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Extending the Dimensions of the Social World through Game-Worlds

Jonathan Tuckett

Abstract

Alfred Schutz's dimensions of the social world was a key component of his phenomenology of the life-world. As Schutz saw it the life-world is arranged around us as its zero-point determined by the "Here and Now" we occupy. From there the life-world extends into various zones determined by their relation to our "Here and Now" in terms of space and time. The dimensions of the social world built up the sort of we-relationship that was possible with the Other depending on the zone they occupied within the life-world. Due to the time of his writing, Schutz's dimensions could not have factored in the internet and a recent article by Shangyang Zhao (2004) has attempted to extend the dimensions in relation to internet interaction. Building of this, it is the purpose of this paper to extend Schutz's dimensions by looking at First Person Shooters. By looking at game-worlds it is possible to highlight two types of we-relationship missing in the current dimensions: the andsociate relation and the consociated contemporary relation.

Keywords: Alfred Schutz, first person shooter, we-relationship, Shangyang Zhao, avatars

Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) was interested in the way that we orient the world about ourselves as its centre point. We occupy a "Here and Now" around which everything is then arranged in terms of space and time into various "zones". A significant factor in this is what he called the "dimensions of the social world": the ways in which we-relationships can be constituted depending on the "zone" the Other occupies. Due to the period in which he wrote, Schutz's understanding of the dimensions of the social world could not have factored in the internet. Yet it has been suggested that the internet constitutes a new space in which to fashion communities, different to those in the life-

world.ⁱ As recognised by Shangyang Zhao (2004), this presents a challenge to Schutz's understanding of the consociate relationship, in particular, in which face-to-face engagements occur.

It is the intention of this paper to further explore and develop Schutz's dimensions of the social world, including Zhao's contribution, by investigating the sort of relations available in online interactions. However, unlike Zhao who focused primarily on online chat room engagements this paper will focus on a different sort of arena. I argue that a more detailed analysis of Schutz's dimensions can be achieved if we explore the ways in which we-relationships are constituted in game-worlds – the environment which the player interacts with in-game. More exactly, in case of first person shooter games (FPS) it is possible to see that the very structure of the games, the way in which the player is encouraged to interact with the game-world, highlights two forms of we-relationship lacking in Schutz's dimensions. In particular I will highlight the *andsociate* relation which is already possible in Schutz's scheme but oddly lacking and the *consociated contemporary* relation which is potentially unique to game-worlds. In providing these extensions to the dimensions of the social world this will hopefully provide tools which may be of use in future studies that aim to explain player interaction in game-worlds.

I have elected to focus on first person shooter games (FPS) as these constitute the largest market in online gaming. In 2012 the two most popular FPS series, *Call of Duty* (*CoD*) and *Battlefield*, claimed to have over 90 million monthly average users. Similarly in 2012 *Halo*, another of the more popular FPS, recorded that there was an average of 263 million matches played per month for just one of several games available at the time. More recently, Activision estimated that in the first week after release of *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* (2014) a total 370 million matches were played online. Working on

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figures from all *CoD* games released since 2010 there is now an estimated 125 million monthly users (Takahashi 2014). To give a comparison, the combined total of several major massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) is about 61 million average monthly users. Of these, the most popular is *World of Warcraft* which only had 6.5 million monthly users in 2006 and 11 million in 2010 (Nardi and Harris 2006, 149, Nardi and Harris 2010). Despite their popularity, most literature (not just phenomenological) has largely underplayed analysis of FPS. For example, William Bainbridge, a prominent sociologist of religion, has written a number of books on *WoW* and other MMOs (2009; 2010a, 2010b) and his most recent book, *eGods* (2013), claims to study over forty one games only one of which is an FPS.

Further, if our consideration is the way we-relationships are constituted in game-worlds, FPS games also have an advantage over MMOs due to their explicitly "player vs. player" focus. iii As games are goal oriented activities iv an FPS makes another player the goal, which is not always the case in MMOs. For example, Brown and Bell (2004) and Nardi and Harris (2010) have focussed on the *collaborative* emphasis of games, the latter focusing on *WoW* alone. From the perspective of this paper, the "collaborative Other" becomes no more than a "tool" for the player and in this sense their Otherness is occluded. Due to the convergence of goal and player in FPS games, however, Otherness is made explicit.

The following comments focus specifically on *CoD* as an archetypal example of an FPS game. *CoD* games have consistently outdone rivals in sales charts with each game breaking successive sales records. Activision claim that *CoD* has generated more revenue than the movie franchises *The Hunger Games, Transformers, Iron Man,* and *The Avengers* combined (Takahashi 2014). Nevertheless, what can be said of *CoD* can be said of all

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FPS in general. The differences between FPSs are largely superficial and all share the same core mechanics. The main differences occur in visual aspects such as the Heads up Display (HUD) which provides the player with information, the weaponry used, the possible variations upon the Deathmatch game-type, and the number of players in a single match.

The Arena and its Social Relations

In order to grasp the sort of social relations possible within game-worlds it is necessary to give a brief exposition of Schutz's dimensions of the social world detailed at various points throughout his writing. The dimensions are also discussed in the posthumously published *The Structure of the Life World* (1973) which is extensively used by Zhao. However, we must be somewhat careful with this last text as it was completed by Thomas Luckmann using notes and plans Schutz drafted before his death. As Luckmann admits in the preface:

"This book cannot be the book as Schutz would have written it. It is not even the book I *think* he would have written." (Schutz and Luckmann 1973, xxi).

The possible social dimensions are determined by what Schutz calls the manipulatory and perceptive spheres. There is some relation here to Sartre's notion of the "situation" as the objective structure which surrounds me determining what possibilities I have available at the given moment (Sartre 2003, 283). As Schutz suggests in "Symbol, Reality, and Society":

"We start our analysis with the description of the situation in which I find myself within the world at any moment of my everyday life, intentionally disregarding at this level the existence of fellow-men and of society." (1962, 306)

According to Schutz, in our everyday life the world is organised around myself as its

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centre. My body occupies a "Here" from which I orient myself in space and I live in the "Now" out of which comes my time-perspective.

A primary aspect of the orientation of things is what Schutz calls the *world within actual* reach:

"which includes, thus, the objects within the scope of my view and the range of my hearing. Inside this field within my reach there is a region of things which I can manipulate" (1962, 307).

I will refer to this as the *arena*, adapting Sartre's notion of the "situation". Which is a structure of two elements:

First, is the *manipulatory sphere* viii: the region open to immediate interference by me. For example, the cup on the desk is within my manipulatory sphere because I do not have to get out of my chair in order to pick it up. Schutz suggests that everything that is within the manipulatory sphere belongs to the present tense – it is within my "Now". It is important to bear in mind that this "Now" is subjective. If I reach out to grab the mug, for example, there is an expectation that as I close my fingers I will grasp the mug. This expectation contains a time frame in which the action starts and ends. If the action is *successfully* completed within that time frame then it is occurring in my "Now". Another example would be if I asked a friend a question. The question not only contains the expectation of an answer, it contains the expectation that the answer will come within a set time frame. If it meets this expectation then it occurs in my "Now", this holds regardless of the amount of objective time (i.e. seconds, minutes, etc.) that we expect an answer to be forthcoming. Thus an answer that is given within an hour is within my "Now" if it is within the expectation. Second, is the *perceptive sphere*: everything that I can perceive without changing my present location. For instance, if I reach out and miss



the mug, I may see that it is at the far end of the table. Thus the mug is within my perceptive sphere while being out of my manipulatory sphere.

It is important to note that the manipulatory sphere is always contain within the limits of my perception (Figure 1).

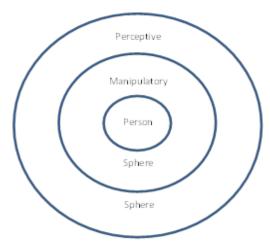


Figure 1: The basic arena

In this respect it is useful to use to the imagery of a gladiatorial arena. Everything that is on the arena floor, including the other gladiators, is within the manipulatory sphere because it warrants immediate action and attention. The grandstands and its spectators constitute the perceptive sphere as there are no immediate actions that can be performed in this regard. There is a barrier between us (the wall) that prevents manipulation. But as a warning qualification we should not be fooled into a potential bias that would favour our eyes in this regard. For example, if I am in a closed room the walls do not determine the limits of my arena. Though I may not be able to see anything, the walls may be flimsy and I can hear everything that goes on the other side. In this respect my arena extends as far as I can hear.

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The distinction between the two spheres and the notion of an arena is useful for understanding the primary consideration of this paper. Schutz suggests that as part of our orientating the world around ourselves as its centre point, this orientation into various zones determines the type of we-relationship we engage in. He gives four classifications: predecessors, contemporaries, consociates, and successors. Of particular concern is how we differentiate between contemporaries and consociates.^x

A. Contemporary Relations

A contemporary is anyone "with whom a mutual interplay of action and reaction can be established" (Schutz 1962, 15). If the results of my manipulations upon my fellow, or theirs upon me, occur in my "Now", we share a *community of time*. For example, when I post a letter the postman who collects and delivers it does so in the "Now" assuming that "my letter will reach the addressee within typically reasonable time" (Schutz 1962, 15). Contemporaries can only be indirectly experienced in that

"his subjective experiences can only be known in the form of *general types* of subjective experiences" (Schutz 1967, 181).

By inference and abstraction I am able to build a construct of how I expect someone to act. Say my letter asks a favour of my friend, this is indirect manipulation because it is founded upon the assumption that my friend will do what I ask. As such contemporaries exist in a new zone of my arena that exists beyond my perceptive sphere. I will refer to this zone as indirect manipulation in contrast to direct manipulation which occurs within the perceptive sphere (Figure 2).

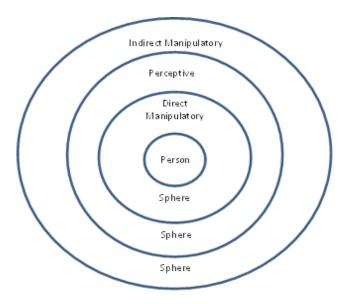


Figure 2: Extended Arena

B. Consociate Relations

As well as the community of time that allows for contemporary relations it is also possible to share a *community of space* in which the Other is within my "Here". A community of space requires that

"a certain sector of the outer world is equally within the reach of each partner, and contains objects of common interest and relevance" (Schutz 1962, 16).

A community of space is constituted by our perceptive spheres overlapping with one another. When this overlap occurs we enter a face-to-face relation by which is meant

"merely a purely formal aspect of social relationship equally applicable to an intimate talk between friends and the co-presence of strangers in a railroad car" (Schutz 1962, 16).

However brief or superficial this encounter may be, it is important to recognise that by sharing in the community of space and time each member of the face-to-face relationship now engages in the "Here and Now" of the Other – we "grow old together". As Schutz puts it:

"each partner participates in the on-rolling life of the other, can grasp in a vivid present the other's thoughts as they are built up step by step" (1962, 16).

As such, these *consociates* share in each other's biographical situation. If we were to imagine our lives as written biographies the consociate is someone who features in my biography at the same time as I feature in theirs. This entails that unlike a contemporary, who is always a construct or *type*, a consociate is experienced as a unique individual because "I directly experience them and their subjective experiences" (Schutz 1967, 142).

C. Mediation

In later work Schutz also recognised a limitation of his presentation of the manipulatory sphere that requires further differentiation of the various zones. As he saw it

"the problem involved is more complicated, especially at a time when, through the use of long range rockets, the manipulatory sphere may be extended beyond the world within my reach' (1962, 307).

Schutz therefore added "artificial extensions" to the manipulatory sphere by which he meant "tools and instruments in the broadest sense of this term" (1962, 307). It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between unmediated (the body) and mediated (artificial extensions) manipulation and perception (Figure 3). For example, the phone call is mediated because my speaking body is "Here" but the voice with which I speak is heard at a "There" far beyond the reach of my shouting.



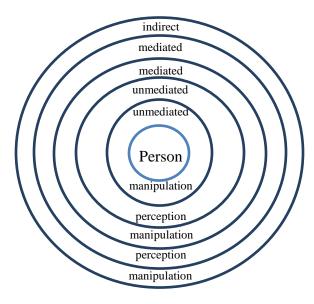


Figure 3: full arena

D. The Other Player as Problem

In order to understand how these manipulatory and perceptive sphere operate within game-worlds there is one further notion to be added: the purpose-at-hand. As Schutz understood it, people are constantly "problem solving" and the problem – a person's prevailing interest – determines what aspects of the world are picked out as relevant. To understand this he gives the case of "S is p" (1970, 102-104). If our interest is the pbeing of S then what is not brought to mind is that S is also q, r, and other things as well as p and so really we should say "S is, among many other things such as q and r, also p". He thus points out that if I assert "S is p"

"I do so because for my purpose at hand at this particular moment I am interested only in the p-being of S and am disregarding as not relevant to such purpose the fact that S is also q and r" (Schutz 1962, 76).

This is important for our understanding of the arena because the arena is thus, in part, constituted by the purpose/problem at hand.

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It is useful to introduce certain Heideggerian notions here as they will help contextualise the usefulness of FPS games to our discussion. Returning to the earlier image of a gladiator arena it is possible to say that the various gladiators – as they are trying to kill me – represent my current problem at hand. For Heidegger our initial contact with objects occurs in the everyday world and not as objects "there" but rather in terms of their use. To this is applied the term "Zuhandenheit" – handiness or ready-to-hand (Heidegger 2010, 69). In Schutzian terms this is to say the ready-to-handness of an object is determined by how well it helps with the current problem at hand. Everything on the arena floor is ready-to-hand in this sense because it can contribute to beating the other gladiators. By contrast, the audience is an objective presence – "Vorhandenheit" or present-at-hand (Heidegger 2010, 70). Importantly though, this

"character of objective presence making itself known is still bound to the handiness of useful things" (Heidegger 2010, 73).

That is, objects are generally encountered as present-at-hand because they *obstruct* our attempt to solve the problem. In the current metaphor, the audience are a specific form of objective presence referred to as *conspicuousness*:

"what is unusable just lies there; it shows itself as a thing of use which has this or that appearance and which is always objectively present with this or that outward appearance in its handiness" (Heidegger 2010, 72).

That is, the audience presents itself as unuseful to solving the current problem. Other forms of objective presence include *obtrusiveness* when the object is not the object we need and *obstinacy* when an object hinders our performance of a task.

Obstinacy is particularly important in FPS multiplayer. In a Deathmatch the purpose is to

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kill the other players while not being killed in turn. The opposing players are both the problem to be solved *and* obstinate in trying to prevent me from succeeding. Contrast this with MMOs like *Dungeons and Dragons Online (DDO)* in which players are always working in co-operation to achieve a shared goal.^{xii} While it is possible for other players to be conspicuous, obtrusive and obstinate this is only in their role as "tools" for achieving a particular purpose – i.e. solving the problem at hand. *DDO* makes this particularly apparent because the player has the option to replace teammates with "bots" – computer controlled characters which fulfil the same role and function as a player controlled character. As such, the "tool" need not necessarily be an Other.

Nowhere though, are other players in *DDO* the problem to be solved. Thus, I suggest, FPS games make more apparent the realm of social interaction because the Other player is either the goal or obstructs the goal. This is true even in objective based matches like Capture the Flag in which the teams attempt to steal the enemy flag and return it to their own flag while defending it. While the Other player is not the problem to be solved, they nonetheless have as their goal preventing me from solving the problem.

The Reality of the Game-World

In order to extend Schutz's dimensions of the social world we must understand the sort of zone that is created by game-worlds: the environment which I interact with created by the game. The various maps in which I can play *CoD* constitute this game-world, but in order for there to be a relation (of any sort) this entails the game-world must occupy a discrete sector of the broader life-world. The issue here is that the game-world is only ever accessed through mediating devices. By the artificial extension of my eyes provided by the screen I am able to see into a location that I could not otherwise reach. I cannot, for example, place my feet inside Bootleg (a map in *Modern Warfare 3* (2011)). Similarly, it is only by use of an Xbox controller that I am able to manipulate the objects contained

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within Bootleg. Everything that we see happening on the screen that gives us Bootleg is really just a series of binary code running various computations. But this naturalistic perspective in which the binary code is what is considered real fails to appreciate Bootleg as it is perceived by the player.

To deal with this it is useful to draw on the comments of Max Scheler (1874-1928) – who influenced both Heidegger and Schutz – in regard to his distinction between the natural and scientific viewpoints. Scheler points out that the sun as it is experienced by persons is the sun of the milieu, not the sun of astronomy: 'The sun of the milieu is different at the North Pole, in moderate zones, and at the equator, and its beams are felt as different beams' (Scheler 1973, 139). What belongs to "milieu" (i.e. the life-world) is what is experienced as effective on the person. He points out that although there are many things which have an effect on me in the objective sense – such as electrical magnetic radiation – I do not experience their effects on me. What I do experience is the lack of warmth of the Scottish sun. Similarly, when playing in Bootleg the player does not experience binary code, what they see and hear is an urban environment. We need to recognise that Bootleg as it is played constitutes part of the "milieu" of the player. That is, the player experiences effectively:

"Anything "effectively experienced" is precisely something whose variation in any form corresponds to a variation of some form in my experience" (Scheler 1973, 139).

That playing *CoD* involves effective experience is made more than evident by the plethora of Youtube videos of irate players. Indeed, the consociated contemporary relation to be identified later may help explain why players react in the way that they do.

The natural viewpoint contained within these various mileux is that attitude which takes

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them as given – i.e. true without question. Schutz builds on this to suggest that taking something as given is to bestow the accent of reality upon it (Schutz 1962, 229-231). Whilst playing *CoD* the player takes it for granted that Bootleg is there. Returning to Heideigger's notion of ready-to-hand, this assumes that I am too busy using the various extensions (controller, etc.) to attend to them as extensions: the extension

"withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness in order to be really handy. What everyday dealings are initially busy with is not tools themselves, but the work" (Heidegger 2010, 69).

It is only in moments of disjunction when my use of the controller does not correspond to the avatar's actions that I attend to the controller as the artificial extension. Crick, in his own study of *Modern Warfare* (2007) comes to a similar conclusion:

While playing an FPS, for example, I rarely think about controlling the avatar. There is no reflection or intellectual analysis; I think as the avatar, from the viewpoint of the avatar. By becoming accustomed to the movements of the control device – enabling fluent engagement within my corporal schema and, as such, becomes an extension of my bodily basis of consciousness.

But what sort of reality are we to understand this as? Jesper Juul, for example, has suggested that games are "half-real" on the basis while the rules we play by are real, the dragons we slay are fictional (Juul 2005, 1). To the contrary, these game-worlds are completely real, but building on Schutz's comments they are only finite sectors of reality. Schutz discusses the notion a *finite province of meaning*: a particular cognitive style in which experiences are real so long as they cohere with that style (1962, 229-231). An inconsistent experience does not become unreal, but rather is made real according to another province. So too, with game-worlds, when my controller breaks this does not

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make the game less real but rather severs my ability to access a finite sector of reality by making me focus on another. And as these game-worlds are only finite sectors it is also inappropriate to speak of "virtual reality". As Hanna Sommerseth notes, virtual reality involves

"an experience of an environment or a world lacking correspondence to a reality outside itself" (Sommerseth 2007, 766).

Unlike virtual reality which would be all consuming, a game-world only occupies a portion of my given arena (the screen) and can only be perceived by sight and hearing. That I am speaking in terms of "worlds" rather than Schutz's own provinces of meaning is to grasp that what occurs within Bootleg, for example, operates according to a different set of rules as those I experience in the rest of the life-world. But, to reiterate, because it is still the source of effective experiences it is no less real because of this.

This difference in rules necessarily has an effect on the player's manipulatory and perceptive spheres. Based on my presentation of the notion of a person's arena and the fact that these maps in the game-world are in effect arenas of a gladiatorial style we may mistakenly assume that the map in its entirety is part of my arena. This is a mistake because my arena is determined by manipulative and perceptive capacities alone. Quite simply, at any given moment it is impossible for the player to perceive or manipulate everything contained within Bootleg. Rather, maps are the background against which the possible limits of the mediated zone of my arena are determined. It is necessary though to make some brief comments about the manipulatory and perceptive spheres as they are determined within the game-world of *CoD*.

As a basic starting point we can understand the manipulatory sphere as defined as

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anything within the map that the player can affect to bring about the scoring of points. The perceptive sphere is then constituted by everything that the player can perceive around this manipulatory sphere. Further to this, CoD offers a variety of options for the player to alter their manipulatory and perceptive spheres within this mediated zone. These options take the form of equipment that makes up a player's "loadout" and include the choice of weapons, attachments, lethal equipment, tactical equipment, perks, strike packages, and death streaks. However, these are divisions provided by the game and are not necessarily drawn along lines that change the player's manipulatory and perceptive spheres. Specifically the vast majority of these, the choice of weapon for example, do not alter the size of the arena but the way in which the player interacts with it. Those items that alter the size of the arena can be broadly divided into two groups: extensions and limiters. An extension is any item that increases the manipulatory or percetive sphere of the player and can be divided into launchers, drops, air support, and radar depending on the particular function they perform. Launchers, for example, increase the manipulatory sphere of the player by allowing them to kill opposing players out of their "line of sight". XIV Conversely, limiter items remove the player from the Other player's arena. The Blind Eye perk, for example, makes the player invisible to air support and therefore immune to that particular kind of manipulation.

Two things can be noted of this. First, the player's arena is in a constant state of flux throughout the match. This flux is achieved not only because the player moves about the map thereby changing how much of it is within their arena but also by choice of loadout. Typically a player may choose between one of five loadouts in the match, which they can switch between on a regular basis. Second, the ability to change loadouts and the inclusion of *limiters* reveal that the game actually encourages and makes apparent a social relation Schutz seems to have ignored in his dimensions.

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The andsociate Emphasis of CoD

The first extension to Schutz's dimensions comes in the form of *andsociate* relations. In numerous discussions of "observation" Schutz occasionally mentions the example of watching someone chop wood. His primary concern in this case is to explicate how the observer produces a correct interpretation of the observed. But in one case he admits that observation involves a "one-sided relationship" (Schutz 1967, 171-176). This raises an issue for the consociate relation that Schutz does not explore.

The person I see chopping wood may be so busy they do not notice my presence. For all intents and purposes I, as the observer in this situation, do not exist to the wood chopper. When this "Now" has passed and they recall the arena in which they chopped wood I will not be present as a part of that past-arena. We may call this a "purposive blindness": my problem at hand restricts my arena. In an objective sense I am within the woodcutter's possible hearing but they do not hear me because their current problem at hand does not lend itself to hearing me. But it is the condition of a consociate relation that the other person also perceives me. In effect Schutz fails to account for *spying*, moments when the observer is face-to-face with the observed but the observed is not face-to-face with the observer (Figure 4).



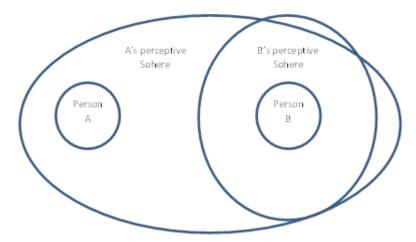


Figure 4: A is spying on B

I will coin the term *andsociate* to define this relation.^{xv} In line with Schutz's comments that the world is orientated according to my "Here" it also needs to be added that the wood chopper is not engaged in an andsociate relation and from his perspective there is no relation at all. We may thus characterise this as "face-to-back".

Evidence and the preference for this sort of relation can be found in the "player vs. player" nature of FPS games. In a Deathmatch the best way to maximise point scoring is to kill as many players as possible without being killed in turn. Being killed results in "respawning": the player reappears in another part of the map and must then spend time finding more enemies again. Further, in *CoD* respawning often comes with a time penalty meaning the player is excluded from the match for about ten seconds. As such, in order to achieve maximum point scoring capabilities, players want to do two things: first, they want to increase their manipulatory sphere as far as possible in order to bring opposing players within it; second, they want to reduce the manipulatory spheres of opposing players in order not to be killed. It is therefore in the interest of Roach, for example, to maintain an andsociate relation with his opponents. If Roach sneaks up on Soap, another player, as he is out of Soap's perceptive sphere then he is not within

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Soap's direct arena. At best Soap is only aware of Roach as a contemporary, but as a contemporary Roach is no more than the type "opposing player". This is preferable for Roach because it makes it less likely that Soap can kill him. That is, by maintaining and sociate relations to Other players, Roach increases his chances of winning.

It is also important to recognise that this andsociate relation *does not* become a consociate relation at the moment of death. For Soap, who has just been killed, the Roach that he becomes aware of is either a predecessor or contemporary. Roach is a predecessor to the extent that Soap is able to watch how Roach killed him through *CoD's* "killcam". In this case Roach is a predecessor because Soap cannot do anything to interact with the Roach he perceives. However, as the "killcam" is no always available, Roach does become a more detailed contemporary because the game delivers a message to say that Roach had killed him. Soap does not directly perceive Roach in this case, but rather the message adds content to the construct that is the type "opposing player" turning it into the more detailed type "opposing player who killed me". By "detailed" I mean this new type provides more modes of behaviour in the sense that the "opposing player who killed me" stands out from other "opposing players" as a target. Again, this is because the game mechanics award Soap more points for killing Roach as "revenge" than killing another player.

Andsociate relations, therefore, are the preferred relation engendered by *CoD* and FPS games more generally. However, widening this preference to other game-worlds becomes difficult. We can say that the andsociate relation is preferable in all "player vs. player" games but must also recognise that different game-worlds place restrictions on their possibility. Take the fighting game *Tekken*, for example, in which both avatars are on screen at all times. Though it would be easier to beat an opponent if they could not

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see the attack coming, the mechanics of the game-world itself render the possibility of an andsociate relation almost impossible. Further, in game-worlds which are not "player vs. player", though andsociate relations can occur there is no particular preference attached to them. In *DDO* that a fellow player happens to be an andsociate is unlikely to have any bearing on solving the problem at hand. In point of fact, the co-operative emphasis of *DDO* would give preference to the converse. As success relies on keeping each other alive, being an andsociate places myself at risk because the other player will not notice when I am attacked.

Nevertheless, what can be concluded so far is that the very structure of games like *CoD* necessarily encourage and sociate relations. This is not to say this is a unique relation of FPS and "player vs. player" games. FPS like *CoD* and *Battlefield* are designed to simulate war in the life-world. By extension it is quite easy to see that if these FPS games reveal the and sociate relation to be preferable, wars as containing similar circumstances will also favour them. But this very point highlights the deficit in Schutz's dimensions of the social world in which the possibility of what I have called the and sociate relation was, oddly, not considered.**

Zhao's Consociated Contemporaries

The second extension that I wish to add relates to Shanyang Zhao's (2004) argument that the internet involves a new realm of social relation. Drawing on the work of Backhaus (1997), Zhao suggests that:

"The use of electronic communications technologies extends human perceptual reaches beyond the limits of human naked senses, resulting in the rise of a third-realm – the realm of consociated contemporaries, where people interact face-to-device with each other in combinations of telecopresence" (Zhao 2004, 92).



In Zhao's view this new social dimension provides a new way to establish the werelationship taking place in the mediated realm. Telecopresence entails a

"situation in which individuals, though not mutually present in the same physical locale, are in each other's electronic proximity and capable of maintaining simultaneous contact with one another through the mediation of an electronic communications network" (Zhao 2004, 98-99).

In telecopresence both parties are outside each other's unmediated realms but through the mediating device may engage with each other in their "Now". Zhao refers to this as a "face-to-device" interaction, the *consociated contemporary relation*, as the individuals engaged in electronic communication act through the mediation of a device (Figure 5).

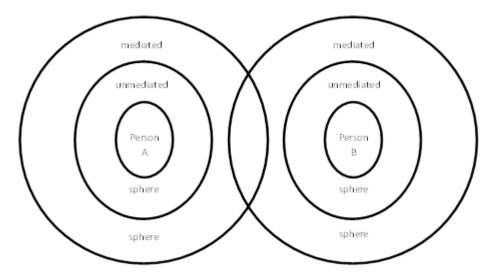


Figure 5: consociated contemporary relation

In the consociated contemporary relation I do not interact with the Other in their embodied presence, i.e. face-to-face, but rather interact with the device that allows them to extend their arena into the mediated zone. And significantly, I am only able to do this by using a mediating device myself. By consequence,

"unlike contemporaries who orient toward others as mere "ideal types," people in



this realm are telecopresent individuals, interacting with one another face to device in real or near-real time" (Zhao 2004, 99).

What I suggest is that Zhao's account fails to appreciate the possible combinations of overlap between unmediated and mediated realms, specifically that there is a difference between communication through telephone and online instant messaging. The suggestion is that both entail face-to-device relations because a mediating device is involved. However, counter to this I argue that in the case of the telephone conversation the mediation of the phone operates as an expansion of the "to" in "face-to-face".

To understand this, we must go back to Backhaus from whom Zhao draws from. Also following Schutz, Backhaus claims a telephone conversation involves three environments: the environment in which I stand, the environment in which you stand, and the environment we share through the telephone. This differs from Schutz's account in which a telephone conversation does not take place in a "third environment" but rather through mediation constitutes the dissolution of the conversant's "There" such that they are heard within my "Here". What is missing from Backhaus' account is an appreciation of the person's experience of hearing the conversant. That is, while the phone allows for a mediate manipulatory sphere in that I can contact people far beyond the limits of my physical shouting, I nevertheless hear the other conversant within my unmediated perceptive sphere. As Backhaus himself notes, in the phone conversation what I get is not the environment in which you stand but just an indication of your subjectivity (1997, 206). Say, for example, I trick a blind person and use a loudspeaker device to communicate with them such that I am many miles from the room they are standing in. In such a scenario the blind person does not know that I am not there in the room with them. That I may occupy a far distant location is not experienced by them, all they experience is my talking to them from a point within the room. In both cases they

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are having a face-to-face relation with me because their perceptions are *direct* even though they are unaware that in one case that relation has been mediated.

What needs to be borne in mind in the case of the phone conversation is that mediation refers to the manipulatory sphere as speaker but not the perceptive sphere as listener. As listener, the sound comes from the phone which is within the unmediated realm. In order for it to be a case of mediated perception the listener would have to be able to hear the sounds as they issue from the speaker's mouth, not the phone. That Backhaus does not recognise this point is because he has a sight-biased understanding of the face-to-face relationship. In his presentation of the conversational thematisations involved in phone conversations, the third variation is "Telephone conversation between two people in the face-to-face relationship" (Backhaus 1997, 209-210). By this Backhaus indicates a phone conversation in which the two conversants can see each other. As he goes to on to suggest

"I may calculate that the face-to-face would be considered a disturbance while the telephone call may not" (Backhaus 1997, 210).

But this understanding of the face-to-face relationship is far more restrictive than Schutz who understands by it only that "both partners share time and space, *perceiving* one another" (Schutz 1962, 315). In his own exposition he makes no reference to sight and focuses on listening alone. The perceptive sphere is in no way restricted to how far I can see, but is constituted by the totality of my available perceptive faculties. Because of his focus on sight, Backhaus does not pay enough attention to the experiences of hearing and so presents the idea of the "third environment" on a misconception.

In order for Backhaus' "third environment" to make sense what would have to occur is

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that the mediated manipulatory sphere and the mediated perceptive sphere overlap.

That is, all engagement between two conversants occurs only within the mediated realms of their arenas. And despite the fact that Zhao follows Backhaus by suggesting that telephone conversations belong to this "third environment", when he focuses his analysis on online chat rooms this may be a more accurate understanding. As he puts it:

"Unlike those in the situation of copresence who directly interact with one another face to face from body to body, people in telecopresence interact with one another indirectly, usually via a desk screen with a keyboard linked to an electronic communications network" (Zhao 2004, 99).

Zhao explains that people in online chat rooms share a community of time but not a community of place. This shift from "space" to "place" by Zhao seems to be designed to indicate the unmediated realm of an arena. In the cases of telecopresence, the conversants engage in mediated manipulation (keyboard) and mediated perception (screen). What is perhaps most significant about this face-to-device engagement is that

"individuals interact with each other in the absence of embodied cues. The disembodied mode of communication, such as online chat, conceals the identities of the interlocutors, allowing individuals to get to know each other without seeing each other" (Zhao 2004, 100).

Following my critique of Backhaus above, I would qualify this as "without perceiving each other".

What Zhao perceptively recognises is that what I engage with is not the "face" of the Other but rather the words they put on my screen. However, whether this indeed constitutes a "third environment" is questionable. What differentiates a message sent via online chat from a letter sent via a postman? A letter on a piece of paper is as much a "disembodied mode of communication". That Zhao is able to construe the two as

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different is possible because of a deviation from Schutz's understanding of consociates and contemporaries, and a different interpretation of the "Now".

The significant difference in Zhao's conception of consociates and contemporaries is found in statements such as the following:

"Consociates are therefore long-time acquaintances, who are copresent most of the time, have lived through similar experiences, and have intimate knowledge of each other" (2004, 93).

By contrast contemporaries are strangers. But Schutz denies any such intimacy in the consociate relation and states that it can be 'fugitive and superficial' and involving the interacting of strangers (Schutz 1962, 17). In Zhao's presentation the absent friend remains a consociate which again Schutz denies: 'a friendship is made up of many separate events occurring over a long period of time. Some of these events involve face-to-face situations, in others the partners simply exist side by side as contemporaries (1967, 179). Thus when I speak of the absent friend

"I form an ideal type of his personality and behaviour based on my past experience of A as my consociate" (Schutz 1962, 17).

A letter, even though it may come from a friend, nevertheless comes from a contemporary as the person who sends it is not within my direct perceptive sphere. Say the letter is a report of this friend's wellbeing, depending on how long it took to arrive, the report may be out of date by the time I receive it. The letter provides me with a construct the validity of which can only be verified by a direct encounter.

Zhao, significantly, reconceives what for Schutz was a *spatial relation*, a question of where the Other is positioned in relation to my "Here and Now", to a *personal relation*.

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"if consociates can be regarded as intimate friends and contemporaries as anonymous strangers, then consociated contemporaries may be considered either intimate strangers or anonymous friends" (Zhao 2004, 101).

Drawing on the work of Locke (1998), Zhao alters Schutz's slogan of "growing old together" to "being alone together" (2004, 102). Understood in this way a consociated contemporary is someone with whom I can have an intimate relationship – "exploring the innermost part of ourselves" – without knowing who they are. Kitchin has similarly observed that the screen acts as a mask to render relative anonymity to the user (Kitchin 1998, 14). But once this recognised how is online chat meant to be any different from letters? Can the same level of intimacy not be achieved, while protecting one's anonymity, through a letter? That a difference between the two can be maintained by Zhao is because online messages are "immediate": an online message takes next to zero seconds to arrive at its destination whereas a letter can take days. Face-to-face contact is similarly immediate and so the two by extension must be similar in kind. What becomes clear here is that the "Now", for Zhao, is construed in objective rather than subjective time. And, implicit in his account is the assumption that "intimacy" requires "immediacy".

Contra Zhao, Schutz made no such claims about the face-to-face contact. Not only this, but even though the online message may be immediate it is no less *indirect* than the letter I send my pen pal. That is, the Other given to me by the letter/instant message is the Other of "Just Now". What I perceive is not an Other as they are "Now", rather I perceive the manipulated object – the message. Crucially, I do not perceive the manipulating. I did not see this person write the message that they have sent me. In any form of indirect manipulation the manipulation is disembodied because the manipulated object can no longer be manipulated once it has been "sent". We can

contrast this with telephone communication which is *direct* because I can *hear* the speaker.^{xvii}

The notion of "Just Now" occurs primarily in Schutz's criticism (1962) of Scheler's understanding of intersubjectivity. Strictly speaking, "Just Now" is not applied to the Other but the self: Schutz explains that in reflection the self that is perceived is never the self of "Now" but the self of "Just Now":

"what we grasp by the *reflective* act is never the present of our stream of thought and also not its specious present; it is always its past" (Schutz 1962, 172-173).

Simply put, the self is too busy doing the reflecting to ever capture itself in its *vivid present*. By contrast, however, it is possible to capture the Other in their vivid present – as a "Now" as opposed to "Just Now" (Schutz 1962, 173-174). However, it is worth noting that the Other spoken of here is a consociate. It is significant that Schutz explains that: 'In *listening* to a lecturer, for instance, we seem to participate immediately in the development of his stream of thought' (emphasis added Schutz 1962, 173). In order to build up the Other's thought as they are thinking it I must have *embodied* cues to do so.

To say the contemporary belongs to the "Just Now" requires a qualification, however. The contemporary I manipulate belongs to my "Now". This is so because I am manipulating them in the sense that manipulation is ongoing. However, the contemporary who manipulates me has already finished the manipulation. In this respect I have indirect perception of the Other: I experience the manipulated object as the product of an absent (i.e. outside of my "Here") manipulator. As such the contemporary belongs to the "Now" when I manipulate them and the "Just Now" when they manipulate me. Note, this does not require the contemporary does manipulate me:



the contemporary I learn of through hearsay also belongs to the "Just Now". Nor should this "Just Now" be conflated with the "Past" in which case the contemporary would in fact be a predecessor. The crucial difference between the two is that I still have the possibility to manipulate the contemporary whereas I do not have such a possibility with the predecessor.

This distinction between the "Now" and the "Just Now" is crucial if we are to maintain the possibility of consociated contemporary relations in a way that is consistent with Schutz's spatial understanding of the dimensions of the social world. By looking at *CoD* we will see that a consociated contemporary is an Other who is there "There and Now". Specifically, even though they are absent ("There") I am nonetheless able to perceiving their manipulating – rather than the manipulated – through their avatar.

The Disjunction of Perception

Based on my introduction of the andsociate relation, for a consociate relation to occur the person who is the recipient of the manipulation must be able to perceive the manipulator. By applying this to *CoD* we may simplify this by saying that I must be able to *see* who shoots me. However, this comment may propagate the sight-bias that can be identified in Backhaus' work on telephone calls. I raise this point here because the consideration of the possibility of a sight-bias brings to a light a disjunction of relations in game-worlds that allows us to properly apply the notion of consociated contemporary.

In the case of *CoD* we can in fact identify that the perception of the Other is entirely dependent upon sight alone due to the mediation involved. The Other occupies a position in Bootleg which can only be perceived by the mediation of the television which

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shows me Bootleg. At the same time, as this television allows such mediation it is also an object within the sphere of my unmediated perception. This becomes significant if we factor in the possibility of not only seeing the Other but hearing them instead. Let us take the example of Roach firing his gun (Figure 6).

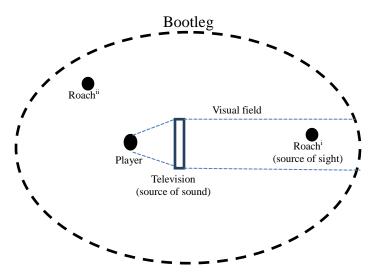


Figure 6: sources of perception

Visually the screen is experienced much like a window that allows a restricted view through which I can see Bootleg. I can therefore see Roach firing his gun from a particular location in Bootleg (Roachⁱ). However, the experience of sound differs from this in that the source of the sound does not emanate from a location within Bootleg but from the object in my unmediated sphere (the television). As can be seen in Figure 6 the sources of my perceptions of Roach are in fact separately located. Crucially, and indicating the sight-bias of the FPS, I am only able to associate the sound of gunfire with Roach because I see him simultaneously. This point becomes clear if we remove sight from consideration. If I close my eyes and simply listen, all I can hear is the sound of gunfire emanating from the television and I cannot locate its source "There" in the game-world. This is like the case of the blind man in the previous section: regardless of



where I actually am, he always hears me from the same location (the speakers). Without visual confirmation I am unable to distinguish between Roach if he fires from in front of me (Roachⁱ) from if he fires behind me (Roachⁱⁱ).

In fact, if all I have is sound, then I cannot even identify Roach as Roach as all I perceive is the manipulation, not the manipulator. As it is not the manipulator that I aim perceiving I cannot identify a unique individual – i.e Roach – but rather only become aware of contemporary "player firing gun" – a *type*. Indeed, to trace back to the earlier discussion, this means Roachⁱⁱ has an andsociate relation with me in this situation.* I am within his perceptive sphere, but he is not within mine. The only way in which I can establish a consociate relation with Roach in the game-world is if I see him and he sees me.

The consequence of this disjunction of the sources of perception and the sight-bias that I want to highlight is that, insofar as I am dependent on sight what I see is not the embodied Roach but rather the avatar by which he manipulates the game-world. Earlier I mentioned Crick's comments on how the player experiences their own avatar while playing an FPS, but what is not given consideration is the experience of the avatars of Other players. That is, while the avatar may be a part of my embodied experience do I experience the avatar of another player as embodied?

If our experience of these game-worlds is sight dependent nothing about the avatar reveals the embodied player. This would incline us to think of the relation as a contemporary one even when I can see the avatar that shoots me. However, there is a subtle difference if we draw a contrast with the above example of hearing gunfire. To see this we can draw a parallel with the life-world example of the letter. No matter how

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quickly the letter arrives, the manipulation has ended and belongs to "Just Now" as opposed to "Now". I do not perceive the manipulating – the Other using the pen to write the letter. In the case of *CoD*, the bullet is equivalent to the letter and the avatar to the pen. The avatar perceived by the player is not the manipulated object but the manipulating device. The avatar as a tool of the player, in the same sense as a pen, is what is doing the manipulating within the game-world. As the manipulation is ongoing, even though the Other cannot be directly perceived it is nevertheless giving me them in their "Now". It is to our experience of avatars that I shall re-apply Zhao's consociated contemporary. As the Other player is "There", and I have no direct perception of them, they are contemporaries. But as I have direct perception of their manipulating they are not a contemporary of "Just Now" but "Now". They share the same *vivid present* I would perceive in the case of the consociate.

Concluding Remarks

At any given moment I am surrounded by an arena constituted by my manipulatory and perceptive spheres which is divided into various zones depending on whether these spheres are unmediated/mediated and direct/indirect. Schutz's dimensions of the social world presents a model for understanding the sort of we-relationship that arise depending on the Other's position in relation to my "Here and Now". By looking at online games, particularly "player vs. player" oriented FPS, I have aimed to extend the dimensions in two areas: first, to highlight in Schutz an under-emphasis on what I have called the andsociate relation in which a person is in my arena but they are not in mine. I characterised this as "face-to-back". Second, I have suggested that game-worlds have created a new zone in the dimensions of the social world where mediated arenas overlap. Co-opting Zhao, this is the realm of consociated (or andsociated) contemporary relations in which we are "face-to-device".

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If we relate this new understanding to Zhao's notion of "being alone together" we can in fact draw a different conclusion. As Zhao sees it, this being alone allows an intimate exploration via the protection of anonymity. Contrary to this, the way in which CoD players are known to react to one another suggests that this "anonymity" generates derogatory and insulting, rather than intimate, interaction. My proposed explanation for this is that not only do the players experience a disjunction of perception when interacting with an Other through game-worlds, the very structure of the consociated contemporary relation that allows this interaction also creates a disjunction of sociation. That is, the player experiences an Other who inhabits various zones of their arena simultaneously – they are both consociate and contemporary. This creates a problem of interaction: should the avatar be treated as unique individual or type? What I suggest is that this very structure which leads to a disjunction of sociation will always be problematic for the person because it will never be clear how they are supposed to interact with the Other. However, I would also stipulate that the way in which this problem is played out depends on the game in question. For instance, the andsociate emphasis of FPS games that I identified will likely create different problems of interaction compared to a game which lacks this emphasis. Further study is therefore required to understand the sorts of problems this disjunction of sociation can create. Thus, while only some preliminary comments have been made in this regard it is the hope of this paper to have at least provided the map by which further analysis can be orientated.

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ⁱ E.g. Harasim 1993; Shields 1996; Willson 1997; Holmes 1999; and Dawson and Hennebry 1999

In relying on the phenomenology of Schutz this differs slightly from pre-existing phenomenology of video games which has been predominantly influenced by Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945[1962]) in focusing on the player's experience of their own body (e.g. Clark, 1998; Murray, 2000; Dourish, 2001; Crick, 2010; Farrow and Iacovides, 2012).

While connections can be drawn, this differs from most other research on FPS which has focused on how these games develop a "militaristic attitude" in players that is then adopted in other areas of the life-world (e.g. Deck 2004; Halter 2006; Huntemann 2010; Penney 2010; Festl et al. 2013; Hitchins et al. 2014) i In this I am following Meier's definition of games and sport (1981).

^v It is unclear if this comment refers to the whole series or just *Advanced Warfare*.

vi Comments have primarily been taken from *Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932[1967]), "The Dimensions of the Social World" (1932) in *Collected Papers II* (1964), and "On Multiple Realities" (1945), "Common-sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action" (1953) and "Symbol, Reality, and Society" (1955) in *Collected Papers I* (1962).

vii This is to avoid the confusion that can be created with the similar world within potential reach which adds a time perspective to this (1962, 224-226).

viii I have chosen this use as the formal designation but Schutz also uses "manipulatory area" and "manipulatory zone" interchangeably.

ix Understandably there would be many who question this point. And it must be admitted that this point holds only on the grounds of *ceteris paribus*. Quite simply, in any empirical instance the more objective time passes the more likely some form of distraction is going to occur that "breaks" the "Now".

^x Predecessors and successors refers to the past and future tense respectively and as our focus is on the present tense will not be included.

xi This time perspective will require qualification later.

xii Nevertheless, *WoW*, for example, does provide "player vs. player" options. But numerous servers do not allow players to attack one another or place restrictions on how players can fight each other.

The phrase is also used by Crick in his discussion of Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (Crick, 2010:262).

xiv Strictly speaking this increases the range of indirect manipulation.

xv "And-" is taken from the Old English prefix meaning "against, opposing".

xvi As highlighted by Wagner, Schutz's predominate focus on face-to-face relationships was the result of his experiences as a frontline soldier (Wagner, 1984).

any physical gestures they may make. Thus we can speak of the full face-to-face encounters where I can see the total response of the person and partial face-to-face encounters were only some of the response is experienced.

xviii My thanks to the reviewer for noticing this.