piece-by-piece they complete or reveal the whole picture of the story of the game.

A quest is a series of actions and events, which consists of three major parts: the initiation of the quest, the body of the quest, and the reward. Quests are pre-programmed in the game and are usually triggered when the player talks to computer controlled non-player characters. During the conversation, the non-player character may provide players with a context for the quest. For example, someone may need the player's help to slay a monster that is harming a villager's life or to investigate some spy activities. The quest could also be an easy task, such as delivering a letter to someone in another village.

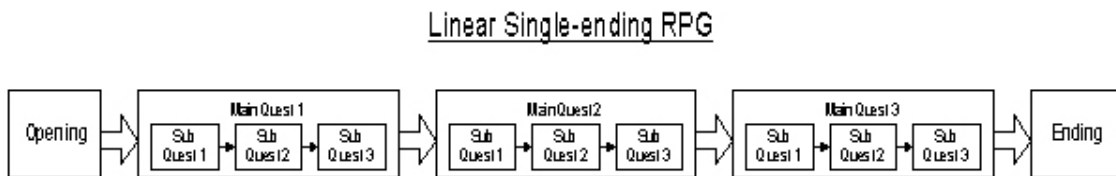
In some cases, there can also be *sub-quests* to a quest. For example, a player might be asked by character A to collect a particular item from

character B and then return it to character A. However, before handing over that particular item, character B asks the player to complete a sub-quest, by killing some evil monster roaming in the village. Only after the player kills the monster can he obtain the item from character B. The player then returns it to character A, who gives the reward to the player. This entire process is called the *quest body*. The original goal of the quest is called the *main quest*, whose completion is contingent upon the accomplishment of the *sub-quest*. A quest with only one step is called a *task*.

There can be multiple endings to a computer role-playing game. Moreover, each ending may require different ways to fulfill. Based on the patterns in which role-playing games develop their plots and corresponding endings, Jung Chou identifies four types of role-playing games (1999). The four categories are: linear single-ending, linear multiple-endings, nonlinear single-ending, and nonlinear multiple-endings.

A linear single-ending role-playing game has only one ending and only one path to complete the game. As Figure 2-1 indicates, the storyline in this kind of game is linear, without branch stories, and cannot be altered by the players' decisions. Players must complete the quest one by one, following a fixed sequence in order to finish the game. Because this kind of game is less complex and easier to design, most computer role-playing games belong to

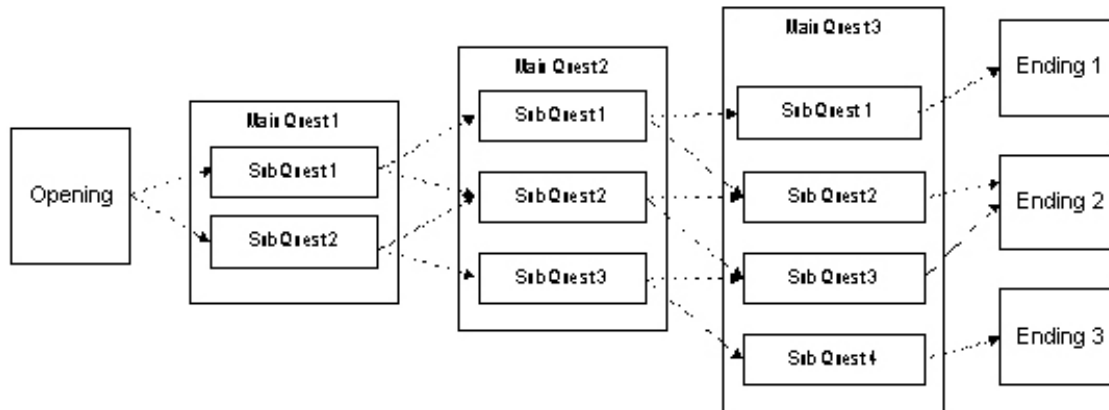
this sub-category, such as the popular Japanese computer game: *Final Fantasy* series (developed by Square Soft), and the traditional *Dungeon and Dragon* series (developed by AD&D).



**Figure 2-1 Linear Single-ending Role-playing Game (Chou, 1999)**

The second type – linear multiple-ending role-playing game, is more complex than the previous one. In this type of role-playing game, players have to face lots of choices, each of which leads to a different direction of the story and finally to different endings. The *Fallout* (Interplay, 1997) is a good example. As Figure 2-2 indicates, there are three different endings in the game and each can be reached through multiple choices of paths. In this example, there can be  $2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 3 = 72$  ways to reach the end of the game. However, as the choices of players multiply, the difficulty and complexity of completing this kind of game also multiplies, since it is really hard to manage so many transitions and possibilities and still maintain good quality of every possible path of the story.

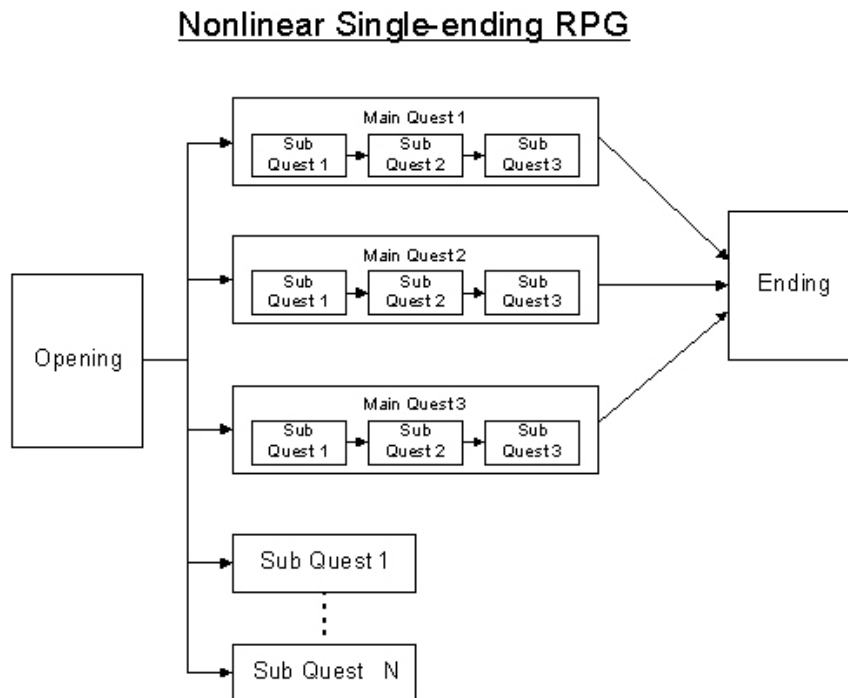
## Linear Multiple-ending RPG



**Figure 2-2 Linear Multiple-ending Role-playing Game (Chou, 1999)**

The third type is the nonlinear single-ending RPG. This type is very common in today's game market. It has only one ending but with more than one choices of paths to reach it. Different paths are constructed for different quests and do not have to be completed in an orderly sequence. In other words, players can randomly choose the quest to complete and still reach the end of the game, as long as all necessary quests are being completed. For example, as Figure 2-3 indicates, a player can start from main quest two then come back to finish main quest one and then other quests. Whatever this player's choice is, he/she will eventually reach the single ending of this game. Due to its openness in structure, "players can actually have their own journey

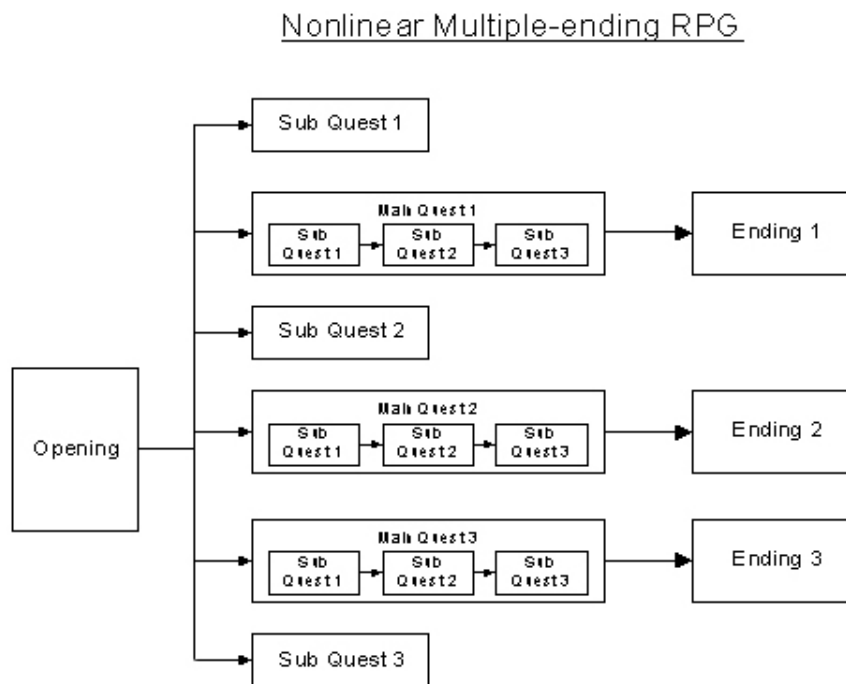
of the adventure and create their own story” (Chou, 1999). The famous *Ultima* (Origin) series is one good example of this type of role-playing game.



**Figure 2-3 Nonlinear Single-ending Role-playing Game (Chou, 1999)**

The last type is the nonlinear multiple-ending role-playing game, as illustrated in Figure 2-4. It is also the least common one in today’s game market, because it is not only much more complex for game developers to design, but also harder for players to master the game (Chou, 1999). Games of this type do not have a fixed storyline or plot. Although it may have a

general description of the background story of the game, the detail of the adventure is left for players to decide. This type of game can even have multiple start points depending on the players' choice and they all lead to different endings. The *Wizard* series (Sirtech) and today's massive multi-player online role-playing games usually belongs to this category.



**Figure 2-4 Nonlinear Multiple-ending RPG (Chou, 1999)**

## 4. Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

The massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) is a relatively new sub-genre of the computer role-playing game. It became increasingly popular after the wide adoption of the broadband Internet, which is able to transfer more multimedia data than traditional dialup connections. In today's typical MMORPG, thousands of players log on to the same game world at the same time over the Internet. With the infinite possibility of the interaction between real people, it creates an incredibly rich and active environment in which interesting things are constantly taking place.

Today's MMORPGs are simplified versions of the nonlinear multiple-ending game. Multi-layered quests and overlapping goals exist throughout the game. In fact, as the name of a popular game – *EverQuest* – suggests, this type of game can literally last for ever. In MMORPGs, there is no clear-cut ending of the game. Instead, the game is composed of numerous quests and tasks. The quests in MMORPGs are usually much shorter than the stand-alone versions of computer role-playing games, because the former requires Internet connections, which are charged separately and are usually measured by time. By constantly updating new quests in the game, MMORPGs can

provide thousands of hours of game play, with a nearly infinite variety of goals to achieve, across a vast virtual world covering miles of land and sea.

Two kinds of MMORPGs can be found in today's game market. One is the semi-closed game, and the other is the pure-open game. The former is represented by such games as *Neverwinter Nights* (BioWare Corp.); and the latter is represented by *The Dark Age of Camelot* (Mythic Entertainment). The semi-closed game is essentially the computerized version of the traditional *Dungeons and Dragons* card role-playing game. Similar to its paper counterparts, the classic semi-closed game requires: 1) a player to act as the Dungeon Master, who controls the development of the story, and 2) the number of players can not exceed a maximum set by the game companies. In the case of *Neverwinter Nights*, the programming allows a maximum of 64 players to participate in a game at any given time. On the other hand, the pure-open game allows an almost unlimited number of players to participate in a game at the same time. The duties of a Dungeon Master are fulfilled by the game manufacturer. Because of its simplicity and less stringent requirements, pure-open MMORPGs are dominant in today's game market.

## **CHAPTER 3PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to compare the archetypes and quests in MMORPGs from Taiwan and the United States to see how they reflect the social structures and cultural values of their countries of origin.

### **Research Questions**

How do MMORPGs combine mythic archetypes with socialized goals of game play in the virtual world? What roles do the cultural values in the real world play in the virtual world games?

### **Hypotheses**

1. According to Carl Jung, archetypes and the collective unconscious are universal among all cultures. Therefore, similar archetype systems are likely to exist in games even from countries with different cultures. In particular:
  - a. Games from different cultures would likely use similar ideas to develop their archetypes.

- b. Similar sets of root archetypes would likely exist in games from different cultures.
2. The basic concept behind the development of MMORPGs is to create virtual worlds where players can interact and collaborate with each other. These players are real people living in the real world. In order to make the virtual worlds captivating to the players, the social power structures in the real world would likely be replicated in the virtual game worlds.
  3. MMORPGs developed in different countries will demonstrate a similar pattern of reflecting the dominant cultural values in their societies of origin. In particular:
    - a. In the Taiwanese game, the following tendencies will exist:
      - i. Higher power distance
      - ii. Higher uncertainty avoidance
      - iii. More collectivism
      - iv. More femininity
    - b. In the American game, the following tendencies will exist:

- i. Lower power distance
- ii. Lower uncertainty avoidance
- iii. More individualism
- iv. More masculinity

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodologies employed in this research and my philosophies in selecting research samples, determining the scope and direction of both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and outlining the structures of analytical tools. First, I will give a brief background on the two computer games that are my subjects of research: *Shen-Chou* (EWorld Soft) and *The Dark Age of Camelot*. I will explain why the genre of MMORPG, to which the games in question belong, is more suitable for the purpose of this research than other genres of computer games. Then, I will break the research down into two main discussions: the archetype analysis and quest analysis. In the third section of this chapter I will explain the protocols for conducting the analyses and define the analyzing units, sampling methods, and the basis of each cultural category against which the games are measured.

## **Sample Selection**

This research examines two MMORPGs games produced by two different companies based in countries with divergent cultural values. The first game, *The Dark Age of Camelot* (shortened as *Dark Age* below), is produced by an American company: Mythic Entertainment. The other game, *Shen-Chou* (meaning “The Land of Gods”) is manufactured by a Taiwanese company: EWorld Soft.

*Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* became my games of choice based on the following standards. (1) Both games belong to the same sub-genre within the MMORPG genre; (2) both games were given high scores for their overall quality of production by popular game review sites in both countries.

### **1. Genre of Game**

*Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are comparable research targets because they both belong to the pure-open subcategory within the MMORPG genre as specified in chapter 2.

## 2. Quality of Production

This research used the scores given by the game review sites in both countries to determine the quality of production. The American site determined as the standard was Gamespot.com ([www.gamespot.com](http://www.gamespot.com)), and the Taiwanese site was Players.com.tw ([www.player.com.tw](http://www.player.com.tw)). As of December 2002, in the pure-open MMORPG category as stated above, both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* were among the top three highest rated games in the category.

Both the Taiwanese and American sites have adopted a similar five-category rating system for reviewing the games. The five categories comprise of graphics, sound, gameplay, value and the reviewer's tilt. These categories are defined below:

**Graphics:** the technical use of graphics, as well as the aesthetic quality of a game's appearance and presentation.

**Sound:** the quality and use of sound effects and music in the game.

**Gameplay:** everything from the game's interface to its control and how well balanced it is. Basically, how well a game plays and how enjoyable it is for the player.

**Value:** reflects the game's longevity, i.e., how long you will be able to play and enjoy the game and also how much replay value you will get out of it. The retail price of a game can also figure into the value score. Games with a low gameplay often have lower value scores. On the other hand, a game can have great gameplay (and rate a high gameplay score) but have a very brief shelf life (and rate a low value score).

**Reviewer's Tilt:** This score basically lets a reviewer sway the final score higher or lower, based on the reviewer's experience with a game. For example, a game might have well defined graphics but very low gameplay. It receives a low tilt score to keep the overall score low, because the game ultimately is not fun. On the other hand, a game might have poor graphics and sound but have a very good story, so it might get a high tilt to boost the overall score a bit.

Using such a rating system, *Dark Age* was rated 8.2 and ranked the seventh highest in the entire role-playing game category. However, if we look only at the pure-open MMORPG sub-category, it became the second highest, only slightly behind the *Ascheron's Call II: Fallen Kings* (8.3), produced by Microsoft, Inc.

*Shen-Chou* was rated 8.4 by Player.com.tw, and was ranked tenth in the role-playing game category as of December 2002. The ranking also included many English games that are available to players in Taiwan. However, since my purpose was to compare the games from different cultures, I only looked at games produced by Taiwanese companies and within pure-open sub-category. In that case, *Shen-Chou* became the second highest in the category.

Based on the two reasons above, I decided to use *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* as the subjects for this research.

## **Research Structure**

Two different subjects of analyses were studied in this research: the archetype and the quest. There are in general three major stages that most players go through when playing MMORPG: the character design stage, the role-playing stage, and the player versus player stage. Research on the character design stage will reveal the structure of avatar archetypes, and a study of the role-playing stage will reveal the underlying cultural values embedded in the quests completed by the players through conducting role-playing. By contrast, the player versus player stage does not offer insight into

the representation or the influence of cultural values within MMORPGs. Hence, it will not be included as part of the analysis.

Based on my research questions, the independent variable in this research is the game's country of origin; the dependant variable is the presentation of archetypes and the cultural values in the quest designs. Their relationship is shown in Figure 4-1.

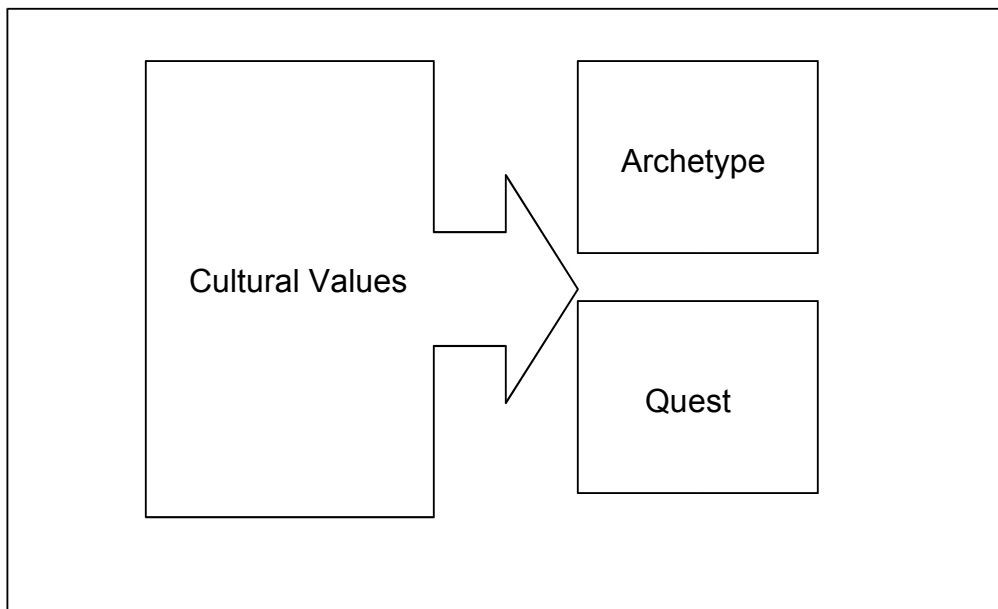


Figure 4-1 Structure of this research

### **Archetype Analysis**

The target for the first stage of this research is the representation of archetypal images in the avatars within MMORPGs. Unlike most other

computer and video game genres, MMORPGs provide diverse avatar archetypes from which players may choose according to their own liking. For example, players may change the avatar's outfit or their physical attributes. The personalized nature of these avatars enhances the experience of role-playing. This feature of the MMORPG hints at the possible representation of the basic archetype groups that exist within a society.

That said, in this stage of the research I will examine the archetypes presented in both the Taiwanese and American games to determine the archetypes to which each avatar belongs. I will also determine the initial values of player attributes that are preset by the game developers, including strength, dexterity, energy, intelligence, etc.

However, sub-archetypes, such as those formed when the players reconfigure the values of an archetype's attributes when designing a character, will not be considered, because such adjustments are usually insufficient to alter the category to which the archetype belongs. In the role-playing stage of the game, players may be given freedom to customize the attributes of an avatar as desired. The space granted for the customization is too small to override the preset archetypal characteristics of the avatars. Therefore, in each MMORPG, only certain types of predetermined archetypes are allowed to exist.

The mutual overlap between various archetypes can produce endless numbers of archetypes (Jung, 1968a), thus I decided to only look at them in their simplest forms, reduced to the most basic forms of archetypes in both games.

## **Cultural Values Coding System**

The second part of the research involves the analysis of the quests that players encounter in the role-playing stage of MMORPGs. The base data was collected through analyzing the quests in *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age*. Both games are among the top three rated games and enjoy the highest data request rate in their respective countries.

### **1. Unit of Analysis**

The basic unit in the quest analysis is each individual quest or task that is available to players in the games. However, due to time and resource limitations, this research did not look into the alternative endings of the quests. The survey will code basic information of each quest, including the types of the quest behavior and the types of the rewards.

## **2.Cultural Dimensions**

The cultural value dimensions adopted as the dependent variables in this research are adopted from the four cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede's four dimensions – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individuality vs. collectivity, and masculinity vs. femininity – are widely used in many studies of culture because the theory summarizes various aspects of the cultural values discussed in existing literatures. This research adopts Hofstede's (1986) model to facilitate the process of data encoding.

## **3.Quest Coding System**

The Quest Coding System employed for this research was developed using Microsoft Access 2002, and was designed to measure each quest's (1) behavior types, (2) targets of behavior, (3) cultural value indexes, and (4) types of rewards. The contents of the quests collected from *Shen-Chou* were collected from the *Official Shen-Chou Strategy Book* published by EWorld Soft (2003). The contents of the quests of *Dark Age* were collected from the website [www.camelotlore.com](http://www.camelotlore.com), which is a clearinghouse where players submit game information. The cultural value indexes are measured based on the descriptions of the quest procedures, as well as the dialogues between the

characters in the quest. These descriptions and dialogues are published in the strategy book and on the website. For the purpose of this research, 133 quests from *Shen-Chou*, and 146 quests from *Dark Age* were encoded into the Quest Coding System.

#### **4.Descriptive Information**

I would like to use a sample quest to clarify the operation of the coding system. For example, a particular quest in *Shen-Chou* may be triggered only by the sword master. This sword master, as played by the gamer, must kill a bandit. Once the bandit is dead and the quest completed, the player is rewarded with a sword and a ring. In my quest coding system, the *profession* of this particular quest is: "sword master." Since there is no sub-quest in this quest, the *behavior type* of the main quest is clearly "to kill." The *target* of the behavior, i.e., the sword master's target, is "bandit." The sword master receives weapons and other items as rewards for the behavior; therefore, the coding under *rewards-weapons* and *rewards-items* is entered as "true."

#### **5.Attribute Definitions**

Since attributes are important factors for the archetype analysis in this research, it is necessary to clarify the definitions of each attribute in both

games. Both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* adopt a character attribute system to describe the characteristics of each avatar. Seven attributes are used in *Shen-Chou*: constitution, strength, intelligence, dexterity, life, energy, and payload. Nine attributes are used in *Dark Age*: strength, constitution, dexterity, quickness, intelligence, empathy, charisma, and piety. A comparison of the attributes is listed in Table 4-1.

Game Name	Shen-Chou	The Dark Age of Camelot
Similar Attributes	Constitution	Constitution
	Strength	Strength
	Intelligence	Intelligence
	Dexterity	Dexterity
Different Attributes	Life	Quickness
	Energy	Empathy
	Payload	Charisma
	Reputation*	Piety
	Sin*	
Total	9 attributes	8 attributes

**Table 4-4.1 Attribute comparison \*Reputation and Sin do not have initial values and are the rewarding system**

As shown in Table 4-1, the games have both similar and dissimilar attributes. The attributes shared by both games are constitution, strength, intelligence and dexterity. *Shen-Chou* takes into account five other attributes: life, energy, payload, reputation and sin, in which reputation and sin do not

have initial values and are presented as part of the rewarding mechanism. *Dark Age* takes into consideration four additional attributes: quickness, empathy, charisma, and piety, in which the initial values of charisma and piety are the same across all the races.

While race is not a distinct factor among the avatars in *Shen-Chou*, each avatar has a specific profession, such as warrior, monk, sword master, etc. Attributes that outline specific professional abilities and physical prowess characterize the expertise of each profession.

### **A.Attributes in *Shen-Chou***

There are a total of nine attributes in *Shen-Chou*. Three are professional attributes including life, energy, and payload, and four are physical attributes including constitution, strength, intelligence, and dexterity. The life attribute determines the maximum hit points a character can endure, and it decreases according to the damage made by enemies during combats; the character will die if the life value reaches 0. The energy attribute is equivalent to mana; the value of this attribute determines how many magical spells a character can cast. The payload attribute affects the number and weight of weapons and items a character can equip or carry.

The values of the three professional attributes described above are influenced by the four physical attributes. The physical attributes include constitution, strength, intelligence and The strength attribution determines the maximum damage a character can cause on his enemies during combats; the constitution attribute determines the overall body build of a character; the intelligence attribute determines the number of magical spells a character can learn and the successful rate of casting those spells; and the dexterity attribute determines how fast a character can strike an opponent as well as evade the attack of the enemies.

The sin and reputation attributes do not have initial values and will change as a result of the players' behaviors after they have begun playing the game. In other words, these two attributes do not affect the characteristics of a character and therefore will not be included in the attributes analysis. The sin attribute only increases when a player deliberately kills other players in the game. The act of murder is not encouraged in the game unless it happens in a special arena where the player versus player mode is allowed. The reputation points are given as a reward when players complete certain quests in the game. This attribute can be either positive or negative depending on the nature of the quest completed.

## **B.Attributes in *The Dark Age of Camelot***

There are a total of eight attributes in *Dark Age*, including strength, constitution, dexterity, quickness, intelligence, empathy, piety, and charisma. Following are their definitions.

The strength attribute determines a character's capabilities to destroy or damage an enemy's certain weapons used for either crushing or slashing. The constitution attribute determines the maximum hit points a character can endure; the higher the attribute, the more difficult it is for an enemy to kill you. The dexterity attribute affects archery abilities as well as one's capability to destroy an enemy's weapon that is used for thrusting. The quickness attribute determines the speed for a character to attack and evade an enemy. The intelligence attribute does not refer to rational powers as is defined in the word's normal sense; in fact, it is associated with the irrational, magical powers in the context of gaming, and determines the maximum points for a character to cast certain magical spells. Similarly, the empathy attribute determines the maximum points for a character, usually a naturalist, to cast their magical spells. The same goes for the piety attributes, which determines the maximum points for a character, usually a priest or a cleric, to cast certain magical spells.

## 6.Operational Definitions

In this research, the categories are constructed based on current literatures regarding the differences between the presentation of cultural values in Eastern and Western communication activities, as outlined in Hofstede's studies. The actual categories were established after two steps: 1) they were first constructed based on the sample quests, and 2) modified according to the results of the preliminary scorings of the protocols.

Below are the categories of analysis and their operational definitions:

This study divides the cultural values detected in MMORPGs into six major cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, collectivism, masculinity, and femininity. Each dimension has its own measuring indexes.

1. **Power Distance:** This dimension involves the relationships in human society that represent unequal social balances between two parties. Such inequalities can occur in areas such as authority, traditions and prestige.
  - a. **Authority:** This index refers to the values manifested in a quest, which involve the player being assigned to

complete his/her mission by a weapons or skills specialist, by people with experience, or by the head of a labor union or a trade union. Besides reporting directly to these authoritative figures, players may also be assigned quests that involve information, data, or related items gleaned from the people or institutions mentioned above. This increases the credibility of a particular quest.

- b. Traditions: The values in this index emphasize the importance of history or past experience to the purpose of the quest. Such values include honoring tradition, encouraging conservative ideologies, and calling upon legends, knowledge or experience passed down in the society. A quest will fall in the traditions index if it attempts to explain the history or the myth of an event or situation in the game, or if it uses such non-player character as a wise-old man, to tell the story. The keywords associated with this index are legend, history, and story.
- c. Prestige: This index refers to a quest that involves items or events that bring prestigious social status to the player's avatar. In other words, the items or the events make the

player's avatar famous or special in other players' eyes.

The key word is famous.

2. **Uncertainty Avoidance:** This dimension involves a quest that attempts to diminish the uncertainty of the player's avatar with regards to the future through the domains of technology, law, and religion. It might also take the form of skills, rules, and rituals.
  - a. **Rituals/Religions:** This index involves a quest that incorporates the elements of any true or fictional religions and their rituals. The quest can be assigned to the player's avatar for religious purposes or for helping others conduct religious rituals.
  - b. **Skills/Technology:** In a quest that involves values of this index, the player's avatar either gains certain skills or learns some kind of technology through completing the quest, or must acquire skills or technology in order to complete the quest.
  - c. **Rules/Laws:** In a quest that values rules and laws, it is stipulated that there are only certain acceptable ways to

complete the quest; also, there is only one ending to this quest.

3. **Individualism:** The values in this dimension emphasize personal values either implicitly or explicitly. Examples include quests that encourage the player's avatar to exhibit charisma, quests that praise the value of independence, or quests that reward deviant behaviors.
  - a. Personal benefits: The motivation for a quest is, at least partly, the benefit of the player's avatar. A player may be motivated to find the right medicine to heal a wound, or secure some material in exchange for service from a non-player character. For example, a typical command given by a non-player character may involve something like this: "Go find a nice piece of wolf skin so I can make a pair of boots for you."
  - b. Uniqueness: The quest emphasizes that the player's avatar is different from other characters, or that the item the player needs to obtain is rare in the game. Obtaining such items will increase the avatar's ability to attack,

defend, or carry out other actions. The key word in these quests is unique.

4. **Collectivism:** The values in this dimension emphasizes or involves the significance or social implications of a group, such as one's reputation, reciprocal actions, trends, or interpersonal relationships.
  - a. Group benefits: The values manifested in a quest emphasize the relationships between an individual and others. An individual is described as an integral part of a larger group. Completion of the quest by the player's avatar fulfills such values.
  - b. Group loss: If, after the player completes the quest, the results of the avatar's actions are against the values honored by the index of "Group Benefits," then it is considered to be a group loss.
  - c. Family benefits: Included here are the relations of marriages, siblings, and filial piety. Individuals are described as members of a family.

- d. Family loss: If, after the player completes the quest, the results of the avatar's actions are against the values honored by the index of "Family Benefits," then it is considered to be a group loss.
  - e. Conformity: A quest falls under this index when it involves a prevalent concept or idea commonly accepted by the majority of the society. The quest usually underscores a fashionable idea, a trend, or a popular activity in that society.
5. **Masculinity:** A quest that highlights masculinity emphasizes masculine values such as resoluteness, decisiveness, firmness, aggressiveness, the willingness to accept challenges, the urge for self-realization, strength, energy, etc.
- a. Aggressiveness: Some quests call for aggressive actions, such as slaughtering enemies, the use of force, or threatening other people to achieve one's goal.
  - b. Competitiveness: The process of completing a quest involves competition, both in the sense of competing with other players and in the sense of competing with another group of people.

- c. Machismo: Values reinforcing that men should be strong or complimenting on the physical strength of a character.
6. **Femininity:** The values in a quest involve the emotions, or emphasizes the harmony between human beings and their environment.
- a. Nourishment: The activities in a quest underscore the need to help and tend to the weak, the disabled, the old, or the young.
  - b. Nature: The activities in a quest emphasize the harmony between human beings and nature.
  - c. Rejuvenation: the activities in a quest bring energy to and revive the player's avatar, or show adoration for the young.

## **7.Cultural Value Indexes of the Quests**

There are a total of 36 different cultural value indexes in the quest coding system; they measure the cultural values presented in each quest. Each cultural value index belongs to one of the six major cultural dimensions

discussed previously: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, individualism, masculinity and femininity. I created the indexes and modified each according to the results of the pretests to ensure that no cultural values were excluded from the coding system. The cultural values were encoded by a single coder on a true (1) or false (0) basis, where “true” indicates that a value is present in the quest, and “false” indicates that a value is not present in the quest.

To account for inter-observer reliability, a second coder scored a random selection of 30 quests, or 10% of all quests. The inter-observer reliability calculated for each of the four cultural dimensions in the coding system is two times the number of the agreements divided by the total number of scores for coder 1 and coder 2. The inter-observer reliability is as follows: power distance is 100%; uncertainty avoidance is 94.5%, collectivism is 90%, individualism is 83%, masculinity is 100%, and femininity is 89%.

# CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

This research comprises of a total of 13 races, 18 professions, and 276 quests collected from the two games. There are three sections in this chapter. The first section is the result of the archetypes. The second section is the results of the quests. The third section is the conclusion.

## **Archetype**

### **1. Basic Information**

In *Shen-Chou*, there is one race and five professions available. In *Dark Age*, the game world is divided into three realms with five races and four or five professions available in each of the realms, making a total of fifteen races and thirteen professions available in the game. Detailed information is in Table 5-1.

Game Name	Race	Profession
Shen-Chou	Han (Human)	Warrior Sword Master Taoist Monk Trickster
Dark Age of Camelot	Realm of Albion Briton Highlander Avalonion Saracen Inconnu	Acolyte Elementalist Fighter Mage Rogue
	Realm of Hibernia Celt Lurikeen Firbolg Elf Sylvan	Mystic Magician Naturalist Stalker
	Realm of Midgard Kobold Dwarf Norse Troll Valkyn	Mystic Seer Viking Rogue

**Table 5-5.1 Overall racial and profession information of the two games**

## 2.Race

The racial distributions among the avatars of *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are quite different. While *Shen-Chou* offers only one race – the Han – *Dark Age* offers fifteen races of avatars from which the game player may choose.

Among the fifteen races represented by the avatars in *Dark Age*, there are six (39%) human races and nine (61%) non-human races. Among the six human races, five (83.3%) of them are white, whereas only one (16.6%) of them is non-white. The Caucasian image of the avatars not only prevails among the human races, but also exists among the non-human races. Among the nine non-human races, two (22.2%) of them, the Elf and the Dwarf, bear similarities to the human form. The avatars that belong to these races all have white skin color. The remaining seven (77.8%) non-human races do not look like humans at all and will not be analyzed on racial representation.

To sum up the racial distribution of all avatars in *Dark Age*, seven (46%) of all races, including both human and non-human, resemble the white race. Among the remaining races whose skin tones are non-white, only one (6%) is human and seven (48%) are non-human creatures. Detailed statistics are listed in Table 5-2.

	Human	Non-Human
White	Briton, Avalonian, Highlander, Celt, Norse	Elf, Dwarf
Number	5	2
% in Human/Non-Human	83.3	22.2
% in All	33	13
Non-White	Saracen	Inconnu, Lurikeen, Firbolg, Sylvan, Kobold, Troll, Valkyn
Number	1	7
% in Human/Non-Human	16.6	77.8
% in All	6	48
Total	6	9
% in All	39	61

**Table 5-5.2 Racial distribution in *The Dark Age of Camelot***

### **3.Attribute System**

Among the seven different attributes in *Shen-Chou*, the professional ability attributes include constitution, strength, dexterity and intelligence. The physical ability attributes include life, energy and payload. Detailed information on the attribute values of the avatars is listed in Tables 5-3 and 5-4.

	Warrior		Sword Master		Taoist		Monk		Trickster	
	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%
Constitution	10	33%	8	27%	7	23%	8	27%	8	27%
Strength	10	33%	8	27%	5	17%	8	27%	6	20%
Intelligence	5	17%	7	23%	10	33%	9	30%	8	27%
Dexterity	5	17%	7	23%	8	27%	5	17%	8	27%
Total	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%

**Table 5-5.3 Initial profession attribute values of *Shen-Chou***

	Warrior		Sword Master		Taoist		Monk		Trickster	
	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%	Points	%
Life	146	65%	121	55%	76	35%	91	41%	106	48%
Energy	22	10%	41	18%	90	40%	77	34%	59	27%
Payload	58	25%	56	27%	54	25%	56	25%	55	25%
Total	226	100%	218	100%	220	100%	224	100%	220	100%

**Table 5-5.4 Initial physical attribute values of *Shen-Chou***

<b>Dark Age Basic Race Abilities</b>	<b>Total</b>		480	480	480	480		480	480	480	480		480	480	480	480
	<b>Empathy</b>		60	60	60	60		60	60	70	60		60	60	60	60
	<b>Piety</b>		60	60	60	60		60	60	60	60		60	60	60	60
	<b>Charisma</b>		60	60	60	60		60	60	60	60		60	60	60	60
	<b>Quickness</b>		60	50	70	60		60	80	40	75		50	70	35	50
	<b>Dexterity</b>		60	50	60	80		60	80	40	75		50	70	35	50
	<b>Intelligence</b>		60	60	80	60		60	60	60	70		60	60	60	60
	<b>Strength</b>		60	70	45	50		60	40	90	40		70	50	100	60
	<b>Constitution</b>		60	70	45	50		60	40	60	40		70	50	70	80
<b>Attributes Race</b>	<b>Ream of Albi on</b>	<b>Brit on</b>	<b>Hig hlan der</b>	<b>Ava loni an</b>	<b>Sar ason</b>	<b>Rea m of Hib erni a</b>	<b>Celt</b>	<b>Luri kee n</b>	<b>Firb org</b>	<b>Elf</b>	<b>Rea Im of Mid gar</b>	<b>Nor s</b>	<b>Ko bo</b>	<b>Trol l</b>	<b>Dw arf</b>	

Table 5-5.5 Initial racial attribute values of *The Dark Age of Camelot*

Unlike *Shen-Chou*, which puts emphasis on the different attributes reflected by avatars of different professions, *Dark Age* assigns different attributes according to the different races represented by each avatar. The initial values of each race are detailed in Table 5-5.

In *Dark Age*, several realms exist simultaneously and are independent of each other. According to this table, we can find that in two of the realms exist two races with all the same attributes; they are the Briton of the Albion and the Celt of the Hibernia. Other races usually have two attributes noticeably higher than the other attributes and two attributes lower than the other attributes. Detailed relationships between the attributes are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.Archetype Systems**

Our first hypothesis was that there would be a similar structure of archetype systems in the Taiwanese and American MMORPGs. Because there were numerous attributes in both games, I created a typology of the attributes based on their theoretical characteristics, including physical attributes, magical attributes, and dexterity attributes. Then, a correlational test was performed to assess the relationships between the individual attributes.

## A. Archetype System in *Shen-Chou*

In *Shen-Chou*, among eight different attributes, three major groups were revealed in the Pearson's r correlation matrix (Table 5-6). The first group includes constitution, strength, life, and payload. The second group includes intelligence and energy. The third group includes only dexterity.

Correlations

		Constitution	Strength	Intelligence	Dexterity	Life	Energy	Payload
Constitution	Pearson Correlation	1	.910*	-.888*	-.683	.902*	-.859	.946*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.032	.044	.204	.036	.062	.015
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Strength	Pearson Correlation	.910*	1	-.835	-.865	.845	-.810	.992*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.	.078	.058	.071	.096	.001
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	-.888*	-.835	1	.470	-.998*	.996*	-.877
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.078	.	.424	.000	.000	.051
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Dexterity	Pearson Correlation	-.683	-.865	.470	1	-.478	.421	-.831
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.204	.058	.424	.	.416	.480	.082
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Life	Pearson Correlation	.902*	.845	-.998*	-.478	1	-.996*	.884*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.071	.000	.416	.	.000	.046
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Energy	Pearson Correlation	-.859	-.810	.996*	.421	-.996*	1	-.849
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.062	.096	.000	.480	.000	.	.069
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Payload	Pearson Correlation	.946*	.992*	-.877	-.831	.884*	-.849	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.001	.051	.082	.046	.069	.
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5-5.6 Attribute correlation in *Shen-Chou***

In the first group, there is a high positive correlation between constitution and strength (.910), life (.902), and payload (.946). Constitution

also has high negative correlations with Intelligence (-.888), and there is a trend for a negative correlation with mental energy (-.849). In the second group, there is high positive correlation between intelligence and energy (.996), and they both tend to have significant negative correlations with the first group. Dexterity is the only attribute left for the third group; it tends to have a negative correlation with strength and payload and is unrelated to attributes in the second group.

Because all attributes in the first group are all related to physical strength, they are put under physical attributes category. The attributes in the second group are all related to the ability of casting magic or supernatural power. They are placed under the category of magical attributes. The third category will be named according to its only member, the dexterity attribute category. Table 5-7 illustrates the three categories.

Physical attributes	Magical attributes	Dexterity attributes
Constitution	Intelligence	Dexterity
Strength	Energy	
Life		
Payload		

**Table 5-5.7 Three groups of attributes in *Shen-Chou***

## **B.Archetype System in *The Dark Age of Camelot***

The Pearson's  $r$  correlation test shows that there are three loosely categorized groups among the attributes in *Dark Age*, as shown in Table 5-8. The first group includes strength and constitution; the second group includes quickness and dexterity; and the third group includes intelligence, empathy, piety, and charisma. Because the initial values of piety and charisma were constant values (60), they do not change with any other attributes hence have no correlation with other attributes.

According to the correlation test, strength and constitution can be put in one group, because there is a high positive correlation relationship between them (.662). Also, they both have a high negative correlation relationship with dexterity and quickness. Empathy tends to be positively related to strength, but not to constitution, a finding that may be linked to strong heroic characters being empathic to others and defending them. Dexterity and quickness can be put in one group, because they both have a high positive correlation (.802) relationship with each other, and a high negative correlation with strength and constitution. Intelligence shows a relatively weak correlation with all other attributes in this table.

Correlations

		Strength	Constitution	Dexterity	Quickness	Intelligence	Charisma	Empathy	Piety
Strength	Pearson Correlation	1	.662 <sup>**</sup>	-.906 <sup>**</sup>	-.833 <sup>**</sup>	-.359	. <sup>a</sup>	.472	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007	.000	.000	.189	.	.076	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Constitution	Pearson Correlation	.662 <sup>**</sup>	1	-.748 <sup>**</sup>	-.820 <sup>**</sup>	-.351	. <sup>a</sup>	.061	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.	.001	.000	.199	.	.829	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Dexterity	Pearson Correlation	-.906 <sup>**</sup>	-.748 <sup>**</sup>	1	.802 <sup>**</sup>	.170	. <sup>a</sup>	-.406	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.	.000	.545	.	.133	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Quickness	Pearson Correlation	-.833 <sup>**</sup>	-.820 <sup>**</sup>	.802 <sup>**</sup>	1	.169	. <sup>a</sup>	-.363	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.548	.	.184	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	-.359	-.351	.170	.169	1	. <sup>a</sup>	-.149	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.189	.199	.545	.548	.	.	.595	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Charisma	Pearson Correlation	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.472	.061	-.406	-.363	-.149	. <sup>a</sup>	1	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076	.829	.133	.184	.595	.	.	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Piety	Pearson Correlation	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>	. <sup>a</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

<sup>a</sup> Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

**Table 5-5.8 Attribute correlation in *The Dark Age of Camelot***

Based on the same typology with the attributes in *Shen-Chou*, the physical attributes include constitution and strength and to a lesser extent, empathy. The dexterity group includes dexterity and quickness. The remaining attribute is intelligence. According to the definitions put forth in the methodology chapter, intelligence, piety, and charisma are used to determine a character's ability to cast supernatural powers. Each of these different attributes is used by a different profession. For example, "intelligence" can only be used by sorcerers, "piety" is by priests and clerics, and "charisma" is by

minstrels or bards. By virtue of their theoretical characteristics, they are by definition categorized together as “magical attributes” (Table 5-9), although they are not statistically correlated with each other.

Physical attributes	Intelligence attributes	Piety attributes	Charisma attributes	Dexterity attributes
Constitution Strength Empathy	Intelligence	Piety	Charisma	Dexterity Quickness

**Table 5-5.9 Categories of the attributes in *Dark Age* (magical attributes are not correlated with each other)**

## **Quests**

### **1.Basic Information**

A total of 274 quests were collected in this research from *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* collectively, among which 133 quests are from *Shen-Chou* and 141 quests are from *Dark Age*.

## 2. Behavior

The data shows that among all the quests, the quests in *Shen-Chou* demonstrate more diversity in quest behavior than those in *Dark Age* (Table 5-10). In *Dark Age*, all quest behaviors can be categorized under one of the three main behavior types: killing, obtaining, or delivering. There is no behavior that falls under the “other” category. By contrast, 28% of all quest behaviors observed from *Shen-Chou* fall under the “other” category.

Another major difference between the quest behaviors in the two games is the fact that there are fewer quests that involve killing in *Shen-Chou* (37.6%) than in *Dark Age* (78.7%). Moreover, more than twice as many of the quests in *Shen-Chou* involve the delivery of an item. Finally, in *Dark Age*, the behavior of obtaining an item occurs almost twice as frequently as in *Shen-Chou*. A number of behaviors were unique to *Shen-Chou*, including bribing, buying, cheating, cursing, divining, praying, persuading, performing rituals, selling, stealing, and threatening, and are listed in the “other” category in Table 5-11.

Game	Shen-Chou	Dark Age of Camelot
Cultural Dimensions	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Killing	50 (37.6%)	115 (81.5%)
Delivering	38 (28.6%)	16 (11.3%)
Obtaining	27 (20.3%)	55 (39%)
Other	28 (21.1%)	0 (0%)

**Table 5-5.10 Behavior distribution in *Shen-Chou* and *The Dark Age of Camelot***

Behavior	Instance (%)	Behavior	Instance (%)
Bribe	1 (.8%)	Persuade	1 (.8%)
Buy	1 (.8%)	Perform Ritual	3 (2.3%)
Cheat	3 (2.3%)	Sell	1 (.8%)
Curse	1 (.8%)	Steal	1 (.8%)
Devine	2 (1.6%)	Threat	5 (3.8%)
Prey	9 (6.8%)		

**Table 5-5.11 “Other” behaviors presented in *Shen-Chou***

### 3.Rewards

Rewards are credited to the player when a quest is successfully completed. Different games may employ different systems to reward the player. This research focused on the rewards of weapons and reputation points. Weapons were a major instrument of reward in both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age*. However, the use of reputation points is exclusive to the quests in *Shen-Chou*.

## A.Weapons

Further analysis of the patterns of rewards shows that the quests in *Dark Age* are more likely to reward weapons to the player upon completion of a quest. As seen in Table 5-12, 21 (14.9%) of the quests in *Dark Age* offer weapons as rewards to the player, but only 4 (3%) quests in *Shen-Chou* provide weapons as a reward to the player ( $X^2 = 11.662$ ,  $***p \leq .001$ ).

Game Name		Shen-Chou	The Dark Age of Camelot	Total
Weapon Reward	No	129 (97%)	120 (85.1%)	249
	Yes	4 (3.0%)	21 (14.9%)	25
Total		133 (100%)	141 (100%)	274

**Table 5-5.12 Weapon rewards in *Shen-Chou* and *The Dark Age of Camelot* ( $X^2 = 11.662$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $***p \leq .001$ )**

## B.Reputation

While reputation points are one of the common forms of reward in *Shen-Chou*, they are distributed unevenly among the different avatar professions in the game. More positive reputation points are rewarded to the sword master, and more negative reputation points are rewarded to the trickster.

In *Shen-Chou*, 51 (38%) out of all 133 quests reward either positive or negative reputation points to the players upon the completion of the quest. Of

these 51 quests, 34 (66.7%) offer positive reputation points. Only 17 (33.3%) of the quests offer negative reputation points.

The system of rewarding reputation points in *Shen-Chou* shows partiality to certain professions, and they are destined to get either good or bad reputations. Only half (25 quests, 49%) of all quests that offered reputation points can be spoken for by any of the five professions in the game. Yet the other half (26 quests, 51%) of these quests are reserved for certain professions, such as the sword master and the trickster.

Among the quests with professional prerequisites, more quests with positive points are given to the sword master. More specifically, there are a total of 34 quests that credit positive reputation rewards upon completion, nine of which (26.5%) can only be completed by the sword master. The remaining quests are designated to the monk, the Taoist, and the warrior, but none bears half as much chance as the sword master to garner positive reputation points. Similarly, out of the 17 quests that assign negative reputation points, only nine (52.9%) are to be completed by the trickster. All of the remaining quests with negative reputation points are not profession-specific. Please see Table 5-13.

Profession	Not specified	Monk	Sword Master	Taoist	Trickster	Warrior	Total
Negative Reputation	8				9		17

% within Negative Reputation	47.1%				52.9%		100.0%
% within Profession	32.0%				100.0%		33.3%
Positive Reputation	17	2	9	2		4	34
% within Positive Reputation	50.0%	5.9%	26.5%	5.9%		11.8%	100.0%
% within Profession	68.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	66.7%
Total	25	2	9	2	9	4	51
% within Reputation Type	49.0%	3.9%	17.6%	3.9%	17.6%	7.8%	100.0%
% within Profession	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Table 5-5.13 Reputation rewards and professions**

## 4.Cultural Values

The most dominant cultural values represented in the quests of *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are outlined below. In *Shen-Chou*, among the six cultural value dimensions, uncertainty avoidance is the most prevalent, appearing in 128 quests (96.2%). The second most prevalent value is power distance, which occurs in 108 quests (81.2%). The values concerning collectivism rank third, and appear in 99 quests (74.41%). In *Dark Age*, uncertainty avoidance is also the most dominant cultural value, appearing in 133 quests (94.3%). The next most prevalent value is masculinity, with 117 cases (83%). As with *Shen-Chou*, the values concerning collectivism are the third most dominant, appearing in 70 quests (49.6%). Please see Table 5-14 for details.

Game	<i>Shen-Chou</i>	Dark Age of Camelot
Cultural Dimensions	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Power Distance	108 (81.2%)	60 (42.6%)
Uncertainty Avoidance	128 (96.2%)	133 (94.3%)

Individualism	6 (4.6%)	37 (26.2%)
Collectivism	99 (74.41%)	70 (49.6%)
Masculinity	54 (40.6%)	117 (83%)
Femininity	35 (26.3%)	52 (39.9)

**Table 5-5.14 Distribution of cultural values in *Shen-Chou* and *The Dark Age of Camelot***

In chapter three, I hypothesized that the Taiwanese game *Shen-Chou* will demonstrate a higher tendency of representing cultural values associated with power distance and collectivism than the American game *Dark Age*. To test the hypothesis, I employed a One-Way ANOVA test. The results on the cultural values (Table 5-15) reveal that there are significant differences in five the cultural dimensions. The results of the test are as follows: power distance  $f=33.702$ ,  $p<.001$ , masculinity,  $f=30.897$ ,  $p<.001$ , collectivism,  $f=25.467$ ,  $p<.001$ , individualism,  $f=24.649$ ,  $p<.001$ , and uncertainty avoidance,  $F=19.537$ ,  $P<.001$ . The only dimension with no significant difference is femininity.

The results in Table 5-15 and 5-16 also corroborate the hypothesis that the values demonstrating collectivism will occur more frequently in *Shen-Chou* than in *Dark Age*. In *Shen-Chou*, 74.41% of all quests involve actions, conversations, or rewards that reinforce the values of collectivism; whereas in *Dark Age*, only 49.6% of all quests can be associated with collectivism.

Game Name	<i>Shen-Chou</i>	Dark Age of Camelot		
Cultural Dimensions	Mean		F	P
Power Distance	.8647	.4823	33.702	.000***
Uncertainty Avoidance	2.0602	1.6028	19.537	.000***
Individualism	.0526	.3546	24.639	.000***

Collectivism	1.0526	.5957	25.467	.000***
Masculinity	.4887	.8511	30.897	.000***
Femininity	.3008	.3688	1.217	.271

**Table 5-5.15 Results of the One-way ANOVA test**

As expected, the values associated with power distance occur significantly more often in *Shen-Chou* than in *Dark Age*. In fact, the quests that involve actions or concepts highlighting power distance appear almost twice as frequently in *Shen-Chou*, with an 81.2% occurrence rate, than in *Dark Age*, with a 42.6% occurrence rate.

The data not only establishes the hypotheses regarding *Shen-Chou*; it also corroborates the hypothesis that the values concerning individualism will occur more frequently in *Dark Age* than in *Shen-Chou*. Quests in *Dark Age* that reinforce Individualism appear nearly six times more frequently than those in *Shen-Chou*, with occurrence rates of 26.2% and 4.6%, respectively.

Because the existence of high uncertainty avoidance in both games does not correspond with my hypothesis, I decided to further analyze the sub-indexes within the uncertainty avoidance dimension. The results reveal that the main components that make up uncertainty avoidance in each game are dramatically different. *Shen-Chou* tends to use rules/laws, and economic incentives (monetary rewards) to regulate people's behavior and circumvent the feelings of uncertainty. *Dark Age* takes a different approach by using

technology to avoid feelings of uncertainty. With the rewards of weapons and special skills, the players are encouraged to harness the external environment, rather than change their behavior. A detailed comparison of the values of cultural indexes within the dimension of uncertainty avoidance is included in Table 5-16.

	Shen-Chou	The Dark Age of Camelot	
	Cases (% within this game)	Cases (% within this game)	Significance of difference
Ritual	26 (19.5%)	27 (19.1%)	.933
Skill/Technology	22 (16.5%)	106 (75.2%)	.000***
Economic	104 (78.2%)	54 (38.3%)	.000***
Rule/Law	95 (71.4%)	15 (10.6%)	.000***
Against Rule/Law	15 (11.3%)	1 (0.7%)	.000***
Nationalism	12 (9.0%)	10 (7.1%)	.557
Suppression	0 (.0%)	10 (7.1%)	.002
Kill the betrayer	0 (.0%)	3 (2.1%)	.091

**Table 5-5.16 Details of the cultural indexes within uncertainty avoidance. \*\*\*p<.001**

In terms of gender-specific values, the quests reinforcing masculinity appear almost twice as frequently in *Dark Age* as in *Shen-Chou*, the former being 83% of the total, and the latter being 40.6%. Values reinforcing femininity also appear more frequently in *Dark Age*, appearing in 39.9% of the quests; whereas only 26.3% of the quests in *Shen-Chou* reflect values of Femininity.

## Chapter Summary

### **1.Archetypes**

Based on the data discussed in this chapter, it can be concluded that both *Shen-Chou* and *The Dark Age of Camelot* adopt similar principles to develop the archetypes of their avatars. The system on which the archetypes are established highlights three specific sets of attributes seen within the human society in general. The three aspects include: the physical strength attributes (strength, constitution, life, payload, and empathy in the Western MMORPG), magical attributes (Intelligence, Energy, etc.), and evasive attributes (Dexterity and Quickness).

These three sets of attributes interplay and correlate to form four basic archetypes. The four archetypes are identified in both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age*, and are assigned names according to their respective characteristics. The four archetypes include the warrior, who always gets the highest value in their physical strength attributes and the lowest in their intelligence attributes; the shaman, who always gets the highest value intelligent attributes and the lowest in their physical strength attributes; the trickster, who always gets the highest value in their evasive attributes; and the chief, who always gets the average values in all attributes.

Although both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* display similar principles in the grouping of attributes and the categorization of archetypes, the correlations among the three sets of physical, mental and evasive attributes are not identical between the two games. For example, in *Shen-Chou*, the magical attributes show high negative correlations with the physical strength attributes. Yet there is no such strong relationship between the two in *Dark Age*. Moreover, strength is related to empathy in *Dark Age*, suggesting that heroic qualities combine these qualities in Western cultures.

Based on the correlational relationships among the attributes of the avatars, I identified four basic archetypes in both games, they are: chief, hunter, shaman, and fool. The names of the archetypes are given according to their strengths and characteristics. The following are their definitions:

**Chief:** This archetype gets average scores in all attributes. They are the Jack-of-all-trades, meaning their physical and mental/intellectual attributes are high enough for them to use most kinds of weapons and learn most kinds of magical skills. However, it is also their Achilles' Hill that those attributes are not high enough for them to master any of the skills, hence they need more strategy in planning their attacks, defenses, and even the paths of completing the quests. This archetype is usually being described as the leader or is given some kind of social responsibilities. For example, the chief in *Shen-Chou* is

the sword master, who was portrayed as the underground judge of the society. The chief in *Dark Age* is the Briton people, who are the people of Camelot and the original subjects of King Arthur.

**Hunter:** This archetype puts emphasis on pure physical strength attributes. They believe in muscle power, have high scores in strength and constitution, which provides more destruction power in close combats, and are able to use heavier weapons. They are high in life attributes so they can take more hits from the enemies during the combat. They can usually carry more and heavier items with them since they are high in payload attribute.

**Shaman:** This archetype puts emphasis on mental and intellectual power. They are always weak in terms of physical strength and usually high in intelligence and mental energy attributes. They play the role as the medium between man and nature or super nature. This archetype can be further divided into two sub archetypes: the healer and the sorcerer. Healers are specialized to use the power of religion or nature to heal other people, while sorcerers use them to bring destructive powers.

**Fool:** This archetype is universally similar in one thing: he is fast. The fool has high scores in quickness and dexterity, which make them the masters of evasive skills and concealed weapons.

## 2. Quests

After analyzing the 274 quests collected from both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age*, the following results were found in this research.

A. The Taiwanese game has more diverse behaviors than the American game: The data shows that among all the quests, the quests in *Shen-Chou* demonstrated more diversity in quest behavior than those in *Dark Age* (Table 5-9). In *Dark Age*, all quest behaviors can be categorized under one of the three main behavior types: killing, obtaining, or delivering. There is no behavior that falls under the “Other” category. By contrast, 28% of all quest behaviors observed from *Shen-Chou* fall under the “Other” category. However, this could also be the result of the way data was collected in this research. Specifically, online information from players was used to examine one game while a book with detailed information was available for the other.

B. The analysis showed that the American game is more likely to reward weapons upon the completion of the quest than is the Taiwanese game.

C. While reputation points were one of the common forms of reward in *Shen-Chou*, they were distributed unevenly among the different avatar

professions in the game. More positive reputation points were rewarded to the Sword Master, and more negative reputation points were rewarded to the Trickster.

D. The most dominant cultural values represented in the quests of *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are outlined below. In *Shen-Chou*, among the six cultural value dimensions, Uncertainty Avoidance is the most prevalent, appearing in 128 quests (96.2%). The second most prevalent value is Power Distance, which occurred in 108 quests (81.2%). The values concerning Collectivism rank third, and appeared in 99 quests (74.41%). In *Dark Age*, Uncertainty Avoidance is also the most dominant cultural value, appearing in 133 quests (94.3%). The next most prevalent value is Masculinity, with 117 cases (83%). As with *Shen-Chou*, the values concerning Collectivism are the third most dominant, appearing in 70 quests (49.6%).

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to compare the archetypes and quests in MMORPGs from Taiwan and the United States to see how they reflect the social structures and cultural values of their societies of origin.

### **Archetype Systems in Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games**

The first hypothesis is that similar archetype systems should be found even in games from different countries with disparate cultures. Although games come from different cultures, they would nonetheless use similar ideas to develop their archetypes. Moreover, a similar set of root archetypes may be identified in games from different cultures. As expected, both games share similar archetype systems, and use the same ideas to develop their archetypes, and have similar sets of root archetypes. The research also confirms that MMORPGs reflect the worldviews of the dominant race within their societies of origin.

## 1.The Existence of a Common Archetype Structure

Analyzing the archetype structures in both games, I found that the avatars of both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are developed and designed based on the same principles. More specifically, four archetypes are identified in each game: the Chief, the Shaman, the Hunter, and the Fool. The four main archetypes all adopt a similar combination of three major qualities: physical, magical, and dexterity. That is, in both cultures, the chief is average in all attributes; the shaman has high magical powers but is low in physical strength and dexterity; the hunter is high in physical strength but low in magical attributes and dexterity; and the fool is high in dexterity but low in magic and physical strength.

William Thompson proposed that these basic archetypes could also be extended to the level of social structure. Therefore I argue that the root archetypes found in this research also reflect the root archetypes of the social structure in both countries. From Thompson's point of view, the stability of a society relies on the mutual counterbalance of conflicting interests. Within the system there is a strong tendency for individuals fulfilling a particular archetypal role in any sphere of specialization to respond favorably to others fulfilling the same role in other spheres. Further, there is a marked tendency

for each sphere to protect its own autonomy by defining claims to legitimate authority on its own terms.

Both games seem to be instructing players about how the society functions and how they should act within that society in order *not* to harm the stability of the society. While every one is perfectly allowed to choose his/her role in a group, he/she is not given the option to be something else. To become conscious of such a scheme, one must move into a different space. In other words, if a player does not identify with the structure as provided in the games, he/she must quit the game and stop playing. However, no one can really escape from this structure since it is the archetypal property of life in society. Thus, as commented by Thompson (1971), “once off the wheel, one seems to be escaping the very condition of being human.”

## **2.A Worldview in which One Race is Dominant**

According to the avatar racial distribution data collected in this research, only one race from the games’ respective countries, namely the Han in *Shen-Chou* and mostly Caucasian avatars in *Dark Age*, is represented in each game. This finding suggests that, at least in terms of racial distribution, the worldview in the virtual world of the online MMORPGs is reflected in

accordance with that of the dominant group in the game's society of origin. This observation was not anticipated in the hypotheses of this research.

According to a study on race in the traditional multi-user dungeon (MUD) by Beth Koko (2000), "the lack of a race property suggests that the MUD is an environment where racial identity is presumed to be irrelevant or homogenous" The finding in this research corroborates this sentiment and suggests that the same phenomenon could be even more prevalent in MMORPGs. Because about half of all characters in *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* are either Han or Caucasian, while the other half are non-human creatures, MMORPGs seem to endorse the assumption that if you are not a member of the dominant race, you do not count and are not represented in the game.

There are three possible explanations for the assumed homogeneity or the dominant race in MMORPGs: it reflects either the assumptions on race as held by the game developers, or it is reflecting the dominant races of the culture of its origin, or both.

## **Cultural Values in Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing**

### **Games**

My third hypothesis is that MMORPGs developed in different countries would demonstrate a similar pattern of reflecting the dominant cultural values in their societies of origin. As expected, paralleling Hofstede's theories, the Taiwanese game demonstrates significantly higher uncertainty avoidance, power distance and collectivism, and the American game shows significantly higher masculinity and individualism. It is in particular interesting to find out that uncertainty avoidance occurs more frequently than all the other cultural dimensions in both games. This was not part of the researcher's original hypothesis.

### **1.Cultural Values in *Shen-Chou***

The researcher believes that as a result of the traditional Confucianism deeply rooted in the Taiwanese culture, there are more frequent occurrences of values concerning power distance and collectivism in *Shen-Chou*. The quests in the game very often convey such messages as: respecting tradition

and authority, maintaining an individual's position within the social hierarchy, and considering the benefit of the group as one's top priority.

Such a tendency towards honoring social hierarchy and collectivism is embedded in *Shen-Chou* because the society in which the game originated has long considered itself the guardian of the traditional Chinese culture. The high power distance found in *Shen-Chou* embodies certain characteristics of the Chinese culture, including obedience to authority, respect for traditions and compliance with the social hierarchy. The model in which the quests are initiated in *Shen-Chou* affirms this cultural tendency. In fact, most of the quests are initiated by authoritative figures, such as a master, a teacher or a government officer. This is very different from *Dark Age*, in which most of the quests are initiated by lay people in need.

Moreover, the high collectivism in *Shen-Chou* shows that traditional values, such as harmony within a social group, the benefits of the group and the concept of shame, are considered important and given high priority. These concepts are reinforced to the gamers through the use of a special attribute – reputation – a reward upon the completion of quests.

How does this system of designating reputation points affect the players' gaming experience? Highly aware that their actions will be judged on

the basis of conformity with traditional values, the gamers become more cognizant of their behavior or decisions made during the quest from a social point of view. The invisible judges designed within the game immediately comment on the player's behavior and give the rewarding points accordingly. Thus, in order to achieve good scores, the players must place a high priority for the harmony of the group or the rules of the group before they take any action.

Besides highlighting the harmony and benefits of the group, the use of reputation points in *Shen-Chou* also underscores the existence of the concept of shamefulness, a concept that according to Hofstede, is most commonly found in collectivist societies (1991). In *Shen-Chou*, the concept of shame is embedded in the design of many quests, in which the player faces tough choices whose respective consequences lead to either good or bad reputation. For example, sometimes the player is required to give up personal benefit in order to gain good reputation points that will enhance the benefit of the group or the face of his master. Otherwise, the player may elect to gain personal benefit at the cost of a failed quest and bad reputation points. In other words, choosing personal benefit is considered selfish and results in bad reputations, namely the shame.

## **2.Cultural Values in *The Dark Age of Camelot***

The data collected from the researcher corroborates the hypothesis that both masculinity and individuality are the more dominant cultural values in *Dark Age* than those in *Shen-Chou*. This not only confirms the hypothesis that the dominant cultural values in the real world will also prevail in the virtual world but also reveals the difference in the image of *the hero* in Taiwanese and American cultures.

As stated in chapter two, high masculinity cultures values a more assertive, decisive, and more aggressive type of hero. *Dark Age* also demonstrates the same characteristic of a masculinity culture. This is in contrast to a less aggressive, more intuitive rather than decisive, and accustomed to seeking consensus type of hero in *Shen-Chou*. Even so, strength tends to be related to empathy in *Dark Age*, suggesting that even tough heroes are concerned for the well-being of others in Western heroic templates.

While values concerning individualism in *Dark Age* score significantly higher than those in *Shen-Chou*, it is interesting to see that values concerning collectivism in *Dark Age* score twice as high as its individualism scores. This is a departure from Hofstede's theories concerning general cultural values, that

there should be more emphasis on individualism than on collectivism in the U.S. cultural framework. It also suggests that Western cultures are concerned for the well-being of others.

I contend that it is due to the gregarious nature of the genre of MMORPGs that the influence collectivism plays an important role. In this genre, as the name suggests, the interaction between players and the respect towards the community are valued far more importantly than those in any other genres of games. Additionally, in *Dark Age*, there are many quests that truly emphasize altruism or benefit of the group. For example, a typical quest may involve the slaying of a monster or a group of bandits in order to safe a village or a group of people. This also contributed to the high collectivism scores in *Dark Age*.

### **3.High Uncertainty Avoidance in Both Games**

Although both *Shen-Chou* and *Dark Age* present large numbers of quests reflecting elements of uncertainty avoidance (96.2% of quests in *Shen-Chou*, and 94.3% in *Dark Age*), detailed data suggests that different cultural value indexes account for the high uncertainty avoidance scores in each game. Among all the cultural indexes under the dimension of uncertainty

avoidance, “following the “rules/laws” is the most dominant in *Shen-Chou*, while the “use of skills/technology” is the most dominant in *Dark Age*.

Such difference demonstrates the varied approaches for the Taiwanese culture and American cultures to deal with the feelings of uncertainties. More specifically, the compliance of rules and laws reflects that Taiwanese culture tend to reduce uncertainties by turning inwardly to create long-term stability by controlling the unpredictability of their members. In other words, there is a tendency to make people’s behavior more predictable and hence easier to control. For instance, in a quest in *Shen-Chou*, an army general gives an order to the player, asking the player to investigate spy activities in the capital city. In this case, the quest is initiated by an authoritative figure – a general, and seeks to eliminate the uncertainty by looking inwardly– the spy activities, which only do sneaky things within a group, by giving a direct order to the player.

On the other hand, the use of skills and technologies reflects that the American culture tends to cope with uncertainties by turning externally and using technologies to create short-term predictability (Hofstede, 1986). In other words, there is a tendency to avoid feelings of uncertainties by controlling the environment through rational thinking. For example, in a quest of *Dark Age*, players are asked by a civilian to go see Master Vismer in the

Academy at Camelot. He tells them of the continued pursuit to control the raising of the undead. He gives them some spell components and asks them to go kill a Roman guard in Cornwall named Favius. In this case, the target is an external threat, and the way to eliminate it is through the use of some spell components, which is a special skill considered as technology in role-playing games.

Such a difference between Taiwanese and American cultures as reflected in MMORPGs is also echoed in the rewarding systems in both games. My data shows there is a big difference in the reward itself when players complete the quests in each game. In particular, *Dark Age* is more likely to reward weapons and *Shen-Chou* reputation points. I argue that the rewarding of weapons can be interpreted as an emphasis on the use of technology, while the use of reputation emphasizes the intention to control people through group pressure.

### **Future Research Considerations**

The main constraint to generalizations of this study lies in the limited number of sample games. Although the results of the study are coherent with other related studies, a limited, thus potentially biased, set of games could impair the ability to generalize the discussion of this research. Future studies

may consider examining more games and more quests from each game to improve the generalizability of the findings.

The next step in studies concerning MMORPGs may include more discussions on the players' gaming behavior and its influences. Following the discussion of this research, there are two possible directions of future research: 1) the impact of "addictive games" in terms of the excessive time spent online by the gamers, and 2) the impact of the rewarding system in games on the cultural values held by game players. For example, will certain dimension of cultural value become stronger after a certain amount of game play? Will certain cultural value be bolstered if the gamers choose to comply with it and are rewarded? Moreover, what conflict will arise if the values set forth in the game oppose the ones held by the players? For example, what would happen when children with Asian or Muslim backgrounds play games with the Western cultural values, and vice versa? Will the games cause conflicts or can they bridge the divide between the cultures?

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

This research accomplished its chief goal in developing a comparison of the social structures and cultural values reflected in MMORPGs produced in Taiwan and the United States. Similar archetype systems emerge from both games after analyzing their archetypes. In addition, this research also concludes that the cultural values and racial distribution in each game resemble the dominant culture and race of its society of origin.

First, both research subjects of this study, *Shen-Chou* of Taiwan and *Dark Age* of the U.S., offer four basic character archetypes, despite their variations in the number and categorization of the characters. The four archetypes consist of the Chief, Hunter, Shaman, and Fool. This finding corresponds with theories put forth by William Thompson, who argues that the stability of a society relies on the balance of the conflicting interests represented by these four archetypes.

This research also finds that the dominant race depicted in the games mirrors the dominant race existing in the society of each game's origin. The

Taiwanese game shows the Han people as the only human race, and the American game emphasizes the Caucasian. The level of racial diversity, however, is not equivalent between the games. While the Taiwanese game has only one race, reflecting the homogenous nature of racial characteristics in Chinese culture, the American game offers fifteen different races, reflecting the more diverse nature of racial composition in Western culture.

Thirdly, a quantitative analysis of the cultural values in the games indicates that while archetypal presentations are universal, cultural values are heterogeneous. According to the analysis, the Taiwanese game demonstrates more power distance, more uncertainty avoidance, more collectivism, and more femininity than the American game. On the other hand, the American game reveals more values reinforcing masculinity and individuality. The differences in cultural values contribute to the different images of a hero in the two cultures as reflected in the games. In particular, the American culture appreciates a more assertive, decisive, and aggressive type of hero who is also compassionate, while the Taiwanese culture approves of a hero who is a less aggressive, more intuitive rather than decisive, and accustomed to seeking consensus.

Finally, this study observes that the rewarding system embedded in the games is a critical tool for conveying and reinforcing their respective, often

contrasting, cultural values. As the object of the reward differs, so do the means and the philosophies through which the values are strengthened. By rewarding reputation points, the Taiwanese culture has the tendency to avoid uncertainties by turning inward and creating group pressure to censor the individual's actions. This model creates a kind of long-term stability by controlling the unpredictability of the society's members. On the other hand, by rewarding weapons of technology, the American culture has the tendency to avoid uncertainties by resorting to external means in order to control or alter the environment to one's advantage.

In conclusion, the cultural values reflected in the Taiwanese and American MMORPGs provide insight into the fundamental characteristics of Chinese and American cultures. As Joseph Campbell writes, "you can keep an old tradition going only by renewing it in terms of current circumstances" (1991, p. 26). This is exactly the scenario when people, regardless of which culture they belong, are tasked with creating a virtual world in their games. In the case of MMORPGS, the elements of vested myth and cultural values are renewed and reborn via the mechanisms of twenty-first century virtual reality online role-playing games. Thus, the oldest myth maintains its socialization and pedagogical functions in the form of latest technology. It teaches people

what to do and how to think even in their recreational activities in the virtual gaming world.

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