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4/25/25

ENG-21001

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In the world of gaming we the players get the chance to experience many wonderful things that games have to offer and if you're looking for a good First-person shooter experience or FPS the newly made Call Of Duty game may pique your interest like it has had for many players over the years. But with every new Call Of Duty release it's starting to see that each table is getting increasingly repetitive with each new installment in the series. A possible reason that COD is feeling repetitive is because of the progression system or in other words how the player levels up in the game and unlocks content over time that is present inside the recent COD games that are making players feel the game is repetitive. In this paper, we will explore what role the progression systems play for the players in a game and how the progression system in 3 recent COD titles such as Black Ops Cold War, Modern Warfare 2 (2022), and Black Ops 6 may contribute to this feeling of repetition by showing how each game approaches this system and show what can work and what is causing issues for the players in the games and try to create possible ideas that could help mitigate this problem in future games.

In most multiplayer games, the main driving force to keep players motivated and engaged overtime is usually done through a progression system. This system allows the player to earn rewards that can vary from upgrades, achievements, and other unlockable content as they play, making the player feel like they are accomplishing something. For the more competitive style of games such as Call Of Duty, the progression systems play a very crucial role in keeping the players motivated to keep playing to unlock certain things they want to when playing, giving the

players a chance to make goals rather than just being about winning all the time. However, the growing concern among players that the Call Of Duty titles are starting to feel very repetitive and grindy when you play the new games is now leading to a lot of players getting a case of burnout after playing the game for a while. Some believe that this could be due to the design of the progression systems that are present in each new game and taking a look at COD Cold War, MW2 (2022), and Black Ops 6 can help reinforce this statement and ways we can address this issue in future titles.

When it comes to making games there are many aspects that a developer would have to consider in order to create a game that keeps the player invested and interested in playing, one of the key elements to this is a progression system and to be more specific in this case it would be considered a character progression system. A character progression system in terms of a Role Playing Game or RPG is defined as “development of player characteristics as the player progresses through the game.”(Tyers, 213) In the context of a Call Of Duty game, the character progression system acts as a way for players to play and unlock various things such as weapons, perks, killstreaks, attachments, and various cosmetics. So unlike traditional RPGs where you would level up and progress to different traits or skills Call of Duty focuses more on the player’s combat and some customization options. So as the player keeps playing the game they would continue to unlock various things to try out items and feel a sense of accomplishment for unlocking certain items they can use.

Progression systems in games are important because they add some more depth to a game in general and they also provide another reason as to why the players should continue playing a game. “A player's propensity to continue playing the game is governed by his/her in-game experiences and achievements.”(Karmaker et al,104) To sum what is being said here is that

players are inclined to play a game based on the experience and achievements they make in that game. In the context of Call Of Duty this is reflected in the player's ability to unlock new items and reward which gives the a sense of growth while they continue to play and without this kind of system present in the game it may make the game feel very boring since there isn't really a goal that the player may have that makes them play the game, this system can even play as a tracker in a way since it keeps track of player levels and unlocks which is important in competitive based games since "players would tend to be more vulnerable and likely to lose motivation at some point of their initial journey, unless they could track their real progress leading to higher self-efficacy." (Waller et al, 11) this is saying how in competitive based games it's very easy for the player to lose their motivation if they can't figure out if they are wasting time in a game they are not good at or if they are improving, which is something of a progression system in a Call Of Duty game can do for the player very well by showing them things such as past ranks and unlocks they have made in the past, so the progression system really does play a role in motivating a player to play the game and while also being engaged as well.

Now that we have an understanding of what a progression system is we can now take a deeper look at how this system is used in the different entries in the Call Of Duty franchise and how each game implements them in each game. Because of the large quantity of Call Of Duty games we will be only taking a look at 3 recent games The titles we are examining are Black Ops Cold War, Modern Warfare II (2022), and Black Ops 6. We will examine how each game has implemented its progression system in their game. In Call of Duty Cold War, the progression system follows the traditional style of progression we would see in older Call of Duty titles such as Black Ops 1 where the system is centered around the level of the player and even the weapon level. In this system the player would Level up from level 1 to 55 where you would unlock

various weapons and equipment like killstreaks to use in the multiplayer game modes, when you reach max level you would be able to do something called prestige where you would reset your player level keeping your weapon level the same if you have maxed it out before prestiging your player level. Now to encourage players to do this there are various rewards such as weapons blueprints and other items for players to unlock when they reset their level. In Call Of Duty MW2 while the general way a character progresses remained the same the developers of this title Infinity Ward would implement and introduce a new and more complex system called the weapon platform system. Unlike the traditional way you would unlock weapons or attachments by using the same weapon players would have to level up related weapons within the same platform to unlock attachments that are shared across multiple weapons, this would make it so that players now have the opportunity to come up with different weapons builds using the large amount of attachments they have access to use. Modern Warfare 2 also shares a similar prestige system seen in COD Cold War with the difference of the player just having to unlock a platform for the kind of weapons they want to use. In Black Ops 6 we see the same traditional style of progression system again with a Persiege system also present in this newer cod title as well but with some more incentives in completing challenges and daily tasks for rewards such as boosts in the experience points players can earn in a match to help level the player faster and reach a higher level at a faster pace and increase the flow of the overall leveling in the game.

While the progression in these games is very impressive and plays a main role in the player, not all implementations are equally effective. In Cold War's case, the progression had stuck more to the classic Call Of Duty experience of unlocking weapons and items just through gameplay which allowed players to steadily gain more and more items over time making the players feel that they are getting something out of the time they spend on the game. In MW2's

case while on paper the weapon platform system offered a unique way to customize and unlock weapons allowing players to experiment and come up with the most outrageous builds, the complexity of the system and how you would unlock certain weapons and attachments had made players become frustrated with the system because it may have forced them to play with a weapon that isn't suited for them and also confuse players on what they would need to do to unlock a certain weapon or attachment due to the many requirements needed to get one item in this system. This system would interrupt the player's progression and make the game feel like a chore when trying to unlock an item. In BO6 the developers would return to a simpler and traditional progression system more similar to older titles, this system would help ease the player's frustration when it comes to unlocking weapons attachments, and cosmetics but the problem is that this system can still be very slow when it comes to unlocking items making the game feel grind heavy with some of the items you spend so long working for to be not so great making the game also too heavily reliant on a battle pass system to give players a goal or incentive to keep playing the game for things they like to get.

Building off from this something to note is the presence of a monetization system called a battle passes are present in each of these Call Of Duty titles now the reason this is relevant to this conversation is because of what is offered in these versions of the battle passes they all include various items such as skins, blueprints base game weapons, and other useful items that is available for a limited time during a season of a Call Of Duty game. These passes usually come with a paid version of the pass and a free version so players don't necessarily have to pay to get things like the newly added weapons, but might miss out on cosmetics they might like. This is where this system starts to show its flaws in the Call Of Duty games there since can be situations where the battle pass items can easily overshadow the items that players unlock through

progressing through the game normally which can cause them to lose interest in the items they now see as not good and cause them to lose the motivation they have to continue to play the game. Overall this may inadvertently contribute to negatively affecting the already placed progression system in the game leading to players feeling that the game is repetitive and there's nothing new or interesting for them if they aren't willing to pay for something.

After taking a look at these 3 games it's safe to say that while progressions systems are essentially, poorly designed or overly complex systems can lead to frustration and repetition in the game. Overall it seems that there isn't a definite solution to this issue that will take time to find and may need to change over time but there are some possible solutions that may help address this issue in some way or another. One possibility is to refine the weapon platform system that was introduced in Modern Warfare 2 by simplifying the system so that it still has the same level of customization but reducing the many frustrations that the players had with the system before so they can enjoy progressing in the game. Another solution is to have content updates that aren't necessarily tied to a battle pass-based system that adapts to player behavior and preferences, introducing new weapons or items that players can unlock for free in the game naturally instead of having to deal with time-limited events. Finally, the last solution that might be able to help with this issue is by returning to a more classic or traditional, progression system similar to what we see in the series' earliest titles where there wasn't as much monetization in these games that could negatively affect the already present progression in the game making it so players feel rewarded in what they are doing and don't see the system as an obstacle.

Overall progression systems plays a key role in keeping players engaged in a game like Call of Duty, but as shown in the recent titles of the franchise this same system can be the exact thing to make players lose interest and motivation in the game if the systems isn't made very

well or isn't properly balanced out with other types of content such as paid content it can cause and lead to the feeling of repetition we have in the recent games causing the feeling of repetition to happen when you are playing these games. But these issues can be solved if given the time with many solutions that could help fix this issue such as making a simpler MW2 platform system or making it easier for players to use, another possible solution could be to have content based on what the players' preferences are and content that isn't apart of a battle pass, and finally the last possible solution could be by going back to the traditional style of progression system one that is similar to the first games.

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