I performed an unguided observation of my friend while he played Blizzard's World of Warcraft. He mainly explored a newly introduced area, and completing portions of its content. The content being primarily "quests," which are tasks given to the player, by NPC's (or, non-player characters). My observation lasted 30 minutes (being an extensive game, I allotted plenty of play and observation time).

I focused on the content of the game, and mainly on the actual world design of the game, or what the user interacts with, what it looks like, and overall design of atmosphere and how/if it interacts with the overall game. Through my observation and personal experience, World of Warcraft (WoW) is an ever-expanding world full of multiple zones, each with its unique theme, story, content, and atmosphere. These zones are split into difficulty with most leading into one another from some user start point or town hub. While playing, my friend was zoned into the game, which makes sense as the game itself is immersive and successful, as with most RPG's you feel attached to the character you create, it, becoming an extension of you.

Snowman’s Alto is a procedurally generated endless runner game, where you play as several unlockable characters, but begin as Alto, a snowboarder. The player is given a set of three tasks at a time, that when completed give a currency, and move the user closer to unlocking other characters. These different characters have unique pros/cons as. For example, one character is much faster, but can't jump as high, making avoiding obstacles more difficult, than if you played as Alto, who is all around average.

While observing (which lasted about 15 minutes, due to the type of game) the player I noticed the relaxing atmosphere generated by the game, and the music to go along with it. The soundtrack adds to the atmosphere, and the game has day/night cycles, which make obstacles harder/easier to see changing user behavior. The gameplay is unique because the player has no idea what to expect next, due to its random nature, however the simplistic design, great soundtrack, and scenic view, combined into a very pleasant user experience.
“Design, Iterate, and Test.”
(source: Initial observations, and expert interview.)

From my interview with Griffin Park, a senior here at Indiana University, a design project lead in the game design program. I gained insights about the design process, user-experience (or, U-Ex), and cohesion, and how these intersect to form a working and fun product. He talked about the cyclical process he, and his team, go through when designing control schemes, environments, and the game mechanics and aspects themselves. We had an in-depth conversation regarding design, specifically UI-design and how rare a designer specializing in the field is, and how often overlooked the UI is in a project. Which is ironic as the UI is usually the thing the user interacts with throughout the entire game, the one constant. So, you would assume that a lot of time would go into making this object intuitive and functional. Rather than just “good enough.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Expert in the Field of Game Design: Griffin Park</th>
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My research started with a comparison between observations I made while my two subjects played two very different videogames, World of Warcraft, and Alto. World of Warcraft is a hugely popular fantasy MMORPG with expansive environments and storytelling, while Alto is a mobile 2d procedurally generated endless runner game where you endlessly snowboard down a mountain. I wanted to compare the two and see how the user/player reacted while engrossed in the game, less about how the game looked, what do you play it on, reason for playing, etc. I wanted to focus on atmosphere, mood, world design, and user-experience. What makes a game fun for the user? Because, isn’t that the point? After my initial observations I began looking closer at how the designers created the environments that the user interacts with, for WoW the massive zones and fantasy player elements, the attachments to characters, score, etc. Or for Alto, the relaxing score and unique art style.
Primary Attributions
source: Observation of user interaction: WoW (source: Christopher Dillon @10/11/17)
image: Screenshot of user playing the game: WoW (source: Christopher Dillon @10/11/17)
source: Observation of user interaction: Alto (source: Christopher Dillon @10/11/17)
image: Screenshot of user playing the game: Alto (source: Christopher Dillon @10/11/17)
source: Expert Interview of Griffin Park by Christopher Dillon (source: Christopher Dillon, Griffin Park @10/11/17)

Secondary Attributions
source: (source: http://www.theastronauts.com/2014/03/secret-immersive-game-worlds/ @10/12/17)
source: In-game Interaction, and impact on the user (VR) (source: https://www.loading-human.com/psychology-video-game-interaction-immersion/ @10/15/17)
source: Interactive Environments, definitions & examples (source: https://www.giantbomb.com/interactive-environments/3015-2602/ @10/15/17)
source: Player-Game Interaction and Cognitive Gameplay: A Taxonomic Framework for the Core Mechanic of Videogames (source: Informatics MDPI: authors Kamran Sedig, Paul Parsons, and Robert Haworth @10/15/17)
General Thoughts:

Maybe look at the difference between how triple A vs. mobile games develop environments or moods/atmospheres, and what they need. WoW having huge gigs of zones with in depth graphics and things to do as opposed to Alto which is strictly 2d, soothing soundtrack, random generated and minimal goals. And of course, how these make the user feel, w/e

Observations:

WoW (PC) - immersive and complex world design (gigs of data), 3D & predesigned (multiple zones, each with a set theme & narrative), immersive soundtrack that takes more of a backseat to the world and zones. My friend was very zoned into the game, moving between questing (completing goals), gathering resources, and playing in group content simultaneously. My friend stating that “time flies by when I am in game.” I noticed a wider breadth of emotion from the subject was dependent on the situations he got into, or tasks he was completing, vs. the main emotion the other subject displayed while playing Alto.

Alto (mobile) - simplistic world design, 2d & procedurally generated (less data which makes sense as a mobile game), soothing soundtrack that, while taking a backseat, is much more of an accent to the world or more in the foreground/player’s mind so to speak. This adds to the mood in a more direct manner as opposed to WoW. My friend stating: “I like playing [Alto] when I’m on the bus or waiting between classes, it burns time and distracts me.” he stated also that he doesn't like carrying his handheld gaming device every day because of its value and size, so having something on his phone is useful because he can boot up and go, while his handheld takes more to get going, and is too immersive for the time span of his use.

Interview Continued Next Page:
Interview with an Expert in the field of Game Design: Griffin Park; Design, Iterate, and Test.

1. **What were some previous projects you’ve worked on/been involved with?**
   “I previously have worked on a couple projects. A mobile puzzle game “Rockslide,” and at the Cuban center I worked on some VR sports games: football and baseball. There [the Cuban Center], I am currently working on a VR basketball game too!”

2. **How would you describe atmosphere, mood, world design/building, and interaction within the scope of game design, and its impact on the player?**
   “To me, a good art style and sound. for example, picture a haunted mansion with stylized graphics, and a matching score, which can scare the player, they work together, it feels odd having one without the other, it breaks [player] immersion. These work together, creating the mood that the designer wants to provide.”

3. **Have you had any firsthand experience with user-testing? If so, have you gleaned any information regarding user interaction and mood-building?**
   “People didn't like the control scheme [referring to users play-testing his VR football game]. You learn how difficult certain aspects are to the player, then once the controls are figured out you see that the player become more comfortable.” *Remedy the initial confusion.* “Button placement on hardware was an initial issue for hiking the ball. In this case it was designing VR, so everything from software to hardware was and is, very important, especially for controls. [Therefore] Player testing is useful because you get to see how each person interacts with the environment, and plays the game in a unique way.”

4. **What would you list as important aspects of game design?**
   “Having clear cut goals man, goals being what you want the player to accomplish, or what you want things to look like. Communicating this with the [design] team is paramount, because you need the aspects [of the game] to be cohesive, regardless of team size. You need things to be fun! So, testing is important. It’s the constant cycle of design, iterate, and test.”

5. **At the end of the day, I feel that videogames are about user-interaction and enjoyment. So, in your experience, what have you done/seen designers do to make a more enjoyable product?**
   “U-Ex [user experience] is often overlooked and it’s a shame, UI designers are an extinct breed... They put a lot of time and effort into the environment to make it make the most sense, and it directly impacts the U-Ex. The end goal is fun, you need everything to make sense and be cohesive as a whole, you can have a great idea, but if the mechanics aren’t interesting or done well, then what's the point?”