
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A PLAYER'S OUT-OF-GAME
INTERESTS AND CLASS CHOICE IN WORLD OF WARCRAFT**

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INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this research paper was to explore the relationship between a player's out-of-game interests and the class that they prefer to play in the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) *World of Warcraft*. The research question encompasses our hypothesis that we would find a common and direct relationship between players' out-of-game interests and their most preferred classes because players with similar interests would enjoy playing the same types of characters. This hypothesis was mainly derived from previous research on the reasoning behind why *WoW* players choose their individualized character and, in particular, that performed in Nick Yee's *The Daedalus Project*.

World of Warcraft (commonly referred to as *WoW*) is the most popular MMORPG today and boasts an online subscribership of over 11.5 million players per month (Blizzard). Players make three choices upon creating a character in *WoW*: race, class, and gender. Race and gender ultimately determine how a character looks, while class determines the abilities the character has. There are ten classes in *World of Warcraft*: Warrior, Priest, Rogue, Mage, Warlock, Hunter, Druid, Paladin, Shaman, and Death Knight. The classes complement one another as each class has unique abilities and many in-game activities (such as certain group quests and instances) require multiple players. As one study on class choice mentions, the division of labor among the classes is as follows:

Some characters attract the attention of the monsters and are equipped to absorb the 'damage' they mete out. Some classes heal players who are taking damage. Other classes 'deal damage,' that is, bring down the monsters with their weapons and spells. In addition, each class has unique abilities useful to other classes (DiGiuseppe & Nardi).

A portion of Yee's research focuses on the character creation process, class demographics, and a player's preferred class type. *The Daedalus Project* focuses much of its study on the idea that "because players are personally invested in the character and the world, every decision they make within the construct becomes personally revealing" (Yee). The project concludes that the process of character creation is based primarily upon in-game factors including: appearance, abilities, starting area, and a class' background story. When concentrating on the out-of-game reasoning behind class choice, demographics have greatly been proven by numerous researchers to be a primary influence on class choice. In *The Daedalus Project*, Yee has also researched the motivation differences between character classes as well, concluding that certain classes were more inspired to play due to different aspects of the game including: socializing, achievement, discovery, competitiveness, teamwork, customization, and mechanics (Yee). There have also been a minimal amount of studies performed on the effect of personality on one's class choice, as well as certain out-of-game effects, including relationships and careers. However, is there a relationship between a *WoW* player's out-of-game interests and their class choice?

METHOD:

Data for this research was gathered through a *Google Docs* survey distributed online through a *Facebook* event, the *World of Warcraft* official general discussion forum, and an email sent to classmates in our WRITING 1133 class on *WoW* at the University of Denver. A total of 45 anonymous responses to the survey were gathered (see survey questions in Appendix 1). The average age of participants who volunteered in the survey was 20.9 and 50% were at level 71 or above. Also, 62% of participants were male and 38% female. The information

gathered from participants was organized into a chart (Table 1) by class choice and showed both similar and different out-of-game interests. After gathering our final data from all 45 anonymous survey participants, we found 43 total valid responses. These results were then analyzed by looking at each class section's out-of-game interests and finding a common thread in those interests in an attempt to understand a relationship between a player's out-of-game interests and the class that they prefer to play in *World of Warcraft*.

RESULTS:

After filtering through our survey results, we found that nine players preferred the Druid class, eight preferred Hunters, two Mages, four Paladins, four Priests, four Rogues, two Shamans, five Warlocks, four Warriors, and one Death Knight (Figure 1).

In our research, we gathered information from nine players who chose the Druid class as their most preferred class choice. When looking at the data presented by these players, there was a common theme of activities that one could do alone, including: watching TV, aimlessly browsing the internet, and reading. However, many players also had social activities listed as what they enjoyed doing out-of-game. It seems as though players who chose the Druid class do not fall into an exact pattern, which makes sense because the Druid class is so diverse that they can specialize as a tank, healer, or damage dealer. For these reasons, perhaps players choose the Druid class because they do not need to rely on teamwork as much as other classes.

The information gathered from eight of our participants who chose the Hunter class as their most preferred generally did so because of a personal connection with their character. For instance, one player enjoys guns and the Hunter is the best suited class for gun slinging. Other player's personal connections ranged from personally liking the style of the Hunter to fondness for their animalistic pets in real life and enjoying their animalistic in game companions.

We gathered information on our survey from only two players who preferred the Mage class. Both of these players were far more interested in the social aspect of *World of Warcraft*. From our research it seems as though Mages are more social in all aspects which makes sense for their class, often needing the assistance of a “Tank” class to protect them.

Four players preferred to play as the Paladin class. These players all enjoy spending time with their friends and/or loved ones as well as reading. Most of the players report their reason for choosing Paladin as their class was because of the versatility of the class, being one of the few classes that can be a “Tank”, a damage dealer, and a healer.

The Priest class was the preferred class of four participants. Players who call themselves Priests were found to often be intellectuals enjoying things such as computer programming, reading, and solving Rubic’s Cubes. One player even stated that when he is “not playing *WoW* [he is] often researching it”.

We gathered information from four players who prefer to play the Rogue class. Rogue players tend to enjoy excitement. Besides gaming, the majority of activities they stated they prefer are high excitement activities such as free-running (aka parkore), riding motorcycles, and racing cars. Many of the players say they like the stealth aspect of the Rogue, the excitement of sneaking up on another player in order to “get a backstab.”

We collected data from two players who prefer to play as the Shaman class. Much like the Mage players, Shamans stated their interests lie in the social element of the game. Also like Paladins, Shaman players state they love their versatility of their class.

We obtained statistics from five players who prefer to play the Warlock class. There is a split in the players who play Warlock. On one side of the split, we found these players to express a similar scenario to Shamans and Mages, as the Warlocks are greatly interested in the social

aspect of the game and their lives. On the other side, we found hardcore gamers who have devoted themselves to gaming more than any other aspect of their lives (according to their statements).

Lastly, we obtained information from four players who play the Warrior class, as well as one who prefers to play as a Death Knight. The players who enjoy these two classes don't appear to follow a pattern, yet they were straight to the point in each having their own distinct interests' including watching anime, sports, sex, and music.

After looking at our research results, we concluded that there is an overall direct relationship between a player's out-of-game interests and the class that they prefer to play in the MMORPG, *World of Warcraft*. The Rogue, for example, seemed to have a direct relationship between out-of-game activities and the players that preferred to play the class. The majority of Rogue players all mentioned exciting activities as their preferred out-of-game activity, such as racing cars and free-running. Other classes including Hunters, Mages, Paladins, Priests, Druids, and Shamans, showed similarities in out-of-game interests to other participants with the same class choice. These similarities tended to relate closely to the background of that type of class. For instance, the Mage class players were quite social and the class itself is considered social as it often needs the assistance of a "tank" in order to do higher levels.

We found an interesting split between the five Warlock class players (Figure 2). Two of the players were strict gamers. One player stated that "*WoW* is everything!" while the other made the comment, "There are other activities than *World of Warcraft*?" in the additional comments section of the survey. The other three Warlock players were exactly the opposite: extremely social. They enjoyed out-of-game activities including hookah with friends, sports, and spending time with their family. We found the social aspect of the Warlock players to connect well with

the class considering Warlocks are known for their ability to call upon a companion (or minion) to assist them with their tasks. However, we also found that the hard-core gamers chose the Warlock class because, even though they are not social in real-life, they chose their character because they felt it was a character that was needed in groups and had “a specific needed value that helps a group or team.” Therefore, they chose their character for the social aspect of the game that they were lacking in their own out-of-game activities.

As for the classes of Warrior and Death Knight, we found little to no relationship between these player’s out-of-game activities and their class choice. Their activities tended to be more on the social side of things and their statements were generally straight to the point. One participant commented that the only activity, other than gaming, that was worthwhile was simply sex. The only relation we could conclude between the Death Knight in our survey and the class choice itself is that the Death Knight is a fairly new class to the game, thus our results included only one of them. Consequentially, minimal knowledge was gained on how that specific class choice could relate to out-of-game activities.

Table 1:

Survey Results

# of participant	Class Choice	Brief description of out-of-game interests
43	*	*
3	Druid	Individual activities (drive aimlessly, browse internet)
4	Druid	Individual activities (read, hike, bike)
23	Druid	Individual activities (video gaming)
25	Druid	(reading, talking, watching stuff)
28	Druid	(Friends, Games)
29	Druid	Individual activities (reading, tv, browse internet)
34	Druid	Individual activities (video gaming)
36	Druid	(sports, family)
37	Druid	(horse riding, gym, friends)

8	Hunter	(Guns)
9	Hunter	Social(violin, friends)
11	Hunter	(Cars, Sports) "looks cool"
12	Hunter	(read/ write) "feel like a ranger"
20	Hunter	(horseback riding, friends, photography)
22	Hunter	(browse internet, sports, social gaming)
30	Hunter	(Roleplaying)
42	Hunter	patience(reading, animating)
19	Mage	(cooking, friends...cigars)
35	Mage	(friends)
2	*	*
13	Paladin	Social (clubbing, friends)
14	Paladin	(reading, music) "Writ class"
16	Paladin	(read, write, friends)
38	Paladin	(reading)
6	Priest	Intellectual/ social (rubix cube, friends)
24	Priest	(programming)
26	Priest	(Travel, Sports) "if not playing wow, researching wow"
32	Priest	(reading, kids)
5	Rouge	(racing cars, watching sports)
21	Rouge	(photography)
31	Rouge	(sports)
44	Rouge	Excitement (Free running, reading, riding motorcycle)
17	Shaman	Social (friends, board games)
18	Shaman	Social(friends)
7	Warlock	(gaming) "Wow is everything"
10	Warlock	Social(sports, friends)
27	Warlock	(gaming) "There are other activities?"
33	Warlock	(read, movies, family)
45	Warlock	Social(music, dance, hookah)"one week with brother"
15	Warrior	(reading, Gaming, browse internet)
39	Warrior	(music, sports, anime)
40	Warrior	(sex) "Straight to the point"
41	Warrior	(Sports, friends)
46	Death Knight	(social music sports)

* = invalid information received

*** numbers on *Google docs* survey start at 2

Figure 1

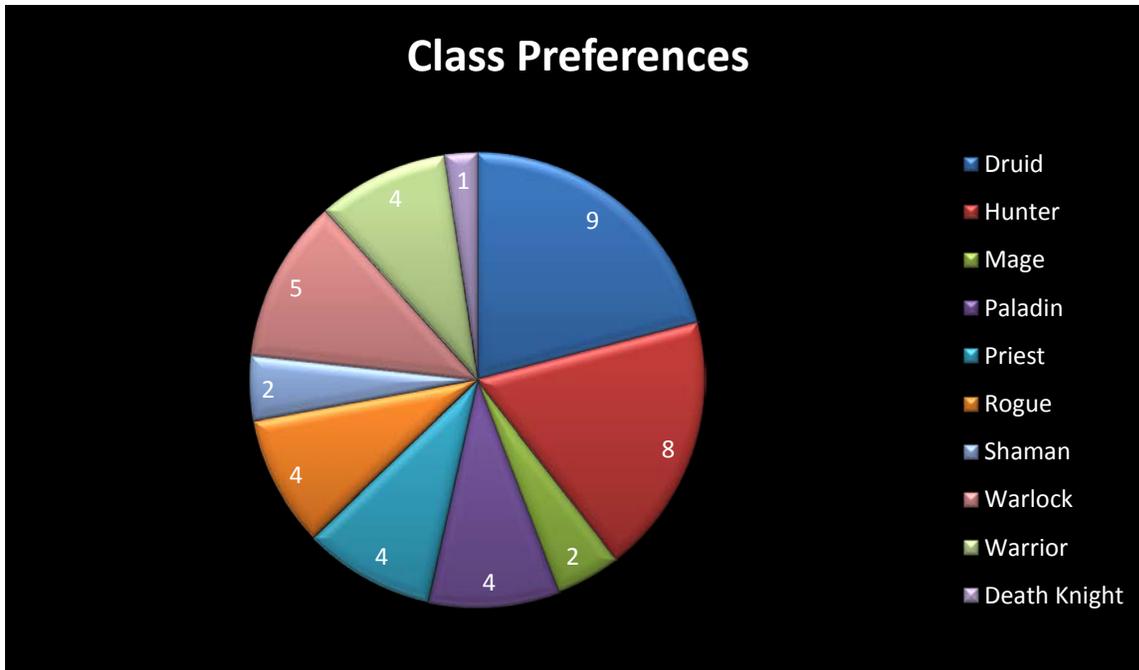
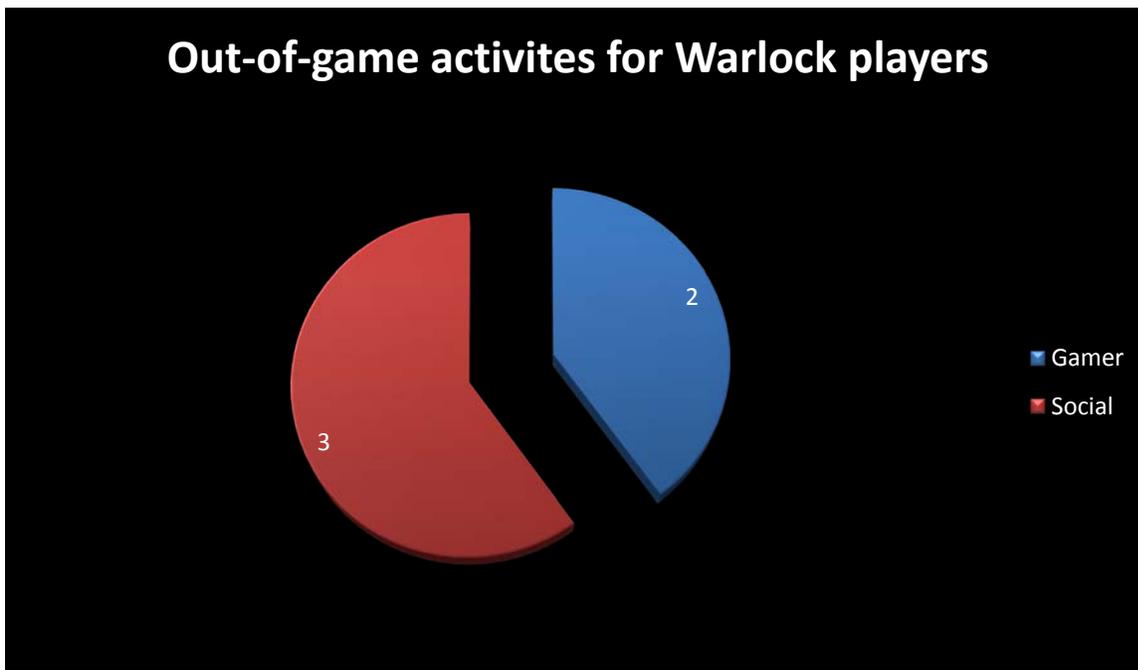


Figure 2



DISCUSSION:

Overall, our study found that there is a relationship between most players' class choices and their out-of-game activities. Not only do the activities match well with other players of the same class, but they also match with the background of that class in many ways. There were a few classes (such as Shaman, Mage, and Death Knight) that were not as popular and only included results from a couple people. Our study may have received more accurate results if we were to gather our information from an equal amount of players from each class. It may have been more efficient as well for us to interview players whose identity was known in order to gain a better understanding of why they chose their character's class choice. The information gathered from our research is useful in that it can further other research on the process of character creation, as well as on how personality effects class choice.

Our research also raises the question: does a player's time spent doing any said out-of-game activity affect their preferred class choice? For example, a player might enjoy both reading and playing sports, but spend much more time reading than playing sports. Would players who spend a lot of time on similar activities prefer to play the same class as each other? Further research on the affect of enjoyment received from out-of-game activities and the relationship they have to a player's preferred class choice could be derived from our study as well. Would players that prefer one activity over the others as a whole tend to play the same types of classes? As our results showed that the background of a class relates to their out-of-game activities, a study further into their activities and even lifestyle may show connections to not only class type, but race and faction as well. Our study breaks the stereotype that *WoW* players enjoy nothing but gaming by showing the multitude of other interests they have. One intriguing possibility based on our data would be showing the popularity of out-of-game activities indicated by players. Our

study found that the majority of the *WoW* players in our survey (65.1%) enjoyed social activities. Other popular out-of-game activities included video gaming (55.8%), reading (41.9%), sports and physical activities (41.9%), and TV/movies (32.5%). The results could also assist in suggesting class types to players. After viewing the differences between the participants in the Warrior class, the research may also propose that a player may be more compatible with a different class choice. The study, in conclusion, shows that there is some relationship between a characters class choice and their out-of- game interests.

Appendix 1:

World of Warcraft - University of Denver Survey

By completing the following questions, you are also granting consent for this information to be used as part of a research exercise that we are completing for our WRIT 1133 class on the MMORPG World of Warcraft. Your participation is completely voluntary. The information you provide may be used in a class project. While profile information may be included in our project (i.e. age, gender, class standing, etc.), your name will NOT be used. We greatly appreciate your participation in this study!
-James & Lesley

* Required

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

What is the highest level you have reached in World of Warcraft? *

- 1-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-50
- 51-70
- 71-79

What is your favorite/most played character's race? *

What is your favorite/most played character's class? *

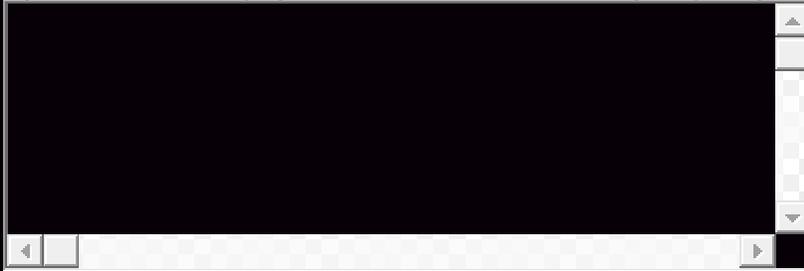
What is it about your favorite/most played character's class that makes it appealing to you? *

What are some other activities that you enjoy other than World of Warcraft? *

What is it about World of Warcraft that drew you in and made you want to play? *

What do you like to do in game? * ie. level, role play, pvp, etc.

If you were unable to play World of Warcraft, how would you spend your time instead? Why? *

An empty text input field with a white border and a black background. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

If there are there any other comments you would like to provide us with regarding World of Warcraft, your interests, your gameplay experience, etc. please feel free to comment below:

An empty text input field with a white border and a black background. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

Submit

Works Cited

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