

Levi Myers
11/25/2025
Psychology of Personality

Reaction Paper: Team Fortress Two Gold Rush vs. the Greater TF2 Playerbase

Team Fortress Two is one of the pioneering first-person-shooter video games in the industry, released by Valve Software in 2007. Its most striking quality is its J.C. Leyendecker and Cold War spy movie-inspired illustrative artstyle, with painterly textures and immensely recognizable and iconic characters. Since 2007, several updates have been added to the shooter, increasing mechanical complexity, gameplay speed, and art style dilution through both purchasable cosmetic items and computer-performance based removals of certain visuals. Recently, a mod for the game, Gold Rush, polished the game's visual style markedly and stripped back a great majority of the artstyle-diluting additions the game had added over the years. This mod was greatly anticipated by a minority in the greater TF2 community, and well enjoyed by those who were seeking relief from the chaotic mess of the original game, but received some criticism upon release for its supposed nitpicking and strongly conservative curation of longstanding content.

In Personality Trait psychology, researchers attempted to categorize people's personality traits into broad factors. Relevant to this conversation are two factors in the EACNO acronym: Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness. The release of this mod for TF2 revealed two conflicting ideals in the community, a spectrum between two extremes. There are those who view the game as plastic, who see the style as flexible and open to wide interpretation as to what fits within the believable boundaries of the game. Then there are the more conservative, artstyle-respecting purists, in which even small deviations from the developers and artists intent. These two "factors" of TF2 players, collections of various traits that determine their taste and level of acceptance for content, can both be connected easily to Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness respectively, or even stand in their own right. After all, the EACNO factors are not universal across cultures, and internet subcultures can count. For the purpose of this paper, I will call the first group "Content" and the second group "Curation".

I was myself very excited for the Gold Rush mod to be released, and would say that I could score high in "Curation". It has been very interesting to see the different arguments between individuals amongst the spectrum, with even those who agree that curation is important believing that the developers of the mod were too conservative in places. I can't help but think that this conversation can extend to the greater consumption of media as a whole: a majority that seems to value content over quality, and the minority that appreciates the pockets of pure quality and effort that can be found. Yet even then, if this group goes too far, pretense can become unbearable to outsiders looking in. I can understand why Gordon Allport had such an extensive list of possible traits that he had to grind down into distinct factors: when applied to situations, any human behaviors, likes, dislikes, and tastes can be turned into traits to define them by.