

Time to Kill: A Psychological Study of World of Warcraft as a Cultural Phenomenon

Mette Ljungquist Johannessen and Kirsti Elisabeth Wiik



Master of Philosophy in Psychology

Institute of Psychology

University of Oslo

May 2009

Acknowledgements

The idea for this project was based on our interest in this matter as we saw that playing World of Warcraft affected people around us in different ways.

We would like to thank our supervisor Katrina Røn for supporting and helping us through this process of writing this thesis.

We would also like to thank all of our participants for taking the time to answer our questionnaire and participating in the interviews.

Thanks to Pål Ulleberg for helping us with the questionnaire, Marte, Anders and Øyvind for proof reading.

We are grateful to all who distributed our questionnaire and to www.wownorge.no that let us post the link to the questionnaire on their pages.

Working together the two of us has made this process fun, challenging and educational.

We thank each other for many interesting hours spent discussing this thesis and for the time that we did not.

Marianne- finally we can celebrate!

Index

- Acknowledgements II
- Abstract 1
- 1. Introduction..... 2
 - 1.1 Previous research 3
 - 1.2 Research questions..... 6
- 2. Method 6
 - 2.1.1 Mixed methods research..... 6
 - 2.1.2 Target group 8
 - 2.1.3 Ethical considerations 8
 - 2.1.4 Handling the data 9
 - 2.2.1 The quantitative part - the questionnaire..... 9
 - 2.2.2 Participants:..... 10
 - 2.2.3 Procedure 11
 - 2.3.1 The qualitative part – the interviews 11
 - 2.3.2 Thematic analysis. 14
 - 2.4.1 Thoughts about the process..... 16
- 3. Results and Analysis 17
 - 3.1 The questionnaire..... 17
 - 3.3 The Interviews: Group 2 – the friends and family members..... 34
- 4. Discussion 40
- 5. Conclusion 51
- References 52
- Appendix..... 56

Abstract

In the last five years, online games have grown in popularity. Thus a growing trend of so called massively multiplayer online role- playing games (MMORPG's) has developed. With over 11 million players worldwide, World of Warcraft is the largest MMORPG today. The media and past research have a heavy focus on the addictive qualities of this game and other MMORPG's, at the same time there is limited research done on the player's social relationships outside the game and players' and non- players' stereotypes and attitudes. This study looks at what happens with the WoW players' social relationships, the motives for playing, and how players are affected by stereotypes and attitudes. The method we have used is a mixed methods design. We conducted an online survey ($n=228$) through two large forums in Norway and some of these participants volunteered to also participate in an interview where we talked to the players and a friend, partner or family member of their choice. We conducted a total of 26 interviews with 13 pairs. The survey data was analysed and then used as a background for the qualitative part of this research, and the interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach. Identifying several themes, most interesting is the time aspect, motivations for playing, attitudes and stereotypes and social relationships. The results suggest that players with friends outside the game tended to talk about the game as a hobby, rather than as something that was their life, a more common response by those with few social relations outside the game. This indicates that strong relationships to people outside the game are a key factor when it comes to playing for fun and it being a hobby. This is an important notion in the further discussion of the stereotypic player. Negative attitudes and media publicity also affects the player to some extent. Further the results suggest that most of the players play because they are bored and have too much time on their hands. This is quite interesting in a time where most people see themselves as having too little time.

1. Introduction

Massively Multitplayer Online Role-playing games (MMORPG's) are a genre of online computer role-playing games where the player enters a virtual world to interact with thousands of other players online. It was Richard Garriot, the developer of Ultima Online, who first came up with the term massively multiplayer online role-playing game. Ultima Online was released in 1997 and was the start of a new way of gaming and online communication. World of Warcraft (WoW), is the largest MMORPG's in the world with over 11 million registered users and is said to hold 62% of the MMOG (massively multiplayer online game) market (Wikipedia.com).

WoW was created by Blizzard Entertainment and was released November 2004. Since then two expansions have been released. The player pays a monthly fee to register a character called an avatar. The player enters the world of Azeroth and start to develop its avatar by doing quests. It is also through quests that most of the story is told. The player can also form or join guilds which allows a group of players to work together to solve quests and communicate.

WoW has become a popular cultural phenomenon, both for the player and for the non-players. The media address problematic usage of WoW on a weekly basis, worried parents talk about their "addicted" children and researchers are fascinated by different aspects of the game, like how players build an identity or how they interact within the game. There has been little to no research on the social aspect outside the game and how this may affect the player. Since these types of games are said to be extremely social for those who play, most of the research has been concerned with social factors within the game and motivations for playing. There is no known research on attitudes and stereotypes and how this affects the players either. The main focus for most researchers has been on motivation and addiction. With an increasing popularity of this cultural phenomenon it will be important to look at changes that occur in the social life of the players and how it affects their daily life. An important aspect is the players' social relationships and how this new type of interaction affects these relationships.

This study looks at the players' social relationships not only in the game, but also outside the game. Earlier research has shown that there are mainly two main reasons for people playing;

one being the social aspect and the other to achieve something and to be the best. If players play for social reasons it is interesting to look at how they act outside the game and handle social relationships with people that do not play WoW. We wanted to investigate whether WoW affects the way a player may be influenced by this game in a social context. Further we considered how attitudes and stereotypes influence both the players and the non- players. Even though earlier research have looked at this, we wanted to include this as it is an important factor to get a better understanding of the implications WoW has on the players lives.

At the end of this paper we want to look at the phenomenon WoW in a broader sense, and discuss how WoW implement itself as a cultural phenomenon all over the world. How will this affect people on an individual, social and cultural manner?

1.1 Previous research

With rapidly growing technological advances, we are exposed to new types of communication and entertainment fields that may have an impact on cultural structures and social interaction. WoW is an example of such a new phenomenon that is being discussed more and more. Research on this field has mainly been survey-based and stresses that further studies about the effects of online gaming would benefit from using mixed method that includes qualitative in depth research methodology.

In the media, in newspapers and TV programs, the focus on WoW has been primarily on the negative aspect looking at adolescents spending too much time playing and how it affects their grades at school, friendships with peers and other activities. Some cases have been dramatic suggesting that this type of activity leads to total lack of control even leading up to suicide (BBC). In the media these cases have been portrayed as if they are a result of playing computer games, but there are no clear evidence that this is a simple cause and effect relation. Tuesday April 4th 2009, NRK 1 showed a documentary about four young male players who had difficulties controlling their gaming, and how games like WoW had affected their lives (Exil, 2009). The players here were called high profile players, as one of them had dropped out of school to play WoW while one of the others hadn't been outside for four years, and had neglected everything around him. Again the media portrays a negative image of computer gamers.

Previous research on the effects of MMORPGs is somewhat limited. Most of the research revolves around addiction, motivation, general demographics and the interaction within the game itself. Because the phenomenon of WoW is fairly new, research on the actual effects is limited in terms of the social and health implications. Another aspect is that most of the research conducted is based on online questionnaires, that will on one side reach many players, but on the other hand not get an in-depth understanding of what happens to the players social life, their perception of themselves as WoW gamers and the underlying motives that makes them spend hours playing.

Several studies show that the average WoW player is over 25 years old and male (Griffith et al., 2004; Yee, 2006a; Cole and Griffiths, 2007; Williams et. al., 2008; and Skog, 2008). What is interesting here is that the more in-depth research done on problematic video game addiction is done on adolescents (Smahel et. al., 2008; and Chiu, 2004). This may reflect the stereotypic view that the general computer player is a young, male "couch potato". As Williams et al. (2008) says; "studies of the stereotypic young male are no longer sufficient for generalization". The fact that the average WoW player is older, indicates that this group has to be investigated further; hence we have chosen to look at players aged 18 – 36.

Most studies on this, if it is not based on general demographics or interaction within the game, tends to have a negative view, indicating that playing MMORPGs includes having more hostility, lacking on academic achievement, making sacrifice of other things in life, neglecting family and friend, and getting health problems (Chiu et al., 2004; Peters and Makesky, 2008; Peris et al., 2002; and Parsons, 2005). However these studies do not say anything about the social implications for the player, but only focus on the negative aspect such as comparing it to other types of addiction.

Even though an extensive part of the previous research done on WoW and other similar games has a very negative focus, there are also studies looking at this in a positive manner suggesting that it increases cognitive abilities, helping people to relax and getting new relationships and indications that the WoW players cannot be defined as addicts (Ng and Wiemer-Hastings, 2005; Yee, 2006b; Chappelle et al., 2006; Wood et. al., 2007; Cole and Griffiths, 2007; and Williams et al., 2008).

Research looking at the motivation for playing MMORPGs seems to vary somewhat. Williams et al. (2008) claims that sociability, achievement and immersion are the strongest motivators for playing. The participants scored somewhat higher on sociability, but scored highest on achievement with regards to playing time. This is important to take into consideration, if the time players use in the game is motivated by achievement and not the social aspect, it challenges the indication that the social aspect as the main attraction for players. In this study we wanted to get a clearer understanding of this issue by looking at the players own perception of their social life both within and outside the game. We also wanted to see whether other types of motives besides achievement and the social aspect as mentioned by Williams et al. (2008). Chen et al. (2006) suggest that the balance between perceived challenges and skills, and the type of in-game social interaction influences the level of enjoyment. The interesting part here is that while the general statement from players are that they play for social reasons does not cohere with some of the research where achievement seems to be just as important. Also the study by Berit Skog in 2008 at “The Gathering” (Skog, 2008) indicated that most of the WoW players play both with friends and alone.

Cole and Griffiths (2007) look at how MMORPG players interact socially in the game and compare online and “offline” friendships. Findings from their research show that 2.6 % believes that the game has a negative effect on relationships with other players. While 20, 3 % believed that it has a negative effect on relationships with those who does not play, and 2/3 believes that the game has a positive effect on relationship with those whom they play with. This is supported by Chapelle et al. (2006), who say that EverQuest, which is a similar game to WoW, provides opportunities for new relationships. Their study indicated that these friendships are meaningful and emotionally resonant.

Considering the previous research it is evident that more in-depth research is needed. This is also claimed by several of the researchers themselves. According to Williams et al. (2008) the most basic concern is that consumers of this new medium will use it to the detriment of human relationships. Several reseachers believe that a more thorough investigation of the social and community patterns could help explaining these relationships (Griffith et al. 2004; Parsons, 2005; Chen et al., 2006; Chapelle et al. 2006; Peters et al. 2008; Williams et al. 2008; and Skog, 2008). This aspect is what we wanted to investigate in our research by conducting interviews with both an active player and his or hers boy/girl friend, a friend or a family member. As Berit Skog says in her report from The Gathering in Lillehammer 2008,

“The findings here support the discourse about WoW, and those who claim that this game has an effect on and represents challenges when it comes to social relationships and school or work. It opens up for a more thorough study on the consequences this has. A study like that should contain qualitative data.”

Going through the previous research on this it is clear that more research should be done and that further investigation on several aspects of WoW playing needs to be studied more thoroughly. We have therefore done a study using both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the social aspect, the underlying motives for playing and then say something about WoW as a cultural phenomenon.

1.2 Research questions

Because of the lack of research on the social aspect outside the game that might have an effect on the player, we wanted to study this issue. We also wanted to address the issues of motivation for playing, even though this has been a quite common research topic for researcher within this field, and how the attitudes and stereotypes might affect the player and their partner, friends or family. Our research questions are therefore:

- How does WoW affect player’s everyday social life?
- What is the motivation for playing WoW?
- How do attitudes and stereotypes affect the players?
- How is WoW implemented as a cultural phenomenon?

We want to address our research questions by using a mixed methods approach, applying questionnaires and interviews.

2. Method

2.1.1 Mixed methods research

In this study to really grasp the essence, we felt that a mixed method research approach would give us the best opportunity to say something about the implications of WoW. Mixed methods’ central premise is that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination will provide a better understanding of the research problems than one approach alone. There are several preferable reasons for using a mixed methods design for our research. It provided us with a strength that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative

research. It gave us a more comprehensive evidence for studying our research questions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

We applied a combination of a questionnaire and interviews as we believed that this would be the best approach to answer our research questions. This enabled us to reach a large number of players and by applying both methods that have several benefits in its own; we can combine the two and get an in-depth analysis (Shaw et al., 1996; Baumann, 1999; and Way et al., 1994).

For this mixed methods research we applied a sequential explanatory design (Morse, J., M 2003). The explanatory design is described as a two-phased mixed methods design. In this design the qualitative data helps explain or build upon initial quantitative results. The procedures of this design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, which is followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The second, qualitative phase of the study, followed from (or connects to) the result of the first quantitative phase (Creswell, 2003 and Creswell et al, 2007). We have on the other hand emphasized the qualitative data in our research to get a more in depth image of a WoW player.

There are both strengths and challenges when using this type of research design.

Because of the two-phased structure it is straightforward to implement. This is because the researcher conducts the two methods in separate phases and collects only one type of data at a time. The final report can be written in two phases and the design also appeals to quantitative researchers because it often begins with a strong quantitative orientation. We have on the other side written the analysis in separate phases, but then combined the results of the data sets to get a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

The challenges that are emphasized are that the design require a lot of time to implement the two phases. The researcher must decide on whether to use the same participants from the same sample in the two phases, to use different participants from the same sample or to draw participants from the same population for the two phases (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) To answer these challenges we have decided to use participants from the same population for the two phases. By doing this the participants had answered the questionnaire and had an idea of what we wanted to talk about, but also, the questionnaire was used to get in contact with the players and we believed that this was a good way to recruit participants. The emphasis on

the time aspect did worry us a bit at first but we have not seen this as a problem throughout in our process.

2.1.2 Target group

The group we studied consisted of players between 18 to 36 years of age. In the media the focus has primarily been on younger teenage players. This is of course a large group of players, but research shows that the actual player is in their mid twenties (Griffith et al., 2004; Yee, 2006a; Cole and Griffiths, 2007; Williams et. al., 2008; and Skog, 2008). Our survey showed a somewhat younger player than in the prior research, and the largest group was between 18 and 25. Our focus will not be on teenagers or the discussion around addiction. By focusing on the group of players aged between 18 and 36 years, we believe that this is the best group to represent the general, Norwegian, WoW player.

2.1.3 Ethical considerations

There are several ethical issues that needed to be considered. Before conducting the questionnaire and the interviews we applied Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (see appendix 1) to get an approval to collect and store personal data from our participants.

In the interviews, we had to be clear, towards the participants, on what we wanted to study, what our research questions were and who we are. We also had to obtain informed consents (see appendix 3a & 3b). The informed consent gave the participants information about the purpose of our research, how long we expected the research process to last and what our procedures were. The participants were told that they had the right to refuse to participate and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Because we also talked to a friend/family member or partner about the player and their habits we informed the participants in both groups about the limitations of confidentiality. They were given information about our supervisor and that she will have access to the information and that some of the data collected in the surveys and interviews with the players might be used in the interviews with their friends and family. Finally they were given information about where they could (and still can) get information about the project and ask questions if they have any.

All participants were informed of us recording the interview and were also made aware of this in the written information they were given. After the interviews were completed, we debriefed the participants. They will all receive a copy of the complete thesis.

Some participants might perceive that the results do not reflect what they feel and may feel deceived. This would of course depend on the outcome of the study and their perception of what the outcome should be. When debriefing the participants they were told that the results will be based on what the general tendencies that we have seen and that this might not represent what they believe themselves.

2.1.4 Handling the data

Using a mixed method research design gave us more than one set of data material that needed to be handled. To be able to make the analysis and then see the connection between the data, we first analyzed the statistics from the survey. Then we separated the interviews of the players to the friends/family member, hence group 1 and group 2. We decided to analyze the two groups separately. This appeared to be the best way to see the patterns and tendencies from each group. In the discussion part we will answer our research question by drawing lines between the analysis of the questionnaire and of both interview groups.

2.2.1 The quantitative part - the questionnaire

The advantages of applying a quantitative method are several. First of all it enables us to reach a large group of players as well as ask the standardized questions with standardized options for answers. Applying a qualitative approach also enabled us to reach a group of people over a large area; we wanted to have participants from all over the country. We designed an online questionnaire that we distributed through a forum for the Norwegian players and also through the university's mailing lists. The surveys helped us to reach a whole different number of players than we would have been able to do through interviews alone. These surveys also helped us gather participants for the qualitative part of our study. Our goal for the survey was to gather some statistical data about the players' routines, perception of social life and attitudes towards WoW.

The questionnaires were designed by Nettskjema a standardised program for designing questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into nine sections (see appendix 6). The first section asked for information about gender, age, marital status, work and living situation.

Section two and three asked if the participant has tried WoW, if they still play and their routines around playing WoW. Section four asked why they started to play. This was also a question meant to be answered by those who no longer play as well as those who still play WoW. The fifth section was designed to find out more about them being a social person or not, if they perceive them self as social, if they think others do, and if they believe the game has had any effect on this. Section six asked about daily routines that was meant to give us information on how much they actual play and if playing has ever been a problem. Section seven and eight were designed to round up with general questions about WoW, attitudes and consist of easy yes and no questions. The last section was where the participants could leave their e-mail address if they wanted to be contacted for further participation in the project.

After receiving enough participants we wanted to see the main trends and who the typical player is. All of the answers from the questionnaire were transformed into percent which made it easy to compare the different groups and tendencies. This also made it easier to compare the results with the results from the interviews and provided us with a base for the next step in our research.

2.2.2 Participants:

The sample from the questionnaire distributed to the players consists of 228 participants from Norway. All participants completed an online questionnaire in their own time. Of these participants 92,5% (n=211) were male and 7,5% (n=17) were female. The participants aged between 18 and 36+, 53,5 % aged between 18 and 21. They volunteered to participate in this study by following a link we placed at a couple of Norwegian WoW forums. Thus their motivations for participating were only interest and a chance to have a say. The questionnaire was anonymous, unless one left contact details in form of email address to participate further. We also distributed a shorter questionnaire directed at people who in general know someone who play WoW. This questionnaire was distributed just to get participants for the interviews. We are not including its results in this thesis. Of these participants (n=16), 68,8% (n=11) were female, and 31,2% (n=4) were male. This questionnaire was only distributed to students at Psychological Institute at the University of Oslo. We will not discuss this questionnaire further in the thesis because its only purpose was to gather participants.

We decided to distribute the questionnaire to the players in English. This is because we wanted to write our thesis in English and it seemed natural to have the questionnaire in English as well. The main language in WoW is English and we believed that the participants would find it easy to relate this questionnaire to the game.

2.2.3 Procedure

After a small pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed to two main Norwegian WoW forums through a link (<http://folk.uio.no/kirstiw/>). The link was also e-mailed to a range of students at two Universities in Norway (University of Oslo and NTNU), where we also hoped to achieve a snow ball effect, where they would pass it on to friends and relatives. When the participants clicked on the link they came to a site where they were informed of their rights, which among other things said that participating was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. They were also told about the nature of the study and who to contact if they had any questions.

2.3.1 The qualitative part – the interviews

As said earlier we wanted to do a more in-depth research on the WoW player. The best way to do this, in our opinion, was to conduct several interviews with existing players and a friend or a family member (someone who knows the person well). Qualitative interviews have several advantages. The most obvious is that the interviews would let us get closer to the player and their families in a way that we would not be able to through quantitative surveys. We applied thematic analysis to get a deeper understanding of the players and WoW means to them.

We wanted to use the interviews to:

- Look at how the game playing affects players' social relationships.
- Get an idea of the underlying motives for playing WoW
- How stereotypes and attitudes affects the way the player talk about being a WoW player.

So how are we going to do this? There are several ways in which this type of research method can be applied. Steinar Kvale says; “research using interviews involves a deceptive simplicity; it is easy to start interviewing without any advance preparation or reflection” (Kvale, 1996). To avoid this we set up a list of how this qualitative research process was to be conducted. These phases are presented next.

Phase 1. The preparation phase

Looking at the response from the questionnaires we started to see some general tendencies but also some contradictions.

After studying the answers from the questionnaire we developed an interview guide (see appendix 4a &4b). This was a semi structured interview guide, allowing us to ask follow up questions, but helped us to make sure we had talked about the different topics.

We also started thinking about what analytic approach that was most suitable.

As the participation for these interviews were voluntary, we assumed that most of them wanted to give us a more “glamorous” view of playing WoW. Because of this we decided that we also wanted to talk to a person who knows the player well and would be able to talk about the player and his playing patterns from an outsider’s point of view. This would enable us to “double check” the players’ statements and perhaps compare their stories about the game playing. By doing this we had to make two separate interview guides, one for the player (group 1) and “*the other person*” (group 2). The structure of the interview guides was similar; however some of the questions were changed in order to suit the player and the friend/family member.

Phase 2. The participants

Most of the participants in the interviews had signed up themselves through the questionnaire. Fifty-five of a total of 228 participants left their e- mail, 11 of these still wanted to participate after hearing all of the terms and finding the time. One was nominated by a friend who we talked to and one replied to the questionnaire for friends and family. To increase interest about joining our project, we announced that one of the participants in the interview could win a gift certificate for a travel for two.

The group of players was somewhat homogeneous in the way that they were all males and that they had at least some periods where they played WoW quite extensively. This might be a biased group, but also presents a sample of WoW players that wanted to show that not all WoW players fit the stereotypic “nerd” who is asocial, unfit, has no friends and spend all their time on playing and does not have another life outside of the game. We do not see this as a problem because this is an interesting group of players on many levels as we will show in our discussion and results part. We have also chosen to compare this group of players with the

whole group from the questionnaires. This way we can control for the bias by comparing these two groups, where the sample from the interviews have already answered as well.

Another problem is that the sample of players in the interview part (group 1) of the study only consists of men. In group 2 however there were some females, but only one play WoW. Two women left their e- mail address in the questionnaire but did not find time to participate and did not want to ask a friend. This might be a possible area of further research. It might seem that women who play WoW do not tell everyone that they do play. All though we only have men in our sample, we do believe that this is a representative group of the players.

Phase 3. Contacting participants and making appointments

We emailed all the respondents who had given us their email addresses. We were able to make appointments with 32 participants; 16 “cases”, however some of them withdrew because of lack of time to complete the interviews, and we ended up with 13 cases, 26 participants.

They were given the option whether they would do the interview face to face or by MSN. We encouraged most of them to do a face to face interview, but as some of them lived far from Oslo or for any other reason we offered to do the interview by MSN. We wanted a geographical spread and decided that MSN was the best other option to talk to participants who for some reason did not want or could not do it face to face. Most players are familiar with MSN as they also use this to communicate with other WoW players.

Phase 4. Conducting the interviews

The face to face interviews was held either at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo, a convenient library or in the interviewees home. Both researchers were present in most of the interviews, except for the three interviews conducted in Trondheim, where only one had the opportunity to be. The interviews took about one hour and were recorded. Having both the researcher present made the interview more relaxed and the participant more comfortable. One of the researchers took the leading role going through the interview guide, while the other researcher listened and made comments or asked additional questions when needed. In the MSN interview both the researchers was also present. These interviews took somewhat longer time, sometimes up till two hours. And it was more difficult here to get longer descriptions of episodes that described certain events. We were following the interview

guides making sure that we covered all the areas we wanted to get information on, but supplemented this with follow up questions if necessary.

Phase 5. Analyse the data – using thematic analysis.

We will here go through the method of analysis we used.

3.3.2 Thematic analysis.

To conduct our analysis of the interviews we have chosen to do a thematic analysis. Going through different analytic approaches we decided that a thematic analysis would be the best way to grasp the information from the interviews and also the best way to systematize the data we collected. We have applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis as this provides us with a thorough and systematic procedure to analyze the information from our interviews.

Braun and Clarke see thematic analysis as a foundational method in qualitative analysis. They say that it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting other forms of qualitative analysis, but they also stress that a thematic approach should be considered a method in its own rights. The critique of this method is the absence of clear and concise guidelines and that "anything goes". Even though it also is a widely used method of analysis, there are no clear agreement about what it is and how one should go about when using it. However, by using Braun and Clarke's step by step guide, explaining how we have handled our data and how we have coded it and explaining how the themes derived from the data. We believe that this is a valid and acceptable method of analysis in our study. As Braun and Clarke also say; one of the benefits of thematic analysis is the flexibility. It is a method used to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes. It organizes and describes our data set in detail. The importance here is to be clear on the process and the practice of the method, something the six phases will provide.

Thematic analysis is not embedded into any pre-existing theoretical framework. This means that the researchers using this method of analysis have to make some decisions regarding the theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke (2006) mention a few decisions that the researchers have to make in this regards before proceeding with the analysis. First we have to decide whether to provide a rich description of the data set or a more detailed account of one

particular aspect. Our data material consists of three different data sets; the statistics from the survey, interviews with the players and interviews with the players family members or friends. In our case we first analyzed the different data sets separately, coding them and identified themes, and then we looked at the data sets as a whole providing a more rich description of our data. Second, we had to make the decision of using an inductive/bottom up way or a deductive/theoretical way. In our case we have a more deductive approach as we are looking at certain aspects of the data in relation to our research questions and the themes that derived from the data are linked to the research questions. Last, we had to decide on the level of analysis, then at a semantic or a latent level (Braun and Clarke, 2006). We concluded that the latent level was the best way as it identifies underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizes the semantic content of the data.

Braun and Clarke suggest a step by step guide to conducting thematic analysis. This is a six step process in which enables us to structure and make sense of our data material. They point out that analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to another, but merely a guide to structure the process while moving back and forth between the entire dataset.

The six phases of thematic analysis.

Phase 1 – Transcribing and reading

When the interviews were completed we transcribed all the recorded interviews as well as going through the MSN interviews removing information that could identify the person. After completing this we read through the entire data set, marking the sections we considered important.

Phase 2 – Generating codes

After reading through the interviews we decided on categories or codes that we would use in our analysis. We marked the different sections in the transcriptions placing segments of the text under each code or category. With the research questions in mind we wanted to grasp the information given in the interviews and systematize this for further analysis. The codes or categories we decided to use was; *demographics*; such as work, age, marital status, *social relationships*, *social status* (how they see themselves as a social being) *time*; time used playing, and time on playing, WoW vs. other activities, *periods*; in what periods do they play more and why, *boredom*, *motivation*, *contradictions*, *attitudes*, *stereotypes*, *positive and*

negative experiences, and impact on life. By using a coding template we put citations and comments to these in a structural form. (See appendix 5)

3. Searching for themes:

Looking at the coding sheet, we started seeing some tendencies and the different themes started to derive from the coded material. After extracting citations, analysing them and grouping them together, we found the citations that best possibly highlighted the themes we had decided to focus on. Then we had the basis to start searching for themes that seemed to grasp the different aspects of playing WoW.

4. Reviewing themes:

We read through the documents once more checking if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set.

5. Defining and naming themes:

After reviewing the themes several times in regards to what we found to be important in our data, we again refined the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells and generated clear definitions and names for each theme. The themes will be presented in the analysis.

6. Producing the report:

In this last stage we wrote the report deciding on what quotes to use and how we wanted to structure the material so that the reader may be engaged in the analysis and the discussion part.

2.4.1 Thoughts about the process

Having the opportunity to collaborate on this thesis we had throughout this process on this thesis we had the advantage of discussing important issues throughout this process. This was especially useful when conducting the interviews. Our initial worry when it came to the interview process was that the participants would feel intimidated by being interviewed by two people at once. However this seemed to only make them relax and feel comfortable through the interview. Three interviews were conducted by Wiik alone in Trondheim, and she did not feel that the connection with the participants were as good as when both were present. The participants were more nervous and the interview had a more serious tone than with the

others. The participants did not seem to relax as much as when both were present. They answered more with yes/no and there were fewer narratives. With regards to the MSN interviews, being two made it possible to discuss the responses from the participants straight away, before asking the follow up questions. This way we could become clearer on what we wanted the participants to elaborate on, how to approach them and resolve issues where one could have misinterpreted the participant. This was also very helpful when doing the interviews face to face as we had already seen some of the problems with a few questions and had some experience with the process already. When conducting the face to face interviews one of us took the lead being the interviewer and the other one helped out when needed. It was also helpful to have one to observe us as interviewers as well, giving feedback on what worked and what did not. Working together has also forced us to word our thoughts and discuss every issue. This has made the process more educational and interesting because we have constantly been discussing our thesis and different issues along the way.

Being able to discuss the project also gave us the opportunity to question and review the process along the way. We initially wanted to do a narrative analysis of the interviews and designed the interview guides to open up for the interviewees to tell stories about how WoW had affected their lives. However during the interview process it became apparent to us that a narrative analysis would actually not include all the aspects that we were not aware of before talking to the participants. We therefore concluded that to best capture the essence of the interviews and cover the main topics and answering our research questions, a thematic method of analysis would be more suitable to be able to extract the important information. This is also the first time we have done this kind of interviewing, and being able to listen and talk to each other, we have been able to reflect on how we talk to people and how we word ourselves to get the information we were looking for with the participants. This process has enabled us to be more reflexive towards ourselves and how to act within a research setting.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was, as described earlier, divided into 9 parts, concerning personal information, time spent, motivations, stereotypes and attitudes.

Personal information (section 1)

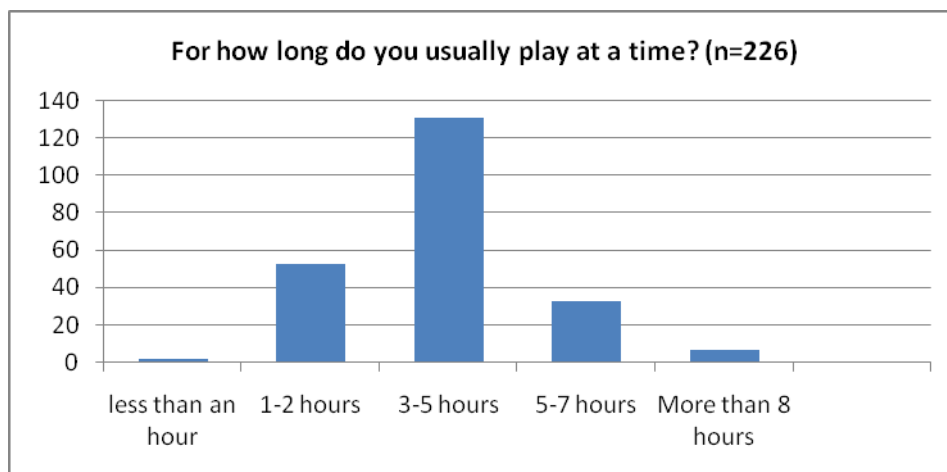
Initially we wanted to map out who the player is by asking question about age, gender, marital status, living situation and work situation. The results show a picture of a male player, between 18 and 25 years of age, mainly single, living with parents, alone or with partner, working full time or studying, and living in Norway.

Information about playing WoW (section 2)

All 228 participants have tried WoW, whereas 35 have quit playing. The reasons they give for quitting are mainly that they do not find WoW interesting, did not have the time and that the game took up too much of their time. This aspect of time is quite central for WoW players as will become clearer in the analysis of the interviews.

Time spent (section 3)

Answering how long they have been playing, 53, 5 % ($n= 226$) said they have played for more than 3 years. Only 15,1 % stated that they had only been playing for a year or less. Of the players, 43, 3% ($n= 224$) said that they play every day, whereas 35, 7% play four to five times per week. When they play, 58% ($n=226$) play three to five hours at a time but only 3,1% play for more than eight hours at a time. (See table 1)When asked what the longest time they have played for without taking a break, 51, 8% ($n=224$) answered more than eight hours.

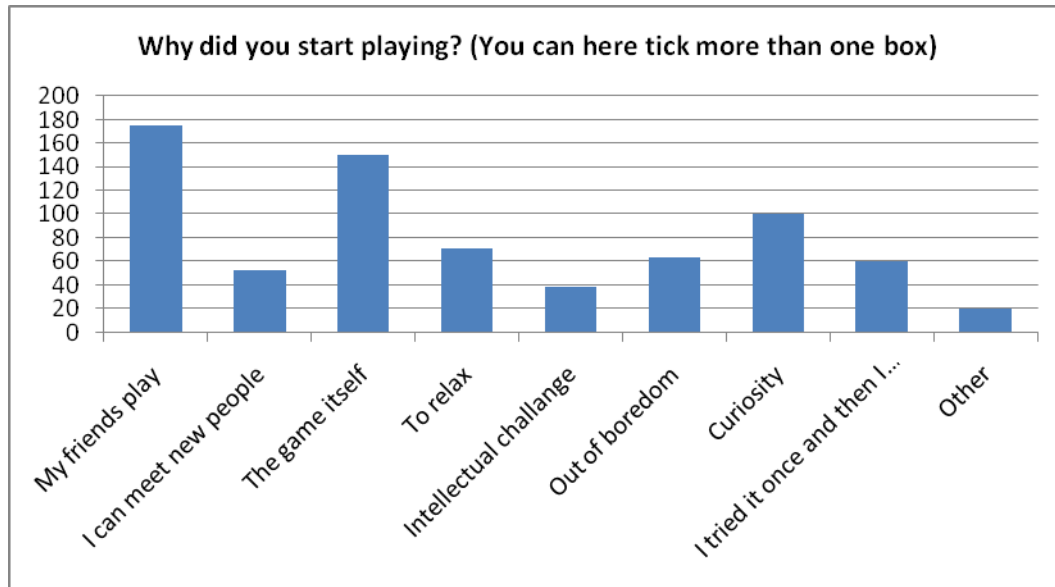


(Table 1)

Motivations (section 4)

Mapping out why they started playing WoW, (see table 2) their motivations (they could here tick more than one option), it was quite evident that most of the players started to play because their friends play and out of curiosity. The other main reason was the game itself.

Whereas meeting new people, to relax, intellectual challenge, an agreement of the statement “I tried it once and then I was hooked”, and out of boredom were other reasons they could tick but fewer did.

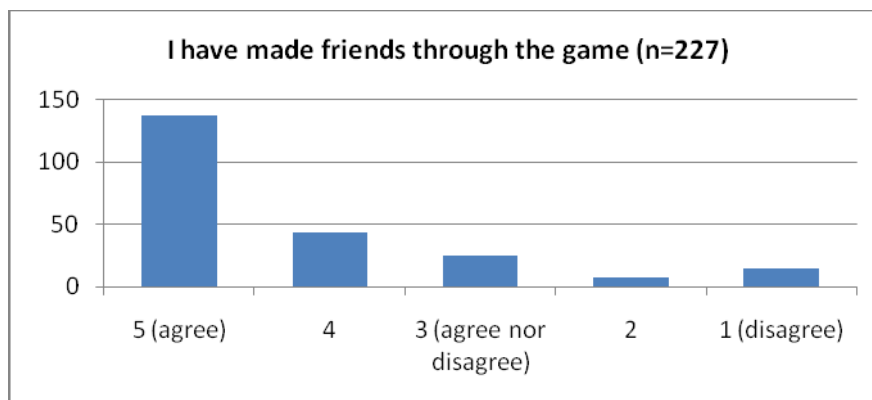


(Table 2)

The player as a social person (section 5)

This section was based on 23 statements about the player as a social person. They were to tick the option that they felt was the right for the different statements. The options ranged from 5 (agree) to 1 (disagree). The statements “I see myself as a social person” and “My friends see me as a social person” received about the same response. Of the participants about 60% ($n=228$) ticked 4 or 5, that they see themselves as social persons and felt that their friends think the same. In general they reported that the game has had little or no effect on them as social persons. Whereas most of the participants (66, 1 %, $n= 227$) agreed (4 or 5) to the statement about friends or family not having asked them to stop playing, 36, 4 % ($n= 228$) disagree to the statement “my friends or family have asked me to spend less time on WoW”.

As for motivation being partly the social aspect as stated above, 79,7 % ($n= 227$) agreed (ticked 4 or 5) to have made friends through the game (see table 3). They also report that they in general feel close to their friends (79, 4%, $n= 228$, answers 4 and 5 grouped together), and that they have never lost friends because they play WoW (86, 8%, $n= 227$, answers 4 and 5 grouped together).



(Table 3)

Attitude and behaviour when playing (section 6)

Given the options, never, seldom, sometimes, often and always, the participants were to tick the statement matching each question. Each question described attitude or behaviour regarding playing WoW. On answering if they have ever skipped a meal because of WoW, 21, 1 % ($n=228$) answered that they had never done so, whereas 67, 6% said they had seldom or sometimes skipped a meal. As many as 50% ($n= 228$) of the participants said that they sometimes have felt that the game has interfered with their daily activities. Of the participants 25,6% ($n=227$) stated that they feel obligated to play because of their relationships within the game. Asking about relationships within the game we wanted to know if participants have ever been annoyed by somebody who plays WoW, 15,4% ($n= 227$), stated that they often or always are annoyed. However 31,3 % said they never where annoyed by somebody who play.

As one could see from the results in section 3, time spent, participants reported that they play for several hours at a time. When being asked if they ever loose concept of time when playing 37, 9 % ($n= 227$) reported that they sometimes do and 28,6% reported that they often lose concept of time when playing. Even though they spend much time playing WoW, 56,2 % ($n= 226$) would never or seldom call themselves addicted to the game, but 27, 9% would sometimes see themselves as addicted to WoW. However, 29,6 % ($n= 226$) said that they have told themselves to quit playing, whereas 42,9 % said they have never done that. Most of the participants did not feel that friends, family, school or work are getting in the way of them playing. As many as 77, 5% ($n= 227$) stated that they never have played WoW at work, though 22,5 % ($n=227$) stated that they sometimes have skipped work or school to play.

When they were asked if they tell people that they play WoW, which might give an indication of how general stereotypes and attitudes towards affect the player, only 3,5 % ($n= 227$) of the participants said they never tell people that they play. (See table 4) As many as 41,4% said they sometimes tell people they play and 40,6% said they often or always tell people they play.



(Table 4)

Addiction (section 7)

This research is not on addiction, but as stated earlier this is an important aspect for the media and the players. This also gives an impression of the player's attitude toward the game. Thus asking about addiction, revealed that 63, 4 % ($n=227$) of respondents know someone who has been addicted to playing WoW, whereas 85% ($n=226$) think that one can get addicted to this game. Most of the participants (80, 2%, $n= 227$) talk about playing with friends, family and/or partner and 72, 7 % ($n= 227$) would recommend WoW to others.

Continuing to play? (Section 8)

To finish up with some easy questions, the participants were asked about their further WoW playing. When asked if they have reached their goal level, 83,3 % ($n= 227$) said that they have, and when asked if they have more than one character 90, 7% ($n=226$) reported that they do. Since the latest expansion pack, called Wrath of the Lich King, was launched just after we closed the questionnaire we asked if they planned to buy this addition which 89,7% ($n= 224$) said they were going to do. The last question regarded if they wanted to quit playing WoW and only 13, 7% ($n=226$) reported that they wanted to do so.

Several interesting findings emerged from the data. These findings will be discussed together with the findings from the interviews in the discussion.

3.2 The Interviews: *Group 1 – the players*

We are now moving over to the qualitative part of our study and will here be looking at the analysis and result from the interviews. Going through the interviews several times, coding them, we started seeing some tendencies that seemed to go through several of the interviews, and we started seeing some tendencies that seemed to go through several of the interviews. As we were going through the interviews, coding them, we found that some themes seemed to emerge from the material, and these themes will be discussed here. These themes for group 1 are; the *age difference* when it comes to their own reflections on playing WoW, why *they wanted to participate* in this study, the social aspect divided into three different sections; *all my friends play*, *I'm a social person* and *new friends*. Then we move over to the time aspect; *time to kill*, *to hide behind the screen*, and *I play more in certain periods*. Then the last part is considering the stereotype view and attitudes; *I'm not a typical WoW player* and *I'm not ashamed that I play WoW but I don't tell anyone that I play*.

Age differences

We interviewed 13 players who ranged between 18 and 31 years old. They were all male, something that may represent the majority of WoW players. Earlier research by Yee, Griffith (2006) supports this idea that the majority of players are male. This might also reflect the stereotypic image of the computer nerd, who is male asocial and not very athletic.

What was one of the interesting findings we discovered was that the older guys seemed to be more reflective than the younger ones. The younger part of the group from 18 to 21 were more likely to get engaged in questions that involved what happens within the game, how to get to a certain level or how to kill the monsters.

This type of engagement in talking about how they play the game was apparent with all the younger participants. They were also likely to answer that they did not play too much and that the game did not affect their lives at all when asked directly about this.

The older part of the group, 24 – 31, did not specifically talk about playing the game itself but reflected more about the social aspect of the game, talking about the people they have met playing WoW and what this means to them. Many of them also admitted that in periods they have played too much, and that this has had a negative effect on their life at least for a certain time.

Most of the older participants worked in IT related professions, while some of the younger once was either still in school or just started university.

Only a few were in relationships, however a couple of the older participants have had relationships that triggered or extended the WoW playing.

Why participate in this study

Before going deeper into the analysis it was an interesting aspect looking at the different reasons for participating in this project. All participants except from one told us they wanted to help out and thought the project sounded interesting. Many of them also mentioned that they wanted to contribute to give the WoW players a new image.

“I wanted to help out, and show people that it is not the games that make people addicted, more so the social problems outside the game. And also to wipe out the image the wow player has and their so called non existing social life”. (# 6)

This reflects the stereotype image the WoW players has, and clearly provoke some of the players. As some of them mentioned this was a way of letting people know that players could be “normal” as well.

“WoW is something I have spent several hours, days, year on, and studies around this especially the social aspect of WoW are something I found very interesting. Because, it is, well something I have experienced myself, felt it, and yes, I thought it might be an interesting experience.” (# 7)

Based on their arguments for participating it is evident that this is a way for them to talk about their playing. Most of the players we talked to play or have played more in periods and they believe they could contribute to this type of research and remove the stereotypical view in general.

Only one of the players mentioned the prize that one could win if participating.

This may indicate that it is important for the players to talk about their game playing and present a different view on the typical computer nerd.

“All my friends play”

We are now moving over to a different cluster of themes considering both the motivation and the social aspect for the WoW players.

It is a well known factor that most WoW players “excuse” their game playing because of the social aspect. By claiming that they play with their friends it legitimates this as a hobby. This is also the case here. They had different motivation for playing, both on a conscious and an unconscious level; they all mentioned the social aspect as a very important factor for either starting to play or the reason while they still play today. All except from one have at one stage played together with friends they had from before.

“If I log on, and there are no friends there, usually I’ll log off again”. (# 11)

“It was mostly because my friends had tried beta, and thought it was good. (...) I prefer to play with others” (# 5)

While about half of the players started playing because their friends play the other half started because they had always been interested in computer games and was curious about this new type of MMORPG. They became the inspiration for other friends who wanted to play and encouraged them to play as well.

Another aspect is that playing Wow is a way to keep in touch with friends that has moved to another part of the country or even another country, or if the player himself has moved away from his friends. As we can hear from these players, it is important for them to play to keep in contact with their old friends;

“It is entertaining. And after I got sick, it has been the best way to keep in touch with my friends” (# 5)

“What keeps me playing the game I would say is the close encounter with friends. Many of my friends are in the military or they study in other places in Norway, and they all play. So we just sit there and chat. Not about the game but about everything. The game is just something we do together.” (# 7)

Half of the players claimed that they would play as long as their friends play, but the day their friends quit they will quit as well. This is a strong indicator for how important the social aspect of the game is. However, even though this is social in the way that they talk to their friends through either Skype or Ventrilo, it means that some other forms of socializing might be neglected.

“Well, I play with several of my friends. (...) Some of them I have known for a long time. Some of them I also went to primary school with, and I have actually become closer to these after we started playing wow together.” (# 10)

Even though the social aspect was very important for many of the players we interviewed, they also mentioned the fact that they liked to get better and that it was important for them to be able to manage the game and reaching higher levels. As one of the players (research participant # 7) here claims, it started out as a social thing, but then ended up being something he was aiming to be good at and that became the main reason for continuing to play.

“Well..., it started out as a social experience, but has turned out to be something that I push myself to be best in. So I guess it is the competition aspect that has made me continue and that has made me play as much as I have.” (# 7)

The only one who did not play with friends at all said that computer games had always been a hobby for him, and that none of his friends were interested at all. He viewed this more as something new within the computer world and was more curious than anything else. His social gain here was that he had made new friends that in his case turned out to be lasting relationships.

“My friends don’t know much about WoW. My group of friends, the ones I have grown up with, we are about 10 guys and none of them are interested in things like that at all.” (# 4)

“I’m a social person”

Most of the players considered themselves to be social. As the term “social” can be understood very differently, we asked them to define what they meant by a social person. Even though this might be difficult to define, they all gave a definition that included openness, like talking to people and feeling comfortable around others. On the other side, a few of the younger ones said that they felt social and outgoing together with existing friends, but not always comfortable in social settings.

“I’m a very social person. I could never have played WoW if it wasn’t for the good relationship in the guild. I have met so many new people through this. (# 6)

On the other side you have the more introverted type who feels that WoW has contributed to making him more social than he was. This may indicate that for some players who might be shy or uncomfortable in social settings WoW can be an extra push into getting more self esteem and to “practice” their social skills.

“I have never been a very social person, but I am very outgoing in some social settings. (...) I believe that I have become more social after starting to play wow.” (# 5)

In this regards we asked whether WoW had made the player more or less social. As some of the younger participants claimed that this has been a good way to meet new people, it was a general idea amongst this group that it had not really had an effect on their social relationships.

“I can’t say that I have become more or less social, but most of my contact with others has gone from being face to face to through internet. I have always been a bit asocial, and often feel uncomfortable in social settings, so I think it is ok. I find it much easier to talk to people through the internet.” (# 5)

“If I hadn’t played computer games I guess I would do something else lazy, like watching movies and stuff with my friends. But I think I would feel quite alone just watching a movie by myself. That might also be why I define myself as a social person, you know. I want to be with other people all day long.” (# 3)

New friendships?

This is one of the key themes in our study. As many WoW players have said that the great thing about WoW is that you meet new people. This puts WoW in the same category as so many other online communication forms today, as a forum for meeting new people from all over the world. If this is the case, this might be the beginning of a new area in how we interact and get in contact with others. What we wanted to look at was whether these new acquaintances was considered friends or just “team mates”. Therefore we wanted to ask our participants their view on this and if they had made new friendships through WoW.

“I have gradually lost contact with those of my friends that doesn’t play WoW, so most of my friends play. (...) I have however gotten a few new friends, both through WoW and also other places but who has also started playing WoW. It is easy to lose contact when one doesn’t have common activities such as WoW or school. (...) I have met several people that I consider good friends through WoW, and many new acquaintances.” (# 5)

Even though some of the players considered that they had made new friendships, many of them also viewed these “new” relationships as only being people to play with, and nothing more than that.

“I don’t necessarily see the people I play with in a guild as good friends. They are just someone I play with.” (# 10)

“... I have expanded my horizon a bit, and met people I never would have met otherwise. But I guess there is also a reason that I would not have met them if I did not play. Usually we have nothing more in common than the game, and if it wasn't for that I probably would never had talked to them.” (# 2)

Most of the players had “met” new people, but only two of them had made lasting relationships that exceeded the WoW world. Many of the players that said they only played with their friends. Instead of meeting new people, they saw this as a great way to keep in contact with old friends that they would normally not talk to anymore. Some of the participants also mentioned that they played with friends of friends, but did not consider these as new lasting friendships.

Summing up the findings for the social aspect, it seems that most of the players play WoW together with their friends, or at least started to play because their friends did. This may prove the fact that this can be a social game. Most of them also see themselves as social beings, not just in the game, but also outside in “real life”. Half of group one said that all their friends played, while the other half had friends who played, but also a group of friends that did not. However this did not seem to affect how much they played, indicating a different perspective that the social aspect is not really that important after having played WoW for a while. We also looked at if they had made new friendships or not. The general tendency was that they had met new people but most of the players did not define these as friendships but more as acquaintances.

Time to kill

One of the most interesting tendencies that we were not aware of from the beginning was that so many of the players talked about their WoW playing as something to do to kill time, or when they are bored. As the word boredom seemed to be something that many of the interviewees talked about in relation to playing WoW, we saw this as something important that we needed to look at more closely.

“It is usually boredom that triggers it. (...) There are several times I have wanted to spend my time doing other things, and I guess one could say that many times I have played because I don't have anything else to waste my time on. It would have been fun to do something else that just wasting time on this again. But I guess it is like any other game, it is just to kill time.” (# 2)

It seemed according to our data that much of the reason these players played WoW was because they were bored or wanted to kill time or even try to fill a feeling of emptiness.

“Before I went on sick leave, I spent less time on the game. Then I had other things to do such as school, homework and I was more social with friends. However the time I then spent on WoW was more active.” (# 5)

“If I have nothing to do that day, I can play from I finish work until I go to bed. If I have other plans, it might just be a few hours a day. I would definitely play less if my girlfriend was around more often.” (# 6)

Several of the players compared playing WoW to watching TV, or in another way; that playing WoW was more fun than watching television, and therefore they did that instead.

“... I would compare it to watch TV. That is what you do when you have nothing else to do. And of course, I would never put WoW above anything else, I would rather go to see a movie, or a football game or have a beer than playing WoW. So I would say that this is an activity you do when you don't have anything else to do.” (# 4)

Even though many of the players indicate that the game playing is triggered by boredom, they also see this as a hobby in line with other types of hobbies or activities. As some people chose to play football or collect stamps, this is how they chose to spend their spare time.

“It is just a hobby. What else does one do in your spare time than hang with your friends, watching TV, or a movie or play football and stuff like that? What I want to do when I come home is to sit and play games with my friends. So in that manner it is not different than what all other people do.” (# 3)

Further some of the players think this is a more engaging activity than watching TV and would rather compare it to playing some sort of team sport.

“Watching TV you just sit there and take in information, but in WoW there are so much more interaction. It is better to compare it to a sport. I stimulate my brain more than just watching TV. I feel that I get very dozy of watching TV. It is very easy entertainment. And in WoW you have to entertain yourself, because you have to do things. Just like sports.” (# 3)

As some of the participants have played football when younger, they felt that even though playing was not of course as physical, it could still be compared to the same type of feeling one gets when working together to achieve a common goal. For the ones who had played some sort of sports earlier, it seemed as if this was something they felt better at and got more out of than doing sports.

To hide behind the screen

When we talk about hiding behind the screen there are two dimensions; one being to escape into this world as a result of a more or less bad experience like a relationship breakup.

“The WoW playing goes in periods. Periods with little playing, and periods with a lot of playing. During the worst periods I guess I have disregarded other things. It doesn’t feel good and you are left with an awful feeling afterwards. But it... well... the last time that happened was after a break-up with my girlfriend, and at that point I did not want to talk to anyone really.” (# 2)

In some of these cases it was easier for the players to cope in this world, not having to deal with the outside world for a while. However, all of the players who had this experience managed to get out of this after a while.

The other dimension of hiding behind the screen revolves around behaviour within the game and how different people allow themselves to act or express themselves differently than they would in “real life”. This is of course not only the case for WoW, but a tendency on internet communication in general. It is worth mentioning because it reflects how this may trigger feelings about the game and also the players.

The anonymity one has opens up for people to say exactly what they want, both good and bad. We learned that often in WoW there might be conflicts in regards to receiving objects and incentives after completing a raid or killing a boss. This may lead to some people saying things to each other that they probably would not say face to face.

“...one can log off if you get angry, right. In real life you cannot. If I’m really angry at someone or someone is really angry with me, we won’t let it go until we have finished the issue. But this is impossible to control in WoW. As all the communication is in English, you can write one thing, and it might be taken another way, just like SMS. (...) So when things are communicated through writing like this especially in another language it might have meant something completely different to the receiver than to the messenger. This often leads to conflicts, and in the game people don’t ask each other.” (# 4)

I play more in certain periods

As mentioned, extensive WoW playing seems to be periodical which might be triggered by an unhappy experience. It is also affected by other circumstances, such as the different seasons. During the summertime for example some of the players did not play at all. This again reflects the fact that if they have other things to do, they prefer to do that. During the summer months it is more tempting to be outside, even if it is just sitting outside in a park drinking beer.

In other periods the player can become tired of playing, and gets sick and tired of the game because nothing more can be done.

“The playing has always gone in waves or periods. I used to have periods where I played WoW all the time for two or three months, then I took half a year off, because I got bored playing” (# 3)

Some of the players also talked about the periods as something happening because they realized that they had been playing too much, and then decided that it was time to take a break from playing because they did not feel good about it themselves.

“I have had a few brakes. (...) In the beginning it sometimes became too much, I mean... It was more playing than doing other things. After a while I realized this and took a break. Then I started again, with a new outlook on things, and with new limits.” (# 6)

It was good to see that most of the players actually did realize at some stage that this was taking too much time and then managed to take brakes and regulate their game playing to a level they felt comfortable with. However this was the case for the ones that had at one stage felt that it was not good for them.

“It is bad when you don't go to bed and you fall asleep next to the screen. One time I turned down an invitation to go out just to play WoW, then I thought to myself “Ouch”, I need to stop this”. (# 10)

Periods that lead to more extensive game playing were also triggered by Blizzard coming out with new extension packs. This was the case for all the players in this study. As some of them have had a break, this extension made them start playing again, or playing more for some weeks. This may then be an indication that even though the motivation for playing could be both social and boredom, but when considering this factor it might be that they want to improve their skills. What is important to mention here is that just as we started conducting the interviews the new extension Wrath of the Lich King had come out, leading to many of

the participants being in a period of playing more than usual. This might affect the interview situation and the way the players talked about playing.

As we have seen here the time aspect is important, and perhaps not in terms of how much or how many hours per day they play, but more as that they have too much time on their hands and are bored. It seems like they need to fill their time with something, and this is a way to “kill” that time. We will discuss this later on, but the aspect of boredom amongst people seems to be something that needs to be looked at more closely. However, as many other things in life, the playing periods goes in waves all depending on life circumstances or the fact that they get bored of playing. What may be of some concern is that some of them only change to another game instead of perusing some other activity.

I'm not a typical WoW-player

As talked about earlier when looking at why the players wanted to participate in this project we saw that the players wanted to give a different view on WoW players than what the media has given. What was interesting, was that the players also had a stereotype image of what a WoW player was, and they stressed that even though they may have acted in such a way, they themselves was not such a type.

“I guess I'm not a very typical WoW player because I have a huge social network outside the game, and I would never prioritize WoW over anything else, except perhaps my girlfriend sometimes. But usually she watches TV and I play WoW.” (# 4)

“In contrary to most people that play computer games, I am very social in that aspect.” (# 3)

We also asked the players whether they believed that WoW could be addictive and if they themselves at some stage could be classified as addicts or at least having problems controlling their game playing. Most of them reports that sometimes they had felt like the game took up too much time, but that they had managed to then stop this. But they also said that they believed that it could become problematic for some players, and this was based on types of players. It was said that if you had an addictive personality type, this was easy to get addicted to.

“I believe that the media sometimes is right. I believe that it is or at least it could be a very dangerous leisure time activity for certain people. I believe that I could easily fall

into that category. As this was the only way for me to have contact with my friends for a long period and it made me... well... you know. (...) I think that is very addictive for some people. You'd have to have a certain personality and a special life. I also think that if you have a problem here you might have other problems as well.” (# 7)

“When you see your son slowly starting to drop out of school because he is constantly in front of the computer, I understand that one would react. For me I defended myself at that point, but realized that I was not going in the right direction here. So I quit, or calmed down for a few weeks, and then started on it again. But I have managed to finish my education. Unfortunately there are many WoW players that cannot say the same.” (# 3)

When asking them whether they would recommend other people to play, there were various answers. However the major part says that they would not recommend it either because they do not know how the person would react to it or if they would be able to control their game playing, but also because it takes a lot of time to be able to know the game and that they would not understand the lingo and the inside jokes from those who has played for a long time.

On the other hand some players would also recommend it to others as it opens up for a new universe and is a great way to keep in touch with your friends while doing something that is fun and entertaining.

I'm not ashamed that I play WoW, but I don't tell people that I play

Asking the players whether they would tell other people about their game playing, most of them said that they would not tell other people that do not play, that they play. This again reflects the view on the stereotypical player the players here also have. They do not want to be identified as someone playing WoW.

“..Most of them think it sounds silly. They believe that the game only consists of running around killing dragons and monsters.” (# 10)

“To the outside world I don't play WoW. So I don't talk to someone about it. People who don't play view it as a negative thing. (...) I guess you can call me a “closet player”. (# 4)

They also seemed to believe that no one was interested in what they were doing and therefore did not bother to tell people.

“Most often I don’t (talk to people who don’t play WoW about the game). They are not interested at all. (...) Nobody wants to listen to how I killed this and that boss. (...) I believe that it is easier to talk about football for example, because then all people know what it is all about.” (# 3)

It seemed that the players only talked to their friends, who also play, about WoW. When talking to friends that did not play they talked about other things. This was either because the non playing friends was not interested or made teasing comments about it. It was indicated that their non playing friends would not understand.

“Well, I talk with my friends who play WoW about the game. (...) But with the other friends we don’t talk about it. Only if someone wants make jokes about it.” (# 11)

“I don’t talk to my new real life friends about WoW. They don’t play, so it is then natural, you know, that we talk about other things. (...) They (his friends) love to tease me. Probably because they had no idea of what this was, and that it was a nerdy thing to do. But hey, it has been years since we have even talked about it.” (# 4)

It was clear that all the players were affected by the negative view the media has presented on playing WoW. They said that it was taken out of proportion and that the media only focused on the negative aspect of the game, and that it was the worst cases that mentioned. Here the interesting thing was that even though they said that this negative focus did not affect them, they were clearly agitated when talking about it and this may indicate that they would have to be affected by this as they did not want to identify with the typical player and as they did not tell other people about their game playing.

“In the medias pursuit to get attention they tend to exaggerate and try spread fear by saying that asocial people are drawn to MMO-games. However this doesn’t mean that you become asocial by playing them.” (# 5)

Looking at how the players act when it comes to talking about media and also how they view themselves in relation to the general notion of a typical player, they had some issues, even though claiming that this did not affect them, this shows that they probably are. It might not

interfere with their actual playing but more in how they present themselves and relates to playing WoW.

Group 1 can be said to be a group of middle to high players meaning that some of them play more than the general WoW player while others play more on a hobby basis.

We will now have a closer look at group 2.

3.3 The Interviews: Group 2 – the friends and family members

There is a need to describe group 2 more in depth to get a picture of who they are, and who they are to the players. Group 2 consisted of participants who were selected to participate by the players themselves, thus this is a quite varied group when it comes to gender, age, relation to the player and knowledge about WoW. We told the players that they were free to choose who they wanted to participate, knowledge of WoW was not a criterion, but they had to be close to the player in some way.

The group of 13 participants consists of siblings, parents, girlfriends and friends, in total six women and seven men. Their relationship towards WoW is varied. Of the participants, five have not played WoW, two have tried but did not find it interesting, five do play actively and two play with moderation. We conducted eight interviews by MSN, and five face to face. It was easier to get participants by interviewing with the use of MSN, mainly because this seemed to be less intimidating. To ensure the participants' anonymity we have labeled the participants by using numbers and noting their status as friend, sibling, girlfriend or parent.

While analyzing the results from group 2 there were several interesting themes that responded to our research questions. First of all it is important to look at the theme concerning the player and his social life. This is also a theme recognized in group 1. Both groups stress the importance of the player as a social person, both as a motive for playing but also as a character trait. Another theme standing out is time, whether this being playing too much or playing because there is not much to do with one's time. Recognizing this theme with group 1, boredom or playing because there is not much to do, is an important finding which all of the players tend to mention several times during each interview. The last theme focuses on attitudes and stereotypes that participants in group 2 talked about. This theme was also present in group 1.

It gives him a social network and let him meet new people

In general, the participants in Group 2 describe the players as quite social, both in-game and in real life. Most of the participants said that the player has a lot of friends in real life and that they would view the player as a social person. Some of the players also meet new people within the game and do not only play with old friends.

“...it becomes a social activity when they sit there for several hours and play together and talk together and get to know each other, also outside the game” (Girlfriend #1)

The participants in group 2 were also asked about what they thought the players' motivations are. The main assumption was that this is a social game and that the players play to spend time with friends they share a hobby with. The participants in group 2 were in general positive towards the social aspect of the game and understood that this is an appealing part of the game.

“I think that the social aspect is the reason for most of those I know play” (Friend #5)

A couple of the participants also mentioned that they think the player play for achievement, to accomplish something within the game.

“It started out of boredom, but then I think that the social aspect became a bigger part after some time, maybe also the achievement aspect” (Friend #10)

They also pointed out that the player in general has always had an interest for computers and has been playing other games before starting to play WoW.

“We both played other games quite a lot before he started playing WoW, he did not suddenly become a player” (Sibling #2)

It seems that players mostly play with friends that have the same interest for computer and computer games, whereas with friends who do not share this interest they do not have a problem doing other things.

I don't think he has much to do with his time so he plays WoW to have something to do

Some also mentioned another time aspect. They think the players play to pass time, or that they have nothing better to do with their time. Participants in group 2 repeatedly mentioned that the players play because they got too much time on their hands, they play when others

choose to watch TV, and one mentions that the only positive thing with WoW is that it is just a hobby to spend time if you do not have anything better to do that day.

“It gives him something to do...” (Friend #5)

“...hobby, something to do day in and day out, in addition to meeting people he know and friends while he’s playing”. (Sibling #2)

Most of the participants in group 2 who do not play WoW themselves commented upon the player using a lot of time playing WoW.

“It gives him a social network and lets him meet new people which he would not have met otherwise, however it can be said that he probably loses out on meeting a lot of other people that he would have met if it was not for the game.” (Friend #3)

“It is his interest and it is his hobby, and having a lot of fun with it and seeing, in a way, his friends while doing it, and I understand that aspect of it, it is just that it is very unsocial to live with one who plays, but it is just that he thinks it a lot of fun”. (Girlfriend #1)

The impression given by group 2 in general is that people who play WoW have too much time on their hands. Not being able to know what to do with this time, results in game playing. What is interesting is that several of the players said that they would like to spend time reading or working out etc. when asked what they would do if they did not play WoW.

It tends to be too much

The time aspect seems to be the main issue with this game. Because WoW is an ever continuing game, there is no pause button and continuing obligations towards others within the game results in a form of social pressure. It consumes a lot of time if you let it. Participants in group 2 all mention this as a negative aspect of the game. Most of the participants think that the players use a reasonable amount of time on the game.

”I already think that he plays too much. He plays for several hours each day” (Girlfriend #1)

Those who play themselves have a tendency to think that the player has a sensible relationship towards the game and that they play just as much. The problem is that they might not see that they play too much as well.

"He probably plays as much as I do" (Friend #5(who estimates that he plays for at least 3 hours a day, probably more in the weekends depending on what other things there is to do))

There might also be a conflict of interest regarding how much time the players spend playing WoW. Some partners think that their significant other spend too much time playing the game, but also state that they have a different opinion of the time spent than the player would have. What the fair amount of time spent is might be hard to evaluate, but in general the participants feel that the player uses just as much time as they would use watching TV, reading magazines or as they use on other hobbies.

"He probably plays as often as he can/has the conscience to" (Girlfriend #2)

When group 2 were asked to compare playing WoW to any other activity, most of the participants compared it to watching TV, to kill time, though many comment upon it being more social than watching TV.

"It is a hobby and an alternative to stare at the TV for hours, where you can play with a bunch of other people and have fun". (Sibling #2)

Some of the participants said that they wanted the player to spend more time doing other things, like spending more time with their significant other, going out, spend time with the family and more physically social activities, like skiing (this being in the winter). There are some participants that think that the player uses too much time playing this game and that it affects other parts of that person's life.

"...but it has also taken the focus away from other interests" (Friend #10)

"You sit in front of a screen for several hours, lack fresh air and lose a lot of quality time with friends" (Sibling #3)

One report that it gets in the way of the friends meeting and that most of their friends think that he plays too much. However most of the participants report that they do not think that the player has lost any friends because of the game.

...you never hear about those who only use WoW as a game, as a hobby like anything else...

When asked what they think of the articles in the media about WoW the participants in group 2 described the media's negative approach to WoW in ways that were quite similar to the description given by the players.

"Yes, I do understand that the media get stuck on the negative because that is what, I mean, who is interested in reading that combining computer gaming and having a family at the same time is great. That would not be an interesting article. You know...I do understand the negative approach of the media too. But there are always two sides to a story, is what I think, and that goes for this too". (Girlfriend #1)

It is obvious that they understand why the media chooses to portray a negative picture of WoW, because it is the same with everything; the media is out to sell a story. In general the participants claim not to be affected by this negative publicity, but it is clear that they have given it a lot of thought.

"...you never hear about those who only use WoW as a game, as a hobby like anything else. What you hear about are those who are not able to distance themselves or those who just lose focus. But yes, I would agree to some of it, but I think, maybe, that it is quite one sided. They have chosen to focus on the worst group of players..." (Sibling #1)

One of the participants in group 2 cited something he had read in a discussion of an article about people playing computer games.

"Why is it socially acceptable to invest all your time playing chess, while if you do that with a computer game you will be viewed as a loser?" (Friend #3)

Participants in both groups commented upon the media focusing on the player that has become an addict even though most players are not. However most of the participants believe the focus should be on why someone becomes addicted to this game, why they do not have any friends outside the game and not blame the game itself for people not coping.

You probably think the war in Gaza is caused by WoW

Attitudes towards WoW varied among the 13 participants in group 2. Some of them were not negative to the game itself and could see some of the benefits with the game.

"I understand that it is very social for those who play, but it is not social for those who live with a player". (Girlfriend #1)

Only four of the participants were negative, whereas two were indifferent and the rest thought of it as a hobby you enjoy spending time doing. There was a clear connection between not playing WoW and their negative attitude towards the game. Of those who were mainly negative towards WoW, all were aware of it.

“...but as you might hear a small notion of here (laughing) I’m not too thrilled with this” (Parent #1)

This is quite interesting however, because the players also seem to assume that other people always are negative to the game and therefore they do not talk to other about the game. Some of the participants said that the players do not tell all their real life friends that they play or they do not talk to them about it.

“His other friends do not really know WoW” (Girlfriend #1)

Of those who were negative they also said that the player was aware of their negative view. This could sometimes result in arguments or that WoW was not a topic to discuss. Several participants said that the player, mostly the young ones, often argued with their parents over the game. One parent cited a comment from the player that was fed up with the parent always blaming WoW:

“You probably think the war in Gaza is caused by WoW”

Participants in group 2 said that they would not defend the game in a discussion but they would defend the player and why he plays.

The analysis shows a nuanced image of the effects WoW has on the players themselves and how they are viewed from friends and family members. It is clear that this is quite complex and that there are several factors contributing to how the game itself has an effect on different parts of a player's life. Based on the results we have illustrated a diagram of the different factors that may be affecting the players' lives.

The Effect on the WoW player:

The diagram below shows that there are several factors that affect the players' life and that the effects on the WoW player is a complex issue. We see here that motivation, social relationships and attitudes are the main factors that contribute to affect the player, and these again are influenced by several other interconnected factors.

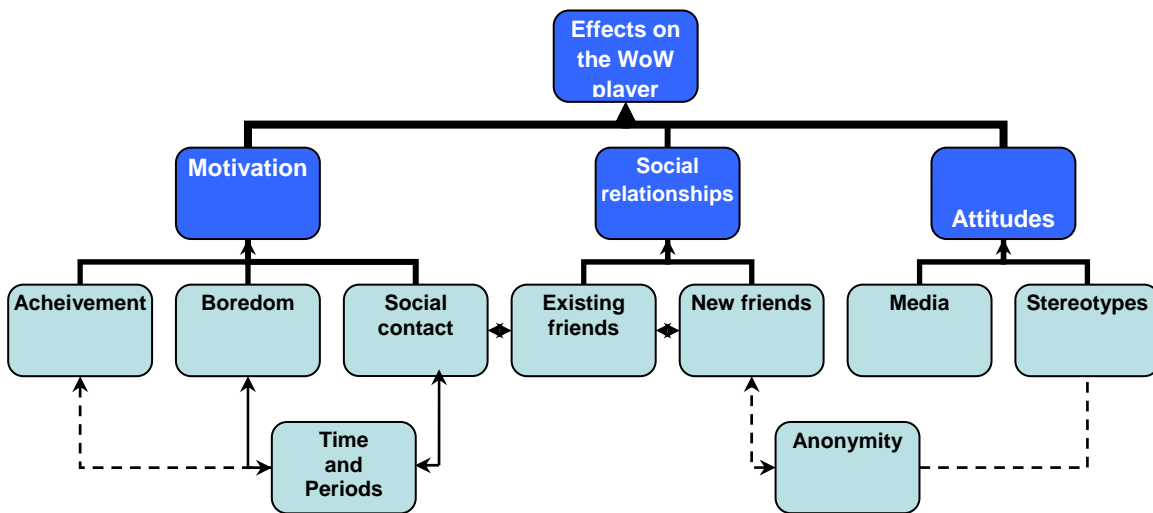


Figure 1.

4. Discussion

After analyzing the three different date sets separately we will now will now discuss our findings looking at the complete data set. We will further try to emphasize the major themes showing the links between the three sets and what this tells us in regards to the research questions.

Social interaction

WoW is, as described earlier, a new way of communicating and interacting with other people. Research done by Griffiths et al. (2004) and Yee, (2007) shows that this is an important part of a players' motivation when starting to play WoW. All participants mentioned the social aspect of the game being a motivation for either starting to play or one of the reasons why they still play today. About half of the players interviewed stated that they started playing because they had friends who played. Studies show that 23% say that human interaction is their main focus and 55% of the players asked, play to be in a group. However, when asked about their regular playing style 31% reported that they are mostly "soloing" (Griffiths et al., 2004). In our study participants also responded that they would quit playing if their friends did. This is a strong indication of the importance of the social aspect in this game.

In general, the participants in the present study see themselves as social persons who like to be with friends and meet people. The same tendency was reflected in the answers given by group 2. Looking at the results from the questionnaire about 60% (n=228) saw themselves as

a social person and felt that their friends would say the same. Additionally, they did not feel that the game had any impact concerning this topic. Participants in group 2 will, in general, agree with the players and describe them as quite social, both in-game and in real life. Most of the participants said that the player has a lot of friends in real life and that their friends also will view them as social persons. Participants in the questionnaire did not feel that friends, family, school or work are getting in the way of them playing. This assumption was given by both groups participating in the interviews.

The research done by Yee, (2007) and Williams et al., (2008) also shows that the social aspect is important for the players. Existing relationships may also benefit from this. It is an easy way to keep in contact and communicate through common interests. Sitting several hours in front of the computer talking to friends is also viewed as a good social connection by some of the participants in group 2. Participants in our study which state that the social interaction is the main reason they still play have friends who have moved to a different part of the country, to another country or they themselves have moved away from their friends. They see WoW as a good way to share an interest and still keep in touch with old friends, also making it easier to maintain the relationship with daily contact.

While WoW gives the player an opportunity to stay in touch with friends and let friends share a hobby, there is also the possibility of meeting new people and form new friendships (Cole and Griffiths, 2007, Skog, 2008). Most of the participants interviewed in the present study played with old, real life friends, or friends of friends. This was also the main impression reported by group 2. In a study done by Cole and Griffiths (2007) they report that as many as 80% of the participants said that they enjoyed playing with real life friends and family, but also make new friends. Almost half of the players in Cole and Griffiths study believed that their online friends were comparable to their real-life friends. The players in our study usually played with different people, who for the main part were Norwegians. They would not consider the new people they meet and play with to be friends, but acquaintances. A couple of the players did however report that they had met new people they considered to be good friends. The results from the questionnaire on the other hand showed that 60, 8% ($n=227$) agreed upon having made new friends through WoW, with only 6,2% disagreeing. How they define friendship may vary and therefore the results might be affected by this.

A couple of the players had met their online friends in real life and also played with people from all over Europe. One of these players did not play with real life friends at all, only people he met through the game and who shared his interest, which his real life friends did not. Almost all of the participants had a large social network and have friends that do not play WoW. Group 2 reported the players' friends who do not play WoW as being, in most cases, as important to the player as the ones who play. Playing is an activity they can share with friends who also play. This does not restrict them from involving in other activities with friends who does not play WoW. However several of the participants said that they often played console games such as Guitar Hero and Grand Theft Auto with their other friends. Stating that their real life friends were more important than the game, and they would rarely play the game instead of being with friends is a good indicator of this being a normal hobby. This might be an important factor when looking at players who have a problematic relationship towards WoW.

We have also mentioned that the game might be beneficial for people who are shy and uncomfortable in social settings. WoW can here help to boost one's self esteem through positive feedback and you can practise your social skills. Several of the participants, especially the younger ones, said that they do not always feel comfortable in social settings, at parties and such, but when playing the game they did not have to worry about saying the right things or acting cool.

WoW is, as stated earlier, a game where the social aspect is a main focus. You play with other people, work together to solve missions and communicate either through real- time voice chats like Ventrilo or Skype or you can use the message board within the game to write messages, more like MSN and other chat forums. Even though you get to keep in touch with friends and the social aspect of the game is quite evident, the intimacy you get through meeting and communicating with people face to face is not present. It will also be interesting to see how this will develop in the future. Communication through the games where you also can choose a level of anonymity might make it harder to be comfortable in normal face to face settings. This might not always help those who already think that social interaction might be hard.

Playing for achievement and status

Being the best, having the coolest equipment and having a high status among the other players is an important aspect of the game. All of the participants had reached top level, and said they played more than before the release of the new expansion pack in November 2008. This indicates, as some of the participants also said, that they usually play more in different periods. Bartle (1996) describes a theoretical framework of player types based on his experience. He says that male players measure higher on achievement and manipulation (to get what they want), whereas females scores higher on relationship, immersion (being someone else) and escapism (play to get away from real world). Male players are more likely to engage in these environments to achieve objective goals, whereas female players want to form new relationships. This is an interesting factor when comparing this to other studies of motivation.

For many players, achievement is the main motivation for playing. When releasing the new expansion pack, one of the new features in the game was achievements. Several of the players talked a lot about their achievements and several mentioned that they had been a part of the best guild on their server at some point.

Achievement as motivation for playing is supported by Bandura's (1977) self- efficacy theory. According to Bandura, the most important factor for self- efficacy is the feeling that you master what you are doing. If you cope successfully in a situation this increases the conviction that you will be able to manage similar situations in an effective way. Most of the older participants are working with and have studied some aspect of computers, as well as the younger ones always have had an interest for computers. According to Bandura's theory the players play because this is what they are good at and they believe that they can contribute to and master the game, therefore achievement is a main motivation.

Also when players talk about the conflicts within the game, the importance of receiving the best weapon after defeating a boss also indicates the importance of achievement.

WoW is designed to give instant feedback and it is easy to achieve goals within the game. This triggers the players to play for achievement. The results from the questionnaire gave an implication of the importance of achievement. Of the participants 83,3% reported that they had reached their goal level (this was before the release of the expansion pack). In addition, 90,7% said they have more than one character, indicating that they "level" a character (meaning building that character to be as good as they want them to be) and then starting to

build another one. Bessièrè et. al (2007) found that players create a character that is more close to the ideal self than their real self, focusing on achievement. Cole and Griffiths (2007) also found that players are fixated on their virtual character and that this leads to playing to achieve the best character and equipment.

However, achievement is not necessarily the reason they give others for their playing. Participants in group 2 reported that they thought the players played because their friends played and because it is their hobby. Only a few mentioned that they believed the player to enjoy the feedback they get and the feeling of a “quick fix” if reality is a bit boring. They mentioned some players having said that the game gives you instant gratification, something the real world does not.

Time to kill

The time aspect seems to be the main issue with this game. WoW being an ever continuing game, obligations towards others to participate within the game results in a form of social pressure. It consumes a lot of time if you let it. According to Williams et al. (2008), when it comes to time spent playing, achievement is the strongest motivation. Participants in group 2 all mention this as a negative aspect of the game. Most of the participants think that the players use a significant amount of time playing the game. Interestingly, most of the players also mention this as the negative aspect of the game. Some however said that this could be a positive thing if you have too much time on your hands.

There might also be a conflict of interest regarding how much time the players spend playing WoW. Some partners think that their significant other spend too much time playing the game, but also state that they have a different opinion of the time spent playing than the player would have. The players all report that they play more in some periods than they do in others. Some of the players reported that they could play more at times when things in real life were tough. This is what Bartle refers to as the escapism player type. This indicates that the player needs to avoid or get a break from “real life” for some time (Bartle, 1996). Mentioning the instant gratification some of the players said that getting “lost” in the game is an easy escape when the real world can be difficult to handle. But it is also affected by other circumstances, such as the different seasons. Some of the players both in group 1 and in group 2 said that they play less during the summer because then they spend much more time outside with friends. Other said that they played less in some periods because they realized how much time

they actually spent playing WoW and felt that they needed a break from the game. Many of them also admitted that in periods they have played too much, and that this has had a negative effect on their life at least for a certain time.

Being bored

One of the options in the questionnaire that the participants could point out as a reason for starting to play WoW was “out of boredom”, but as few as 64 participants did. This is quite interesting when it comes to the case of boredom being the main reason for still playing presented in the interviews. A couple of the participants in group 2 said that they believed that the player thought the real world became boring after playing WoW. With so much constantly happening within the game and the confidence boost when doing good several players said they were bored when not playing and that they find other activities except WoW to be boring. Several studies indicate that adolescents are often bored in their everyday life (Shaw, et al., 1996, Caldwell et al., 1999). Adolescents today have a lot of free time, especially after school and on weekends, which in turn demands that adolescents take control of their free time. This responsibility may provide a new challenge when adolescents have to be responsible for structuring their own time (Caldwell, Darling, Payne and Dowdy, 1999)

Another interesting finding is that the players also get bored of playing. Most of the participants said that they switch between games when they get bored of the one they play. They often take breaks and several of the participants did not play that much before the release of the expansion pack. They said it was too little to do within the game before the new release. This was also reported from a couple of the participants in group 2. They said that the player sometimes got bored with the game and played less or not at all for a period of time. However they commented that the player always returned to WoW. Some of the participants in group 2 also say they believe the player to be playing to pass time or because they have nothing better to do with their time. This might be as Caldwell et al (1999) proposes that they do not know how to structure their time and end up playing just to pass time. Participants in group 2 repeatedly mentioned that the player play because they got too much time on their hands and they also said that the players play when others choose to watch TV. One mentioned that the only positive thing with WoW is that it is just a hobby that you spend time on if you do not have anything better to do that day.

Playing too much

Looking at how this MMORPG might affect the players' everyday social life, it is important to take a look at how much time of their days is spent playing WoW. As seen in the analysis of the results of the questionnaire most of the participants play from 4-5 days a week to every day. They also play for three to five hours at a time. When interviewing some of the participants they said that they usually play for two to three hours a day, more during weekends. Some of the participants say in the interviews that they think they play too much, or have played too much in the past. The interviews reflect the results gathered from the questionnaire. Group 2 also commented quite frequently on the how much time the player spent playing WoW.

The reasons for quitting given by retired players generate another interesting aspect. They report mainly that they did not find WoW interesting, did not have the time and that the game took up too much of their time. This supports the results given by those who still play and their friends and family. It is obvious that this game is extremely time consuming. A studies by Yee (2006b) show that the average time spent playing MMORPGs a week was 23 hours, that is 3 hours and 18 minutes on an average each day. This is significant to what the Norwegian players in our study report. One is easily led to think that spending that much time playing each week have to affect the player in some way. Research has found that there is a significant but weak negative correlation between the effects playing has had on relationships and the number of hours played per week (Cole and Griffiths, 2007). The results from our questionnaire support this. As many as 50% (n= 228) of the participants said that they sometimes have felt that the game has interfered with their daily activities. Griffiths, et al., (2003) most striking finding was that over 25% played for more than 41 hours a week.

When being asked to compare playing WoW to an activity, most participants stated that playing is just a hobby and most of the participants in both groups compared this activity to watching TV, something to do to kill time. A study done by the Statistics Norway (SSB) in 2008 shows that Norwegians watch TV on an average 2 hours and 21 minutes every day, teens spend even more time in front of the TV. Comparing this to the time spent playing WoW, where 131 of a total of 226 participants in the questionnaire said they spend on an average of three to five hours playing WoW every day. Comparing this with the results from Yee (2007) the players spend on an average 57 minutes more playing WoW than the average person do watching TV. In the interviews the player also talked about watching TV and

movies in addition to playing WoW. There are also some participants however who compared playing WoW to playing sports. They explained that playing WoW is much more engaging than watching TV and when playing in a guild this can be compared to be on a soccer team, you have to work together to win the game. Seeing this in the perspective players give on time, it is easier to believe the comparison between watching TV and playing WoW.

Anonymity

Asking about relationships within the game we wanted to know if participants have ever been annoyed by somebody who plays WoW, 15,4% ($n= 227$), stated that they often or always are annoyed. However 31,3 % said they never where annoyed by somebody who play.

Interviewing the participants in group 1 almost all said that they were annoyed by someone within the game. The anonymity aspect of these types of games can both be positive or negative for the player. The positive aspect would be that the player can be who they really are without having to worry about being judged. On the other hand, this anonymity can also make people act out more than normal. This reflects the stereotype image of a WoW player, and clearly provokes some of the players. As some of them mentioned participating in this study was a way to let people know that players could be “normal” as well.

The stereotypical WoW gamer

It is difficult to talk about this phenomenon and how it affects people without considering the attitudes and stereotype views both from the players themselves but also for conceptions of what other people think about them and about them as players. This however can be viewed from different perspectives. Stereotypes may be defined as the negative evaluations that mark prejudice that can stem from emotional associations, from the need to justify behavior, or from negative beliefs (Myers, 2004). Myers also claims that to stereotype is to generalize and that a problem with stereotypes arises when they are over generalized or just plain wrong. One of the first things that highlighted the way that the participants were affected by the stereotype view was the reason they participated in this study. This was apparent in Group 1- the players who themselves had signed up to participate further in this study after completing the questionnaire. The reasons for participating proved to be mostly to show us as researchers that they are “normal” people with a social life and don’t fall into the stereotype characterization. Both the players and the friends/girlfriends who also play, seemed to disagree with the negative outlook the WoW player has, and wanted to show us that this was not the case. Both groups had tendencies to question us as researchers thinking that we had a

negative perspective and therefore wanted to give us a different view. About half of the participants in Group 2 did not play WoW themselves and tended to be more affected by the negative stereotype view the media presents, but would not acknowledge their friend or family member as a computer nerd. The players themselves seemed eager to prove that they were not typical players and did not want to identify themselves as one either. What was interesting was that when the players wanted to show us a “new” way to view WoW players; they also confirmed that the stereotype existed. Many of the participants interviewed knew someone who has experienced problems because they were playing too much. As for the older part of the group, they seemed to be more aware of this factor than the younger ones. The older players either admitted that having had periods that was not healthy for them in regards of game playing, but stressed that they managed to “get out” of it. Some of them also took a more defensive position talking about themselves as a “nerd”. By taking this position it seemed as they wanted to justify their game playing. The younger group on the other side, did not seem to take such a position, but were more eager to explain how they gained new friendships and that this was just something the group of friends were doing together. One can here discuss that when you get older you are more conscious about what sort of activities you are pursuing and the social acceptance for doing this. As for the younger group it might be more accepted to use more time in front of the computer because that is what everybody (the friends) does.

Attitudes towards WoW

Attitudes can be defined as “a belief and feeling that can predispose our response to something or someone” (Myers, 2004). One way to view how the stereotypes and attitudes towards the game affect the players is whether they talk to other people about this or not. It seemed as for the players they were not ashamed that they played WoW, but on the other hand, they did not want to tell people about it. Many of them assume that other people who do not play WoW would not be interested in hearing about it, and also they did not want to be compared with the stereotype they believe that people may have about WoW players. In the players’ opinion, the media is to blame for this. Because of the negative image the media recently has portrayed of WoW it is understandable that they are somewhat restrictive about telling other people what they spend their spare time doing. When this is said, the attitudes of the players and what they believe the general attitude in society is, does not affect their game playing directly. However, how they view themselves as a WoW player and how they present

themselves in social settings that do not have anything to do with WoW, indicate that they are in fact influenced by the media.

One can conclude that there are players that fit the stereotype of a computer nerd that play WoW but there is also many players that do not fit into this definition. As research show (Yee, 2006, 2007; and Williams et al., 2008), the average player is older than initially thought (in their late 20ties) which does not agree with the stereotype. The players we talked to wanted to prove to us that they were “normal” people and did not fit the stereotype, however by not telling people about themselves being players this might actually contribute to maintain the stereotype view in the society.

WoW as a Cultural Phenomenon

It is no doubt about WoW being a growing cultural phenomenon with 11 million players around the world. It is therefore important to understand the attractiveness and the implication this game has. As it affects players social life and health this new phenomenon raises several questions that will need to be addressed to fully grasp the implications such a game has. First it is important to look at the underlying motives that make such a great amount of people play WoW. We have looked at this in the present study finding that the players are usually motivated by achievement in the game and the social aspect. This confirms earlier research by Yee (2006, 2007), Williams et al. (2008) and Griffith et al. (2004). However these motives may be obvious. The players we have interviewed here also give the impression that this is something they do when they have nothing else to do, hence to kill time. Some of them compared it to watching TV while talking to their friends; however they described playing as being much more exciting and active. As one of the players said:

“It is usually boredom that triggers it. (...) There are several times I have wanted to spend my time doing other things, and I guess one could say that many times I have played because I don’t have anything else to waste my time on. It would have been fun to do something else that just wasting time on this again. But I guess it is like any other game, it is just to kill time.”

(# 2)

Many of the players we interview had similar remarks, and this was also confirmed by some of the family and friends in group 2. We believe that this is something that needs to be looked at in a broader cultural and societal perspective. For the past decade and perhaps more, the general conception is that people does not have enough time. In Norwegian this has been

called “tidsklemma”. What then has happened to the aspect of time? Is it so that the next generation has too much time on their hands and need to fill that time with something? Another aspect here is that many of the players said that they started to play WoW because they were bored. Looking at both the time aspect and the boredom, is it so that more and more people needs to be entertained and are afraid of being bored? Do they rely on other sources to be entertained and to fill their time?

Until now research on this as a cultural and social phenomenon has been limited and as said earlier, the implications games like WoW, has been seen in a both positive and negative manner, whereas the positive indicates that it opens up for new relationships (Cole and Griffith, 2007; and Yee, 2006), and the negative as that it is addictive and threatens the players social life and health. The media especially has portrayed an image of WoW as something that destroys the lives of many and that offers a potential threat to the players. Another interesting aspect is the social factor that is so highly appreciated for the players. Even though many of the players play with their friends, what happens then to how we view friendships in the future? Is it acceptable to consider someone a friend even though you have not met the person face to face? As the study from Cole and Griffith (2007) shows that even though a small percent of players, some of them actually trust their online friends just as much as their “off”-line friends. Will this affect how we value future relationships, and if it does, in what way?

As a phenomenon it is difficult to say whether WoW is here to stay or if it really will affect the way people talk to each other and spend time. Looking at other types of online communication forms such as Messenger, Facebook, Twitter etc., this might only be another part of how future generations will communicate and keep in contact with friends all over the world (Skog, 2008). What separates WoW from these are of course the intensity level and the fact that you need to concentrate on completing a task as well as talking to the other players. Whether the phenomenon of WoW is here to stay or not is too early to say, and the long term effects on cultural and societal structures has to be considered as we continue with the different development. What is important is that we have a reflexive view on this and try to understand the underlying ideologies and motivations for this kind of activity.

5. Conclusion

When it comes to the social aspect, having friends that do not play WoW is an important factor for keeping a social life also outside the game. Players who only have friends who also play WoW tend to spend much more time playing and less time doing other things.

It seems as if people who do not play WoW are more negative towards WoW. According to the participants in group 2 that did not play, it is too time consuming and they wish the player could play less and spend more time doing other things which they perceive as more social. However they do see the social aspect of the game and they all feel this is the only positive aspect of the game. All participants stress the importance of the communication within the game. Being able to talk to friends for several hours while playing makes this factor a contributor for seeing WoW as more than just a game. This raises the question of how this affects players and their relationships.

It was important for the players in our study to show us as researchers that they did not fit the stereotypical view of a WoW player. Disagreeing with the medias negative portrayal of the WoW player, players do see that WoW leads to problematic for some people. However those who do not play seemed to be more affected by the medias negative image of the game. The players and also the friends in group 2 that also played WoW said that the media did not affect them in any way. On the other hand they did not tell other people that they played because they did not want others to put them into the category as the “nerdy” WoW player that the media presents. One can ask whether this actually contribute to maintain the stereotype view or not.

As WoW has established itself as a growing cultural phenomenon it is evident that this type of game raises several questions as to the possible social and emotional effects of this activity. To sum up, the main motivations to play WoW mentioned by the players was the social aspect, as playing with friends and/or meeting new people and to achieve something, meaning to become good at playing the game. Based on our data we also saw that the underlying factor of boredom and have time to kill may be the underlying motivation factor, raising the question of if the “new generation” have too much time on their hands and need to be entertained by an outside source to fill their time.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self- efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191- 215.
- Bartle, R. (1996). Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs. *Journal of Online Environments*, 1(1).
- Baumann, C. (1999). Adoptive Fathers and Birthfathers: A study of Attitudes. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 16, 5.
- BBC News: *S Korean dies after games session*. Downloaded 02.05.09 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4137782.stm>
- Bessièrè, K., Seavy, A.,F., Kiesler, S. (2007) The ideal elf: Identity exploration in World of Warcraft. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10, 530- 535
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*; 3, 77-101
- Caldwell, L. L., Darling, N., Payne, L. L., Dowdy, B., (1999) "Why Are You Bored?": An Examination of Psychological and Social Control Causes of Boredom among Adolescents. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 31
- Chapelle, D., Eatough, V., Davies, M.N.O., and Griffith, M. (2006). EverQuest – It is Just a Computer Game Right? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Online Gaming Addiction. *Int J Ment Health Addiction*. 4, 205 – 216. Springer Science.
- Chen, V. H., Duh, H.B., Phuah, P.S. K., and Lam, D.Z.Y. (2006). Enjoyment or Engagement? Role of Social Interaction in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games. (MMORPGS). *Computer Science*, 4161), 262 - 267

Chiu, S., Lee, J-Z. and Huang, D-H. (2004). Video Game Addiction in Children and Teenagers in Taiwan. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour. Volume 7, Number 5.*

Cole, H. and Griffiths, M.D. (2007). Social interactions in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour. Volume 10, Number 4.*

Creswell, J., W. (2003). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Sage Publications, Inc. USA

Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research.* Sage Publications, Inc. USA.

Griffith, M.D., Davies, M.N.O., and Chapelle, D. (2004). Demographic Factors Playing Variables in Online Computer Gaming. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour. Volume 7, Number 4.*

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing.* London: Sage Publications

Morse, J., M (2003). Principles of Mixed Methods and Multimethod Research Design. In A . Ed. Tashakkori and C Tedlie, *Handbook of Mixed Methods In Social & Behavioral Research.* Sage Publications, Inc. USA

Myers, D. G. (2004). *Exploring Social Psychology.* Third edition. New York. Mc Graw Hill

Ng, B. D., and Wiemer-Hastings, P. (2005). Addiction to the Internet and Online Gaming. *CyberPsychology & Behavior. Vol. 8, Number 2.*

Parsons, J.M., (2005). *An Examination Of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games As A Facilitator Of Internet Addiction.* The University of Iowa, Graduate College. Ph.D. Thesis

Peris, R., Gimeno, M. A., Pinazo, D., Ortet, G., Carrero, V., Sanchiz, M., et al. (2002). Online Chat Rooms: Virtual Spaces of Interaction for Socially Oriented People.,

CyberPsychology & Behavior (Vol. 5, pp. 43-51)

Peters, C.S., and Malesky, A. (2008). Problematic Usage Among Highly- Engaged Players of Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour. Volume 11*, Number 4.

Shaw, S. M., Caldwell, L.L., Kleiber, D. A. (1996). Boredom, Stress and Social Control in the Daily Activities of Adolescents. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 28, 4, 274- 292

Smahel, D., Blinka, L., and Ledabyl, O. (2008) Playing MMORPGs: Connections between Addiction and Identifying with a Character. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. Vol. 11, Number 6.

Skog, B. (2008) *Fra WoW til YouTube: Bruk av dataspill og nettsamfunn blant deltagere på The Gathering*, 19.-23. mars 2008. Report, Institute for Sociology and Social science, NTNU, Trondheim.

Søbstad, F. (producer) (2009, April 14) *Exil*. Television Broadcast. Oslo: NRK1

Way, N., Stauber, H. Y., Nakkula, M. J., London, P. (1994). Depression and Substance Use in Two Divergent High School Cultures: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 23, 3, 331- 357.

Williams, D., Yee, N. and Caplan, S. (2008). Who plays, how much and why? Debunking the stereotypical gaming profile. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 13: 993-1018.

Wood, R. T. A., Griffith, M. D. and Parke, A. (2007). Experience of Time Loss among Videogame Players: An empirical study. *Cyber Psychology & Behaviour. Volume 10*, Number 1.

Yee, N. (2005). *The Daedalus Project*. Downloaded 12.09.09 from [Http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus](http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus). Vol. 3-4.

Yee, N. (2006). *The Demographics, Motivations, and Derived Experiences of Users of*

Massively Multi-User Online Graphical Environments. Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, 15: p. 309-329

Yee, N. (2006). The Psychology of Massively Multi-User Online Role-Playing Games: Motivations, Emotional Investment, Relationships and Problematic Usage. In R. Schroeder and A. Axelsson, *Avatars at Work and Play: Collaboration and Interaction in Shared Virtual Environments* (pp. 187-207). London: Springer- Verlag.

Yee, N. (2007). Motivations of Play in Online Games. *Journal of CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 9, 772-775.

Statistisk Sentralbyrå. (21. april 2004). Downloaded 19.04.09 from http://www.ssb.no/vis/magasinet/slik_lever_vi/art-2004-04-21-01.html

Massively multiplayer online role-playing game. (2009) Downloaded 22.04.09 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mmorpgs>

World of Warcraft (2009) Downloaded 22.04.09 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_of_warcraft

Appendix 1

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Katrina Roen
Psykologisk institutt
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1094 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Vår dato: 28.10.2008

Vår ref :19963 / 2 / LT Deres dato:

Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 15.09.2008. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>19963</i>	<i>The Social Implications of the MMORPG World of Warcraft</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Katrina Roen</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Mette Ljungquist Johannessen</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

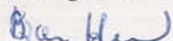
Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 05.05.2009, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen


Bjørn Henrichsen


Lis Tenold

Kontaktperson: Lis Tenold tlf: 55 58 33 77

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Mette Ljungquist Johannessen, Wilhelmsgate 8 C, 0168 OSLO

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

Appendix 2

Informasjon til deltakere ved masterstudiet om World of Warcraft.

Hva er meningen med dette studiet?

Med dette studiet ønsker vi å kartlegge og få et innblikk i hva som skjer med en persons sosiale relasjoner når hun eller han begynner å spille *World of Warcraft*. Da media i en tid nå har tatt opp problematikken rundt dette spillet, ønsker vi å se om dette faktisk stemmer og om det er slik at dette spillet har en innvirkning på spillernes sosiale liv.

Hvor mange vil delta i studiet?

Det er 228 deltakere på spørreskjemaet, og en ca. 30 stykker, dvs. 15 "par" eller "caser", som deltar videre i intervjuene.

Deltakelse i studiet

Intervjuet i seg selv vil vare ca. en time. Opptaket og analysen av dette vil eksistere helt til oppgaven er ferdig vurdert og til og med til eventuell publikasjon av materiale. Etter dette vil all informasjon om deg som deltaker bli slettet. Det er kun forskere og veileder som har tilgang til informasjon om deg.

Finnes det noen risikoer i å delta ved dette studiet?

Det er ingen antatte risikoer ved å delta i studiet.

Hvilke fordeler er det ved å delta i dette studiet?

Fordelen med å delta er å bidra til viktig og aktuell forskning om noe som påvirker mange. Din deltakelse er nyttig da dette kan bidra til videre forskning om emnet, og i tillegg å gjøre folk mer oppmerksom på hvilke faktisk implikasjoner spillet World of Warcraft kan ha på mennesker.

Koster det meg noe å være med?

Det koster ingenting å være med. Dersom intervjuene går over telefon vil deltakeren ikke bli belastet for dette.

Vil jeg få betalt for å være med?

Det er ingen betaling for å være med. Men alle deltakerne vil være med i trekningen av en reise for 2 stk.

Hva med konfidensialitet?

Det er kun forskere og veileder som vil ha tilgang til dine kontaktdetaljer og den informasjon om deg vi får gjennom intervjuene. Personlige opplysninger som er identifiserbare vil ikke bli brukt i oppgaven med mindre du som deltaker blir spurt om å godkjenne dette spesielt.

Hva med frivillighet?

Det er helt frivillig å være med i dette studiet. Dersom du bestemmer deg for å delta, kan du på ethvert tidspunkt trekke deg dersom du ønsker det.

Dersom jeg har eventuelle spørsmål?

Vi oppfordrer alle deltakere til å stille spørsmål dersom det skulle være noen usikkerheter i forhold til studiet eller deltakelsen.

Dersom du har noen spørsmål;

Kirsti E. Wiik & Mette L. Johannessen
forskningwow@gmail.com
Tel.: (99001717 / 97088268)

Katrina Roen (veileder)
katrina.roen@psykologi.uio.no

Appendix 3a.

Informasjon til deltagere til "Implications of World of Warcraft" prosjekt. (Spilleren)

Vi takker for din deltakelse på vårt spørreskjema og at du ønsker å delta videre I vårt prosjekt om implikasjoner av World of Warcraft.

I denne delen av vårt prosjekt vil vi intervjuer deg og ditt forhold til spillet World of Warcraft.

Intervjuet vil ta ca en times tid og vi vil ta opp samtalen på lydbånd.

Begge intervjuere vil være tilstede og vi ønsker å få frem en samtale rundt emnet.

Vi vil gjerne spørre deg om din periode som World of Warcraft spiller, og hvordan ditt liv har blitt påvirket av spillet.

Samtidig vil vi gjennomføre et intervju med din kjæreste/venn/familiemedlem angående den samme perioden, og snakke om hvordan denne personen har opplevd ditt forhold til World of Warcraft. Vi vil derfor gjøre deg oppmerksom at det vil bli snakket om din livssituasjon ut fra den andre partens synspunkt. Det er derfor viktig at du godkjenner dette scenarioet. Men vi vil ikke bruke informasjon gitt i det ene intervjuet i det andre.

Alle opptak, kontaktdetaljer og annen sensitiv informasjon vil kun være tilgjengelig for forskerne; Kirsti Wiik og Mette L. Johannessen, og deres veileder Katrina Roen. Alt vil bli lagret på en ekstern harddisk slik at ingen andre kan få tilgang på informasjonen.

Du vil ikke bli omtalt med ditt eget navn i oppgaven.

Prosjektet vil bli avsluttet i mai 2009. Data, og kontaktinformasjon for de som deltar i intervjuene, vil bli lagret på en ekstern harddisk ut 2010, grunnet muligheter for publikasjon etter innlevert masteroppgave. Etter 2010 vil innsamlet data bli slettet.

Ønsker du å trekke deg fra prosjektet kan du gjøre dette når som helst. Du kan også stille spørsmål rundt din deltakelse til enhver tid dersom du ønsker dette.

Våre kontakt detaljer:

Kirsti E. Wiik & Mette L. Johannessen
forskningwow@gmail.com
Tel.: (99001717 / 97088268)

Katrina Roen (veileder)
katrina.roen@psykologi.uio.no

klipp-----

Deltakers samtykke

Jeg undertegner herved på å være deltaker i prosjektet om World of Warcraft.
Jeg har lest informasjonen og er inneforstått med detaljene i forhold til prosjektet.

Navn sign.

Dato

Sted

Appendix 4a.

Intervjuguide GRUPPE 1

Introduksjon

1. Snakke generelt med intervjuobjekt:
Fortelle hvem vi er og hva vi gjør, prosjektet og at vi er opp, konfidensialitet osv.
Gå gjennom informasjonsskriv og få underskrift på deltakelse.
2. Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv
Alder, jobb, hvor man er fra etc.
3. Hvorfor valgte du å bli med på dette?
4. Hva er ditt forhold til den du har valgt å ha med i prosjektet?

Om WoW og spiller

5. Hvor lenge har du spilt WoW? Hvor langt er du kommet i spillet? Hvorfor begynte du å spille WoW?
6. Hvor ofte spiller du? Hvor lenge spiller du av gangen? Hva er det lengste du har spilt, og hvordan opplever du dette?
7. Kan du fortelle litt hvordan en vanlig spilledag er?
8. Spiller du mer i perioder, og i tilfelle du gjør det, hva er det med disse periodene som gjør at du spiller mer eller mindre?
9. Vi tenkte å snakke litt om livet ditt før du begynte å spille WoW. Kan du tenke tilbake på den tiden og fortelle oss litt om hva du pleide å gjøre? Hva pleide du å gjøre på fritiden? Hvor lenge pleide du å være ute? Hva pleide du å gjøre sammen med vennene dine?
10. Hva pleier du å gjøre på fritiden? Andre hobbyer?

Sosiale relasjoner

11. Er du en sosial person? Hvordan definerer du en sosial person? Ser venner og familie på deg som sosial tror du?
12. Vil du si at spillingen din påvirker andre aktiviteter?
13. På hvilke måter kan spillet påvirket ditt forhold til andre?
14. Er du blitt mer sosial? Mindre sosial? Hvordan forklarer du det? Gi eksempler.
15. Har du opplevd at andre har kommentert spillingen din? Kan du fortelle om den/disse episodene?
16. Kan du fortelle om en episode der WoW har påvirket ditt liv på en positiv måte?
Kan du fortelle om en episode der WoW har påvirket livet ditt på en negativ måte?

Stereotypier og holdninger

17. Vet vennene dine at du spiller?
Hvordan snakker du med det med familien?
(tar du/de dette opp? Ser de på det som en bra aktivitet?)
18. Har du opplevd at andre har hatt egne meninger om WoW?
Forsvarer du spillet eller ikke?
Hvor mange av vennene dine spiller også WoW?
Hvordan er en vanlig samtale med venner om World of Warcraft?
19. Hvordan ser du på vennskap?
20. Hvordan ser du på WoW som aktivitet?
21. Ønsker du å slutte å spille WoW? Hvilke negative sider/ positive sider ser du med spillet.
22. Hvilken betydning vil du si at spillet har hatt for deg?

Avslutning

23. Er det noe du ønsker å tilføye. Noe du mener er viktig, som ikke er blitt nevnt.
24. Gå gjennom med personen hva vi har snakket om og litt mer om hva vi ser etter.

Appendix 4b.

Intervjuguide GRUPPE 2

Introduksjon

1. Snakke generelt med intervjuobjekt:
Fortelle hvem vi er og hva vi gjør, prosjektet og at vi er opp, konfidensialitet osv.
Gå gjennom informasjonsskriv og få underskrift på deltakelse.
2. Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv
Alder, jobb, hvor man er fra etc.
3. Hva syntes du om å være med på dette prosjektet?
4. Hva er ditt forhold til spilleren?

Om spiller og WoW

5. Kan du fortelle litt om hvordan ditt forhold til World of Warcraft er?
Har du prøvd det selv og vet hva det går ut på?
6. Fortell litt om hvordan det var da personen begynte å spille. Kjente du X når han/hun begynte å spille? Kan du huske når X begynte å spille? Kan du huske noe om hvordan det var når X begynte å spille? Hvorfor tror du X begynte å spille?
7. Hvilken betydning vil du si at spillet har for personen?

Sosiale relasjoner

8. Hva pleide X å gjøre på fritiden? Hva pleide X å gjøre sammen med venner? Hvordan vil du si at deres forhold var på den tiden? Hvordan var forholdet mellom X og vennene? Og familien?
9. Hvis du nå tenker på hvordan livet er den dag i dag. Hva pleier du og X å gjøre sammen? Hva har endret seg og hvorfor? Hva gjør X på fritiden? Hva gjør X sammen med venner? Hvordan vil du beskrive deres forhold i dag? Hvordan er forholdet mellom X og vennene? Og familien? Hvordan vil du si WoW har påvirket deres forhold? Hvorfor?
10. Vil du si at WoW har tatt stor plass i X liv? At det har blitt en betydelig del av livet.
For eksempel episoder der X har snakket mye om WoW.
11. Kjenner du andre som spiller?
Hvordan er ditt forhold til dem? Sammenlignet med forholdet til X?
Kan du fortelle om hvordan dere snakker om spillet?

Stereotypier og holdninger

12. Snakker du med andre om WoW og spillerne (for eksempel X)? Hva sier du da?
13. Hva snakker folk generelt om når det er snakk om WoW/ spilleren?
Har du opplevd at andre har hatt sterke meninger om WoW? Forsvarer du personen eller ikke?
14. Vet vennene dine at X spiller? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
15. Media har stort sett gitt et negativt bilde av de som spiller World of Warcraft.
Vil du si deg enig i denne kritikken? Tror du denne kritikken påvirker ditt syn på WoW?
16. Hvordan ser du på online-spill og tv-spill som aktivitet?
17. Hvordan ser du på de andre vennene som X har? Ser du på X som en sosial person? Ser du på WoW spillere som sosiale?
18. Ønsker du at personen skal slutte å spille WoW?
19. Hvilke positive sider ser du med spillet?
Hvilke negative sider ser du? Episoder. (grei avslutning)
20. Har du noe imot at X spiller? Tror du X kommer til å fortsette å spille WoW?

Avslutning

21. Er det noe du ønsker å tilføye. Noe du mener er viktig, som ikke er blitt nevnt.
22. Gå gjennom med personen hva vi har snakket om og litt mer om hva vi ser etter.

Appendix 5.

One example of a coding template, several quotes and comments has been removed.

Kode	Sitat	Kommentar
Personal	Alder, jobb, etc. He he... ja jeg er utadvent og imøtekommende, prøver i hvertfall så godt jeg kan. Møter folk og situasjoner med et smil og positiv lyst og sånn..	Ser på seg selv som en sosial person
Social status	Singel	
Relation	ja, jeg har spilt andre spill før det sååååå, har vel spilt siden 96, 97. Ja, den derre, hmmm... massive multiplayer greia. Hvor man følger med en karakter hele veien. Det er jo det som er..... konseptet rundt det	Har spilt lenge, vant med ulike typer spill Men kun wow i mmorpg, liker å følge opp en karakter
Rutiner	..og det gjør at jeg får god tid til å stikke i butikken uten at det er mye folk, jeg kan dille rundt og gjøre de greiene jeg trenger å gjøre så det er litt sånn, støvsuge, vaske opp, fikse meg noe middag... Jeg har en liten katt som krever litt stell og sånt noe, så det er litt sånn, også er det litt TV, så hender det at jeg logger på sånn, ja.. tja... alt mellom klokka seks og klokka ni alt ettersom jeg føler for, men det er som regel kjedsomhet som trigger det.	
Social relasjon	Jeg spiller sammen med folk, hadde jeg ikke spilt sammen med noen så hadde jeg ikke giddet å spille.	Sosial, spiller med folk, dersom det ikke hadde vært for andre, ville ikke ha spilt.
Motiv	Del det sosiale, dels det at jeg syntes det er en grei måte å kaste bort dødtid på. Det er mer engasjerende enn å se på TV.	Både det sosial og det å ikke ha noe annet å gjøre. Noe å bruke tiden på fordi man ikke vil kjede seg.
Time	he he, ja, så ble det litt mye.Tja, timeantall i uka... 20 timer kanskje	Ler litt når sier det er litt mye. Sier ca 20 timer. Ikke mer? Ikke legitimt å si at man spiller mer. Må da spille lenge når han setter seg ned.
Perioder	Det virker som det er en trigging av dels årstid, dels dagshumør. Sånne ting. Hvem som er tilgjengelig å spille med og så videre.	Flere grunner til å spille, det sosiale, men også andre faktorer.
Kjedsomhet	men det er som regel kjedsomhet som trigger det. Ja det hadde vært mer morsomt enn å sitte å kaste bort enda en kveld. Det er som alle andre spill. Bare en tidtrøyte.	Kjeder seg, mener at det er å kaste bort tid på, Har mye tid til overs kanskje?? Hvorfor ikke gjøre noe annet?
Motsigelse	Bruker mindre penger da. Det er jo en bieffekt av det her./	Før sagt at det er et pengesluk, men så sier at sparer penger pga dette.
Holdninger	Mmm, så lenge han klarer å ha et avbalansert forhold til det og begrense tid.	
Stereotyper	Snakker med venner om at man spiller; Bare de som spiller. Aldri med...(
Positive exp	Emmm, den nåværende sjefen min påstår at jeg har fått bedre lederegenskaper av det da, mene... jeg tviler stort på det. He he..	Men han tror ikke på dette;
Negative exp	bringer fram mye følelser av en eller annen grunn det spillet der.	Hva spillet gjør med mennesker, krancling?
Impact on life	nei... jeg ser mye mindre TV. Det er vel den eneste store endringen, ellers så... nei det er ikke så store endringer egentlig.	Endringer fra før og etter
virkelighetsflukt	Det er snakk om å fokusere dypt nok så blir verden rundt borte. Man må bryte av.	Bruker spillet som virkelighets flukt, bort fra noe annet som ikke er bra.
Media	Ja det rekker jo fram de verste av dem, naturligvis.	Media setter søkelys på de verste situasjonene

Appendix 6. Questionnaire with results.

1. Personalia:

1.1. Sex *

Male	211	92.5%
Female	17	7.5%

1.2. Age *

Under 18 years	0	0.0%
18 - 21 years	123	53.9%
22 - 25 years	58	25.4%
26- 30 years	22	9.6%
31- 35 years	20	8.8%
36+	5	2.2%

1.3. Marital Status *

Single	140	61.4%
In a relationship	78	34.2%
Married/ registered partner	9	3.9%
Divorced	1	0.4%

1.4. Living situation *

Alone	52	22.8%
With parents	85	37.3%
With friends	32	14.0%
With partner	52	22.8%
Other	7	3.1%

1.5. Work situation *

Unemployed	16	7.0%
Working part- time	12	5.3%
Working full- time	102	44.7%
Student	96	42.1%
Sick leave	2	0.9%

1.6. Where do you live? *

Norway	228	100.0%
Other	0	0.0%

2. About playing World of Warcraft

2.1. Have you ever played World of Warcraft?

Yes	227	100.0%
No	0	0.0%

2.2. Do you still play World of Warcraft?

Yes (go directly to section 3)	192	84.6%
No	35	15.4%

2.3. If no, what was the reason for not playing anymore?

Did not find World of Warcraft interesting	21	35.6%
Did not have the time	13	22.0%
Did not have the money	1	1.7%
It took up too much of my time	16	27.1%
My friends/family thought I played too much	3	5.1%
My physical health was getting worse	0	0.0%
Other	5	8.5%

2.4. If you do not play World of Warcraft anymore:

Please answer the rest of the questionnaire. (Consider the rest of the questions in past tense)

3.1. For how long have you played World of Warcraft?

Less than a month	2	0.9%
1-6 months	11	4.9%
For one year	23	10.2%
For 2 years	69	30.5%
More than 3 years	121	53.5%

3.2. How often do you play?

1-3 times a month	5	2.2%
Once a week	3	1.3%
2-3 times per week	39	17.4%
4-5 times per week	80	35.7%
Every day	97	43.3%

3.3. For how long do you usually play at a time

Less than an hour	2	0.9%
1-2 hours	53	23.5%
3-5 hours	131	58.0%
5-7 hours	33	14.6%
More than 8 hours	7	3.1%

3.4. How long do you play before you take a break?

Less than an hour	14	6.2%
1-2 hours	118	52.2%
3-5 hours	79	35.0%
5-7 hours	11	4.9%
More than 8 hours	4	1.8%

3.5. What is the longest time you have been playing without taking a break?

Less than an hour	0	0.0%
1-2 hours	5	2.2%
3-5 hours	30	13.4%
5-7 hours	73	32.6%
More than 8 hours	116	51.8%

4.

4.1. Why did you start playing? (You can here tic more than one box)

My friends play	175	23.8%
I can meet new people	53	7.2%
The game itself	150	20.4%
To relax	71	9.7%
Intellectual challenging	39	5.3%
Out of boredom	64	8.7%
Curiosity	101	13.7%
I tried it once and then I was hooked	61	8.3%
Other	21	2.9%

5.

In this section you tic the answer that match the statement. Only one answer per question. The answers range from 5 (agree) to 1 (disagree).

5.1. I see myself as a social person

5 (agree)	52	22.8%
4	85	37.3%
3 (agree nor disagree)	65	28.5%
2	17	7.5%
1 (disagree)	9	3.9%

5.2. My friends see me as a social person

5 (agree)	48	21.1%
4	81	35.5%
3 (agree nor disagree)	66	28.9%
2	26	11.4%
1 (disagree)	7	3.1%

5.3. I see myself as a less social person after I started playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	19	8.3%
4	34	14.9%
3 (agree nor disagree)	42	18.4%
2	53	23.2%
1 (disagree)	80	35.1%

5.4. My friends see me as a less social person after I started playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	15	6.6%
4	31	13.7%
3 (agree nor disagree)	62	27.4%
2	45	19.9%
1 (disagree)	73	32.3%

5.5. I see myself as a more social person within the game than in daily life

5 (agree)	20	8.8%
4	33	14.5%
3 (agree nor disagree)	59	25.9%
2	43	18.9%
1 (disagree)	73	32.0%

5.6. My friends have a problem with me playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	2	0.9%
4	12	5.3%
3 (agree nor disagree)	28	12.3%
2	28	12.3%
1 (disagree)	157	69.2%

5.7. I see myself as a more social person outside the game

5 (agree)	59	25.9%
4	56	24.6%
3 (agree nor disagree)	70	30.7%
2	24	10.5%
1 (disagree)	19	8.3%

5.8. I often hear that I play too much

5 (agree)	26	11.5%
4	23	10.2%
3 (agree nor disagree)	59	26.1%
2	50	22.1%
1 (disagree)	68	30.1%

5.9. I have canceled appointments with my friends because I would rather play World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	38	16.8%
4	13	5.8%
3 (agree nor disagree)	32	14.2%
2	36	15.9%
1 (disagree)	107	47.3%

5.10. My family or friends have never told me not to play World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	94	41.2%
4	25	11.0%
3 (agree nor disagree)	32	14.0%
2	21	9.2%
1 (disagree)	56	24.6%

5.11. My friends or family have asked me to spend less time on World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	49	21.5%
4	35	15.4%
3 (agree nor disagree)	36	15.8%
2	25	11.0%
1 (disagree)	83	36.4%

5.12. My family or friends has told me to stop play World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	28	12.3%
4	11	4.8%
3 (agree nor disagree)	22	9.7%
2	16	7.0%
1 (disagree)	150	66.1%

5.13. I have made friends through the game

5 (agree)	138	60.8%
4	43	18.9%
3 (agree nor disagree)	25	11.0%
2	7	3.1%
1 (disagree)	14	6.2%

5.14. My friends or family encourage me to play World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	7	3.1%
4	14	6.1%
3 (agree nor disagree)	95	41.7%
2	25	11.0%
1 (disagree)	87	38.2%

5.15. I feel close to my friends

5 (agree)	122	53.5%
4	59	25.9%
3 (agree nor disagree)	40	17.5%
2	2	0.9%
1 (disagree)	5	2.2%

5.16. I have never lost friends because I play World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	184	81.1%
4	13	5.7%
3 (agree nor disagree)	12	5.3%
2	7	3.1%
1 (disagree)	11	4.8%

5.17. I spend too much time playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	38	16.7%
4	34	15.0%
3 (agree nor disagree)	69	30.4%
2	36	15.9%
1 (disagree)	50	22.0%

5.18. My family see me as a social person

5 (agree)	67	29.4%
4	65	28.5%
3 (agree nor disagree)	63	27.6%
2	19	8.3%
1 (disagree)	14	6.1%

5.19. My partner see me as a social person

5 (agree)	40	17.6%
4	32	14.1%
3 (agree nor disagree)	18	7.9%
2	6	2.6%
1 (disagree)	1	0.4%
I do not have a partner	130	57.3%

5.20. My family see me as a more social person after I started playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	1	0.4%
4	7	3.1%
3 (agree nor disagree)	127	55.9%
2	22	9.7%
1 (disagree)	70	30.8%

5.21. My partner see me as a more social person after I started playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	1	0.4%
4	4	1.8%
3 (agree nor disagree)	61	27.2%
2	11	4.9%
1 (disagree)	17	7.6%
I do not have a partner	130	58.0%

5.22. My family have a problem with me playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	9	4.0%
4	12	5.3%
3 (agree nor disagree)	38	16.8%
2	34	15.0%
1 (disagree)	133	58.8%

5.23. My partner has a problem with me playing World of Warcraft

5 (agree)	4	1.8%
4	12	5.3%
3 (agree nor disagree)	15	6.7%
2	15	6.7%
1 (disagree)	45	20.0%
I do not have a partner	134	59.6%

6. In this section you tick the answer that match the statement. Only one answer per question. The answers range from 5 (agree) to 1 (disagree).

6.1. Have you ever skipped a meal because of World of Warcraft?

Never	48	21.1%
Seldom	85	37.3%
Sometimes	69	30.3%
Often	24	10.5%
Always	2	0.9%

6.2. Have you ever felt that the game has interfered with your daily activities?

Never	29	12.7%
Seldom	51	22.4%
Sometimes	114	50.0%
Often	33	14.5%
Always	1	0.4%

6.3. Have you ever felt that you are losing concept of time when playing?

Never	27	11.9%
Seldom	31	13.7%
Sometimes	86	37.9%
Often	65	28.6%
Always	18	7.9%

6.4. Has playing ever been a problem for you?

Never	104	45.8%
Seldom	64	28.2%
Sometimes	51	22.5%
Often	7	3.1%
Always	1	0.4%

6.5. Have you ever been irritated if someone tells you not to play?

Never	84	37.3%
Seldom	56	24.9%
Sometimes	62	27.6%
Often	18	8.0%
Always	5	2.2%

6.6. Have you ever felt irritated because you play?

Never	92	40.7%
Seldom	52	23.0%
Sometimes	65	28.8%
Often	17	7.5%
All the time	0	0.0%

6.7. Would you call yourself addicted to the game?

Never	77	34.1%
Seldom	50	22.1%
Sometimes	63	27.9%
Often	25	11.1%
Always	11	4.9%

6.8. When playing the game have you ever experienced bad conscious because of your playing?

Never	91	40.3%
Seldom	75	33.2%
Sometimes	49	21.7%
Often	9	4.0%
Always	2	0.9%

6.9. Do you feel that friends and family are getting in the way of playing?

Never	154	68.1%
Seldom	46	20.4%
Sometimes	25	11.1%
Often	1	0.4%
Always	0	0.0%

6.10. Do you think work/studies are getting in the way of playing?

Never	110	48.5%
Seldom	49	21.6%
Sometimes	51	22.5%
Often	15	6.6%
Always	2	0.9%

6.11. Have you ever skipped work/studies to play World of Warcraft?

Never	103	45.4%
Seldom	60	26.4%
Sometimes	51	22.5%
Often	12	5.3%
Always	1	0.4%

6.12. Have you ever played World of Warcraft at work?

Never	176	77.5%
Seldom	24	10.6%
Sometimes	18	7.9%
Often	1	0.4%
Always	0	0.0%
I don't have a job/studies	8	3.5%

6.13. Have you ever told yourself to quit playing?

Never	97	42.9%
Seldom	50	22.1%
Sometimes	67	29.6%
Often	12	5.3%
All the time	0	0.0%

6.14. Have you ever felt irritated because you have not been able to play?

Never	64	28.4%
Seldom	78	34.7%
Sometimes	68	30.2%
Often	12	5.3%
Always	3	1.3%

6.15. Has playing World of Warcraft ever overruled other activities you usually do?

Never	62	27.3%
Seldom	87	38.3%
Sometimes	69	30.4%
Often	9	4.0%
Always	0	0.0%

6.16. Have you ever made excuses for playing World of Warcraft?

Never	78	34.5%
Seldom	72	31.9%
Sometimes	63	27.9%
Often	13	5.8%
Always	0	0.0%

6.17. Have you ever been annoyed by somebody who play World of Warcraft?

Never	71	31.3%
Seldom	54	23.8%
Sometimes	67	29.5%
Often	30	13.2%
Always	5	2.2%

6.18. Do you tell other people that you are playing World of Warcraft?

Never	8	3.5%
Seldom	33	14.5%
Sometimes	94	41.4%
Often	53	23.3%
Always	39	17.2%

6.19. Would you call yourself addicted to the game?

Never	90	39.6%
Seldom	53	23.3%
Sometimes	45	19.8%
Often	27	11.9%
Always	12	5.3%

6.20. Do you feel obligated to play because of your relationships within the game?

Never	85	37.4%
Seldom	56	24.7%
Sometimes	58	25.6%
Often	24	10.6%
Always	4	1.8%

7.

7.1. Do you know anyone who has been addicted to playing World of Warcraft?

Yes	144	63.4%
No	47	20.7%
I don't know	36	15.9%

7.2. Do you think one can get addicted to this game?

Yes	193	85.0%
No	26	11.5%
I don't know	8	3.5%

7.3. Do you believe that people who play World of Warcraft has an advantage when it comes to leadership skills?

Yes	100	44.1%
No	69	30.4%
I don't know	58	25.6%

7.4. Do you talk about playing with your friends/family/partner?

Yes	182	80.2%
No	37	16.3%
I don't know	8	3.5%

7.5. Would you recommend others to play World of Warcraft ?

Yes	165	72.7%
No	30	13.2%
I don't know	32	14.1%

8.

8.1. Before you signed up for a character in WoW, were you familiar with other types of online games?

Yes	145	64.2%
No	81	35.8%

8.2. Are you a part of:

Alliance	149	52.5%
Horde	135	47.5%

8.3. Have you reached your goal level?

Yes	189	83.3%
No	38	16.7%

8.4. Are you planning on buying Wrath of the Lich King?

Yes	201	89.7%
No	23	10.3%

8.5. Do you have more than one character?

Yes	205	90.7%
No	21	9.3%

8.6. Do you want to quit playing World of Warcraft?

Yes	31	13.7%
No	195	86.3%

9. Intervju

9.1. Ønsker du og en venn/partner/familie medlem å delta i våre videre intervjuer? Vennligst skriv inn din e-mail adresse og vi vil kontakte deg. Dette er ingen bindende påmelding. Intervjuene vil foregå på norsk.