Kingdom Hearts I vs. Kingdom Hearts II

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WARNING

This presentation may contain massive spoilers for Kingdom Hearts and Kingdom Hearts II
Analysis

How does each game manage to satisfy (or fail to satisfy) each of Bartle’s four player types?
- Achievers
- Killers
- Explorers
- Socializers (not MMO; insignificant)

Examine sense of agency provided for each player type in either game via Abilities

Validating Bartle for non-MP games
THE GAMES

- *Kingdom Hearts II* (PS2) (2005)
- And we’re ignoring *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories* (GBA) (2004-2005)

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Please see the covers of Kingdom Hearts, Kingdom Hearts II, and Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories.

ABILITIES

- 11 Combat Abilities
  - Let you hit things more or harder
- 9 Support Abilities
  - Keep you alive or make you stronger
- 3 Treasure Abilities
  - Help you get stuff
- 4 Shared Abilities
  - Help you get around worlds

= 27 Abilities

- 19/20 Action Abilities
  - Let you hit things more/harder
- 27 Support Abilities
  - Keep you alive/make you stronger/help you get stuff
- 4 Growth Abilities
  - Help you move (DF)
- 22 Weapon Abilities

= 72-73 Abilities (+ a million Drive Form Abilities)
REACTION COMMANDS

- Reaction Commands in *Kingdom Hearts II*
- Instead of “Special Commands”, wide range of “Reaction Commands” available
  - Limit Breaks
  - Enemy-specific attacks
  - Situation-specific attacks
- All used by pressing Δ
  - Randomly appear
  - Occur frequently
  - *Massively overpowered*
In both games, Abilities can be gained by defeating certain enemies/bosses and by leveling up.

**Achievers**
- Gaining Abilities feels significant
  - Fewer Abilities
  - Each Ability significantly affects player’s experience
  - Separate screen for Ability achievement creates sense of accomplishment
- Acquiring Abilities feels random and gratuitous
  - Many Abilities
  - Abilities are devalued due to quantity and lack of obvious significance
  - Ability gain is lumped in with stat increases at level ups

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Kingdom Hearts

Kingdom Hearts II
**ABILITIES**

- **Achievers**
  - AP (Action Point) limit forces player to equip Abilities carefully and strategically.
  - AP limit challenges Achievers to choose effective combinations of Abilities to achieve their goals of getting items, etc.
  - Many Abilities easily not used (i.e. not valuable); equipping desired Abilities fairly easy.
  - Can equip almost all Abilities; no sense of accomplishment for successful combinations.

**Kingdom Hearts**

**Kingdom Hearts II**

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Achievers

- Using Abilities requires strategy and timing
  - 2 Abilities require □
  - Special Abilities chosen from Command Menu
- Enemies have specific strengths/weaknesses; can be exploited via strategic use of Special and Combat Abilities
- Battles dynamic
- Using Abilities requires button-mashing
  - 6 Abilities require □
  - Special Abilities now “Reaction commands”
- Reaction Commands make defeating bosses and enemies easy
- Reaction Commands provide no sense of achievement (random, frequent, unearned)
- Drive Form equally unrewarding

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Achievers

- Can stack on one character
- Same Abilities in both games
- Treasure Abilities stronger/more effective
- Get more stuff!

Treasure Abilities don’t *feel* as effective

- Fewer item drops even with Treasure Abilities equipped
- Drops already incredibly plentiful without Abilities
Achievers (cont.)

- Shared Abilities enhance sense of achievement
  - Allows players to return to previous worlds to gain previously unattainable items using new Shared Abilities (e.g. Glide, High Jump)
  - Achieving such items involving “solving” puzzle-jumping games
- No (or very few) items are unachievable from the get-go
- Growth Abilities do not enhance sense of achievement by allowing player to get previously unreachable items

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Combats Abilities

Killers

- Defeating bosses/mini-bosses (typically) requires lots of strategy and timing (more frustrating)
- Killing lots of enemies requires time - chance of dying is high
- More regular spawn spots/screens

- Defeating bosses/mini-bosses (typically) requires lots of button-mashing
- Lots of opportunities to destroy large amounts of enemies in a short amount of time
Killers

- Abilities can be useful in battle (ex. jumping behind enemies)
- Allow players to exploit certain enemies’ weaknesses

Growth Abilities aid in battle through increased mobility

- Allow players to kill more effectively

Kingdom Hearts

Kingdom Hearts II
Explorers

- Allow Explorers to progress through the game to new worlds, areas, and levels more easily
- Allow Explorers to purchase gear/make items that make progressing through the game less difficult
- Ultimately, are only means to achieve an end (to explore the world); in both games, achieves this end to equal effect
SHARED/GROWTH ABILITIES

Explorers
- Enable player to explore new or previously unreachable areas of worlds
- Motivate players to return to earlier worlds to explore new areas

- All areas are relatively open as soon as a world is opened
- Unlocking the storyline and progressing through the plot is only means of accessing new areas

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CONCLUSION

- The proliferation of Combat Abilities in KH2 reduces the amount of agency experienced by Achievers
- The inability to apply Shared/Growth Abilities in KH2 reduces the amount of agency experienced by Achievers and Explorers
- The abundance of Combat/Support Abilities and introduction of Reaction Commands increases the sense of agency experienced by Killers
CONCLUSION

- *Kingdom Hearts II* decreased motivation and entertainment for Achievers and Explorers with its modification to the Abilities system and increased enjoyment for Killers.

- *Kingdom Hearts* more enjoyable to Achievers and Explorers than Killers.