Influence of Avatar Preference and Playing Habits on Server Selection

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the preference and behavior of players across the PvP, PvE, RP and RP PvP type servers of one of the best-selling MMORPGs—*World of Warcraft (WoW)*. Data for this study was collected using an online survey that was posted on *World of Warcraft* forums, as well as unstructured interviews of *WoW players*. The findings suggested that PvP type servers are the most preferred by the gamers as they feel it provides more challenges and excitement. The data also suggested that the Night Elf race and Priest class for avatars were very popular among players who preferred playing on the PvP servers. Moreover, possible avenues for future research based on the findings of this study are also discussed along with the how new *WoW* Players might find this study useful.

Introduction

World of Warcraft is the best-selling Massively Multiplayer Role Playing Game (MMORPG) game in the Unites States (Nardi & Harris, 2006). This means that a large number of players from different geographic regions play the game and interact with one another at the same time using the internet. The latest version of the *World of Warcraft* expansion pack, *Wrath of the Lich King* has over 11.5 million subscribers (Blizzard Entertainment, 2008) who actively play the game in the virtual *Warcraft* world of Azeroth. Researchers who previously studied MMORPGs have stated, "Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) are part of a larger group of video games that has surpassed film in box office revenue, with MMOGs accounting for about half total game revenue" (Nardi & Harris, 2006) and "*World of Warcraft*, currently one

of the most popular MMOGs, generates over $1 billion in gross income each year (Pittman &
GauthierDickey, 2007). These studies clearly indicate that the market for MMORPGs is very
lucrative, and that is why Blizzard Entertainment is currently developing the third extension pack
for their *World of Warcraft* game titled, *Cataclysm* (Cohen, 2009). Moreover, these studies also
suggest that many researchers are interested in learning more about this virtual world, and about
those who play and collaborate on it.

As the genre of the game suggests, vast numbers of gamers play the game
simultaneously, and this creates a lot of congestion. To get around this problem, MMOGs are
usually divided into a host of different servers called realms. Pittman and GauthierDickey
discussed this phenomenon in detail in their paper "A Measurement Study of Virtual Populations
in Massively Multiplayer Online Games." Being an MMORPG, *World of Warcraft* also has to
get around this issue, and it does so by having multiple servers in different geographical
locations. There are four different types of servers in *World of Warcraft*; they are PvE, PvP, RP
and RP PvP.

PvE

PvE stands for player versus environment. In PvE realms, the player controlled avatar
competes against the game world and other Non-Player Characters (NPCs). This means that
there is no risk of "random player vs. player combat" (PvE) and "distasteful practices like corpse
camping, ganking, and griefing tend to be less prevalent" (PvE). However, players who are
looking for excitement in the game might consider this a major weakness of PvE servers.

PvP

PvP stands for player versus player, and in these types of realms, player are free to engage in combat with other players, unlike the PvE realms discussed above. As playing in PvP realms involves higher risks, there are also greater rewards. Players who like challenges and excitement prefer playing in PvP servers. However, for inexperienced player or "newbs," the PvP realms could prove very difficult, as low level players are often forced to battle with more experienced players.

RP

RP stands for role playing and allow players who want to play the role of their characters. RP servers are a lot similar to PvE servers but there are additional social rules that the players need to abide by. The primary rule that is strictly enforced is that players must always be in character, which implies that one must act and speak as their character would in the *World of Warcraft* setting (Roleplaying).

RP PvP

RP PvP servers are mix of RP servers and PvP servers. Players in these types of servers are allowed to engage in combat with others and play the role of their character. Players playing in RP PvP servers have to abide by the social rules that exist for RP servers as well.

Server Preference

The types of servers mentioned above were created to cater to the needs of different players. Researchers have conducted studies in the past to understand how players' preferences and playing habits differ across different server types. Ducheneaut et al. studied players in

different types of servers using a game addon that extracted player data from the game and observed players in the game as well. Ducheneaut et al. looked at weekly play time and grouping patterns of players across different servers and found "the differences were surprisingly small overall. Characters on PvP servers played about an hour more (70 minutes) per week" (Ducheneaut et al., 2006). However, their study was conducted between 2004 and 2005 and no similar research has been performed after the release of the second extension pack, *Wrath of the Lich King* for the *World of Warcraft* game. Since "*WoW* is a dynamic world" (Ducheneaut et al., 2007), it is possible that player behavior and preferences have changed over time. The aim of this study is to fill in that gap. This research paper will investigate whether the patterns of player behavior observed in past studies still hold true today. This study will look at many of the variables investigated by Ducheneaut et al. in the research paper "'Alone Together?' Exploring the Social Dynamics of Massively Multiplayer Online Games," along with other variables relating to player behavior.

WoW Addiction

Many studies have been conducted in the past to investigate the addiction factors of MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft*. One study stated that "It is important to note that there is currently no such clinical criteria as "'video game addiction'" that has been accepted by any reputable organization responsible for defining disorders of the mind or body" (Wood, 2008), while other studies have shown that various features of the game may cause a player to play the game excessively. Peters and Malesky states, "These results suggest that the greater amount of time individuals spend playing *World of Warcraft*, the more likely they are to experience problems in their lives" (Peters and Malesky, 2008). It is worth noting that Peters and Malesky

(2008) came to such a conclusion after conducting interviews with 196 *World of Warcraft* players who were all members of the top online guilds. Ducheneaut et al.'s 2006 study seem to reflect that same theory. Ducheneaut et al. states in their study that "guilds are often cited as a source of addiction to MMORPGs because of the social obligations they create" (Ducheneaut et al., 2006), also their study proved the hypothesis that membership to a guild creates social obligations. Furthermore, another study found that the threat of addiction to MMORPGs is greater for younger gamers (Smahel, Blinka & Ledabyl, 2008). However, none of the research stated above investigated the frequency of addicted *World of Warcraft* players across the four different server types. A secondary goal of this study is to map the frequency distribution of players who label themselves as "addicted" across the four different types of servers available in the *World of Warcraft* MMORPG.

Methods

Participants

Gamers who primarily play the *World of Warcraft* were targeted since this research project focuses on looking at player behavior and "addicted" player distribution across the four types of servers available in the *World of Warcraft* game. Data was collected from the participants in two stages. First, the participants were asked to complete an online survey, and then two participants were selected for interviews from the total population using a convenience sample. Efforts were made to perform interviews online in the game itself, but the players who were online at that time were not very cooperative and would not consent to an interview. Chat methods that were used include "say," "yell" and, "tell"; however, no favorable responses were received from any players. Several attempts were made to interview players in the game by

logging into different types of servers with high player population and trying to communicate

with other players in densely populated locations such as Stormwind City. Due to time

constraints and difficulty of finding suitable interviewees in the game, the interviews were

conducted with *World of Warcraft* players in the real world. There were a total of 60 responses to

the online survey; however, 2 of those responses had to be rejected as the respondents either did

not fill out the survey correctly or provided vastly exaggerated data. One of the respondents

claimed to play *World of Warcraft* for 168 hours per week. This is clearly an exaggeration as

there are only168 hours in a week and it is physically not possible for a human being to play a

videogame for that duration. The other response that was rejected because the respondent replied

with racial slurs for all open-ended questions like age and hours spent weekly playing *WoW*. As

a result 58 responses were used for performing calculations and forming interpretations. Of the

58 respondents, 42 were male with an average age of 25.40 years (*SD* = 13.49). The remaining

16 female respondents had an average age of 27.39 years (*SD* = 14.78).

   Survey

  An online survey was created using the "Form" feature of Google Docs tool. Google

Docs was use instead of other online survey site because Google Docs preserves the raw data

collected. The method used to distribute the survey was similar to the method used by Yee in his

article titled "The Demographics, Motivations, and Derived Experiences of Users of Massively

Multi-User Online Graphical Environments." In order to get responses from a diverse range of

gamers, the link to the survey form was posted on *World of Warcraft* "General Discussion"

forums as well as the "Off-Topic" forum on Blizzard's network. The links to the survey form

was also posted on other *World of Warcraft* related forums such as "General" and "Randomness"

forums of Wowhead's community site. Furthermore, the link to the survey was also posed on *World of Warcraft* related groups on Facebook as well. However, unlike Yee's method mention above, the survey link was kept active only for a 7 day period due to time constraints.

There were 12 questions which had to be completed by the respondents. Of the 12, 2 were short, open-ended questions that asked the respondents for their age and time spent weekly playing the *World of Warcraft*. The final question asked was an open-ended question, and the respondents were given the liberty to answer the question freely. This question asked why they preferred the type of server that they prefer. The other 8 questions were multiple question choice questions where the respondents were asked about their gender, the race and class of their primary character, for how long they have been playing the *World of Warcraft,* whether they were members of a guild, how they preferred to play the game, whether they considered themselves addicted to the game and finally, the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of addiction to the *World of Warcraft* on a Likert scale of 1 to 10; 1 being not addicted and 10 being very addicted.

Interviews

As stated above, two survey respondents were interviewed. The interviewees were selected based on convenience due to the time constraint. Also, the sample of interviewees was kept at a low number because of time constraints as well. One of the interviewees was a 19-year-old-male who has been playing *World of Warcraft* for the last 3 years. The second interviewee was a 20-year-old female who has been playing *World of Warcraft* for the last 2 years. The interviews with the respondents were unstructured. This implies that the respondents were not asked any specific set of questions, and the questions asked depended greatly on the responses

received from the respondents. The first question both the interviewees were asked was the same as the last question in survey. This was done in order to get a more detailed response to the question. Some of the other questions asked to both the respondents were, but not limited to:

Did you play on other types of servers before?

Why did you change to this type of server?

How did you initially feel when you started playing on the new type of server?

Do you think that you will change servers again? Why?

Analysis

The nominal data obtained from the survey respondents were coded in order to perform statistical calculations. Data such as the respondents' gender, primary avatar's race and class, server preference, and their response to the addiction question and guild membership question were coded. The respondents were asked to indicate the number of other players they usually play with and for how long they have been playing the *World of Warcraft* on a preset range. This was done in order to prevent the respondents from providing false responses. These responses were also coded as the answer choices available to the respondents were nominal in nature. Gender and avatar race and class distributions across the four different types of servers were calculated and analyzed to see if any relations existed between those variables. Descriptive statistical data such as the respondents' mean age, average number of hours spent playing *World of Warcraft* weekly, and the addiction factor chosen by the respondents were also computed along with their standard deviations to show the variability in the data collected. The raw data and the aggregate data mentioned above were used to calculate simple correlation coefficients between the different variables. These correlation coefficients were calculated to see if any

relationship existed between variables being investigated, such as age, gender, avatar choice, weekly play time, guild and group play preferences, server preference, and addiction factor. Moreover, the respondents' answers to the open-ended question about their server preference were categorized into six groups, which were Friend, Battle, Challenge, Safety, Diversity, and Specific Feature. All the responses were put in either one of these categories based on the use of certain key words and phrases. Then, the total number of responses for each of the mentioned categories was counted and converted into a percentage of the total population ($N = 58$) for comparison purposes. Finally, the interviewees' responses were interpreted and used to support some of the findings of this research project.

Results

Server Preference

The average age of the male respondents were 25.40 years ($SD = 13.49$), and the female respondents were 27.39 years ($SD = 14.78$). There was weak correlation between respondents' age and their server preference ($\rho = 0.309$). This weak correlation was a result of higher average age of the respondents who preferred RP PvP server ($M = 46.00$, $SD = 24.32$). The average weekly play time of the entire population ($N = 58$) was 22.53 hours ($SD = 16.38$), with no significant differences between the male and the female samples. There was no significant correlation between respondents gender and server preference ($\rho = 0.058$). Figure 1 below shows the distribution of the respondents across the four different server types.
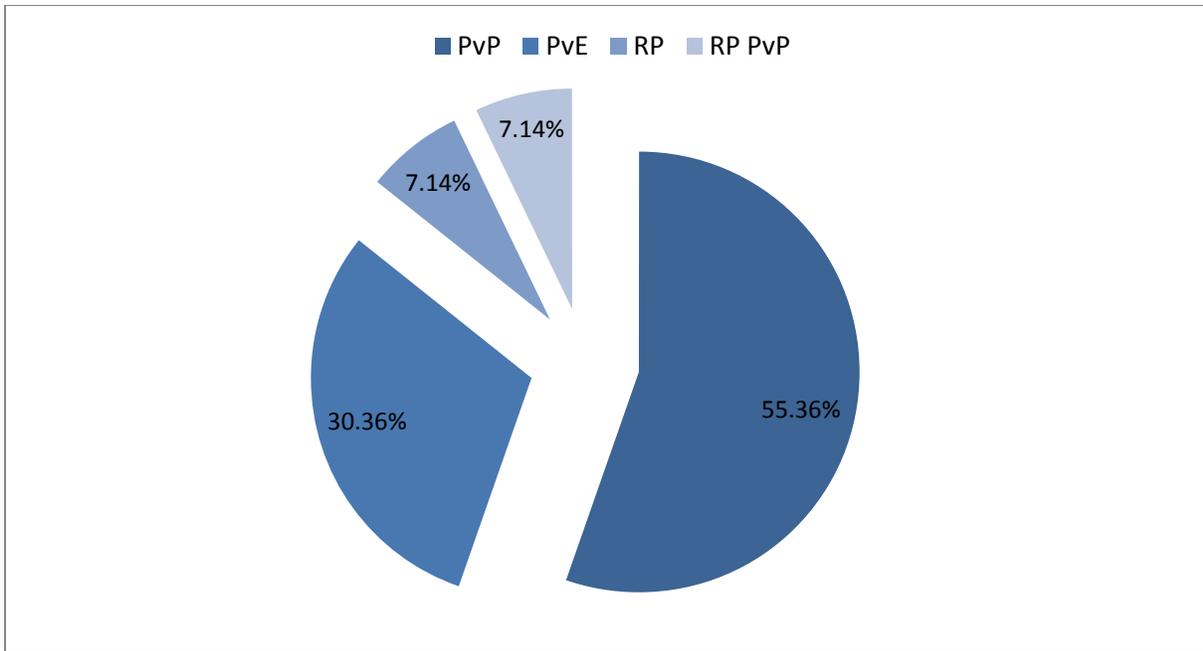
Figure 1: Player Distribution across Different Server Types.

The majority of the population, 55.36%, preferred the PvP type servers and 30.36% of the

population preferred PvE type servers. Equal percentage of the population, 7.14% each, preferred

RP and RP PvP types of server.

Play time across Different Server Types

No significant correlations between play time and other variables were found. The

correlation coefficients for respondents' age and play time, gender and play time and server

preference and play time were 0.243, 0.084 and 0.027 respectively. Play time across all the four

different server types were very similar as illustrated by figure 2.
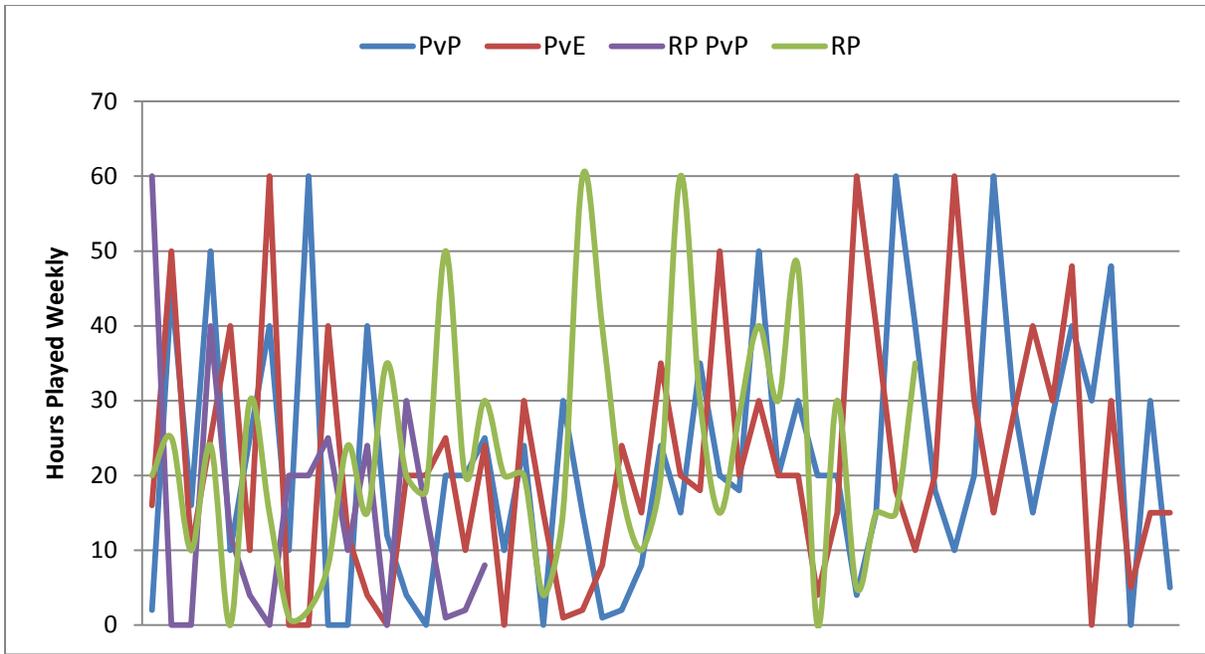
Figure 2: Play time across different servers for the Population.

Simplifying the data presented in figure 2 by using the average play time for the different server types shows that the average play time for PvP, PvE and RP type servers are very similar; however, the play time for RP PvP server types are slightly lower. Figure 3 illustrates this phenomenon.
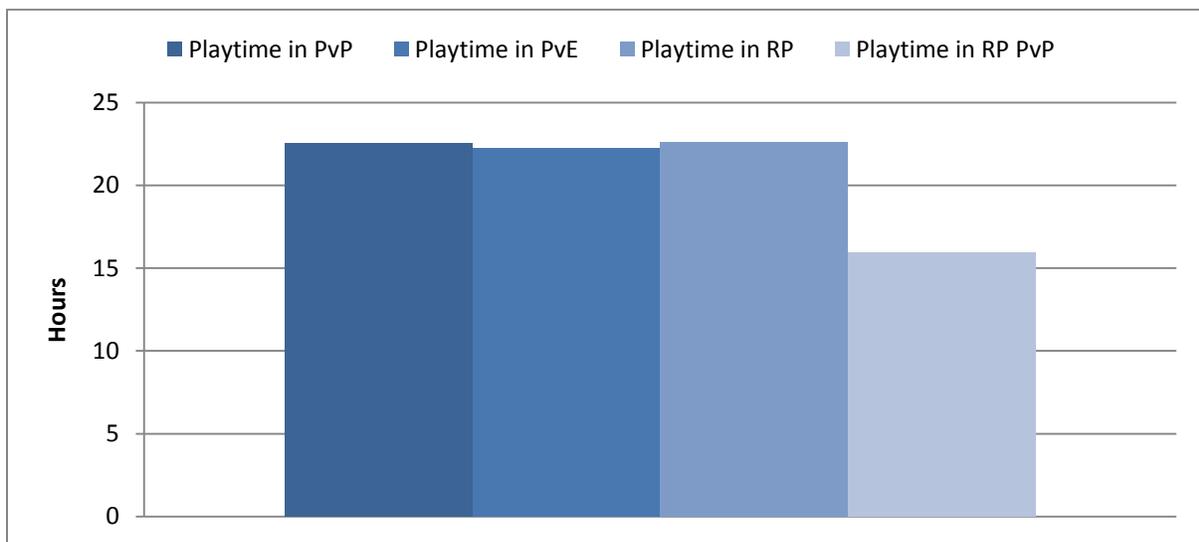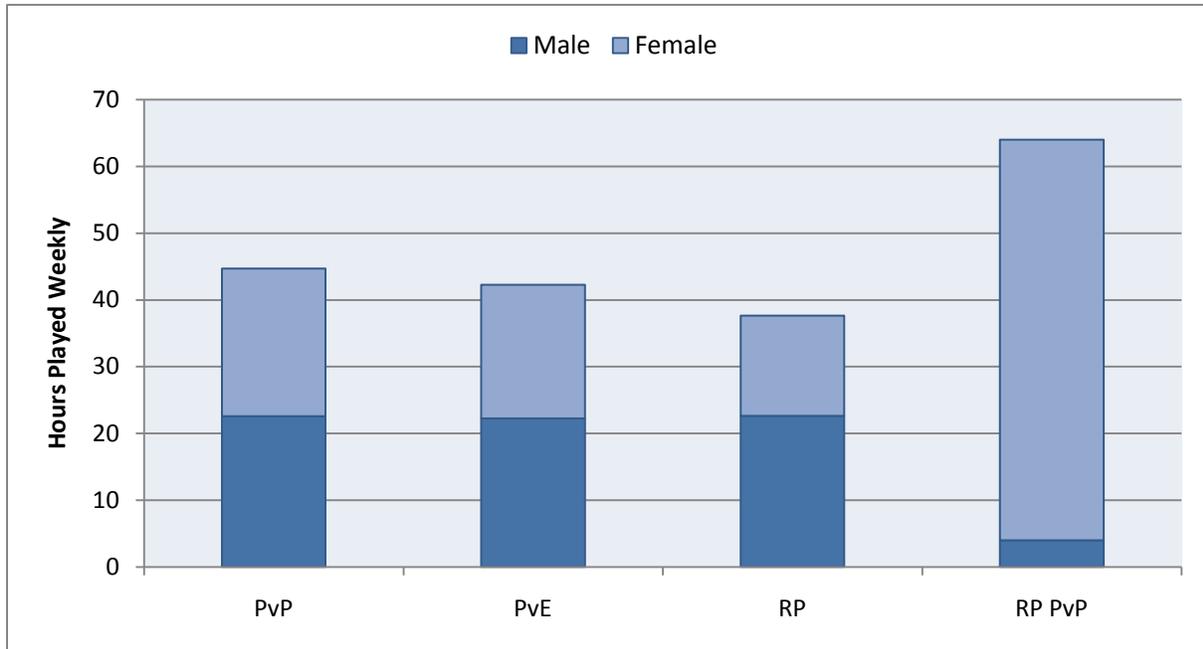

Figure 3: Average Play time across Different Server Types

Gender distribution and play time for the four different types of servers were also calculated. Figure 4 below shows that both male and female respondents spend approximately the same amount of time play *World of Warcraft* on PvP, PvE and RP servers. However, in the case of RP PvP servers, female players play longer compared to the male players.

Figure 4: Gender and Average Play time distribution across Different Server Types.

Avatar Preference across Different Server Types

Correlation coefficients between respondents' primary avatar race and class with server preference were calculated, and the results were not significant. Correlation coefficient for avatar race and server preference was 0.038 and avatar class and server preference was 0.051. Avatar race and class distribution across the four different server types are illustrated on figure 5 and 6 below.
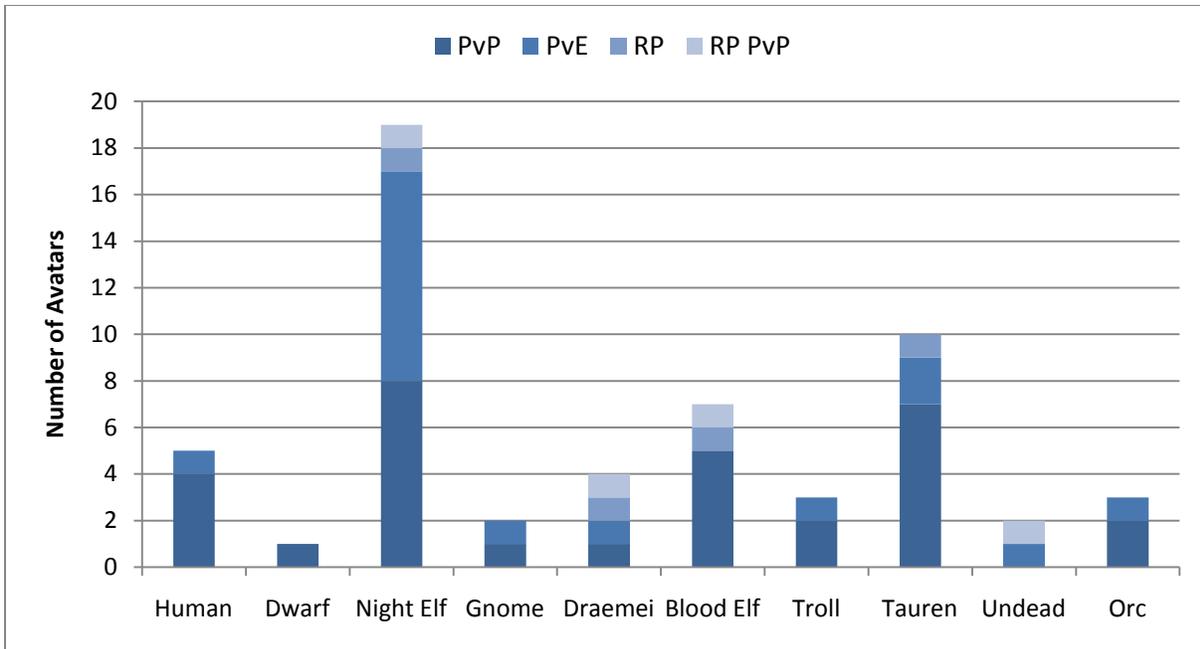
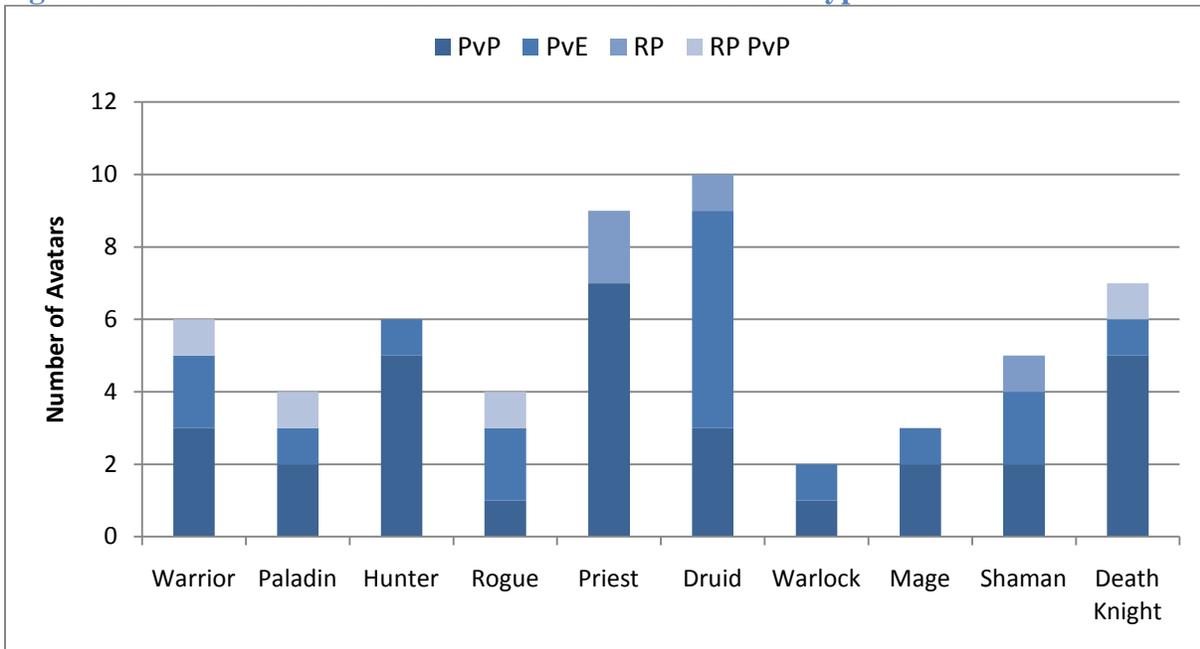**Figure 5: Avatar Race distribution across Different Server Types.**

Figure 6: Avatar Class distribution across Different Server Types.

Figure 5 shows that the "Night Elf" race of avatars is widely selected by players of all the four server types, this is evident from the column for "Night Elf." Figure 6 shows that the "Priest" and "Druid" classes are most preferred by the respondents, and there are significant numbers of

respondents who play with the "Priest" class avatars on PvP type servers. Moreover, the "Druid"

class for avatars is more preferred by respondents who play on PvE type servers.

*Group Play and Guild Preference across Different Server Types*

A large portion of the population ($n= 47$, $N = 58$) were members of a guild. As a result,

there was a weak correlation between respondents' guild and server preference ($\rho = 0.330$).

Analyzing the guild preference of respondents across the four different types of servers revealed

that respondents who prefer to play on the RP PvP type servers are less inclined to become

members of a guild; whereas, more respondents prefer to play as a member of guild in PvP and

PvE type servers. This is illustrated in figure 7.
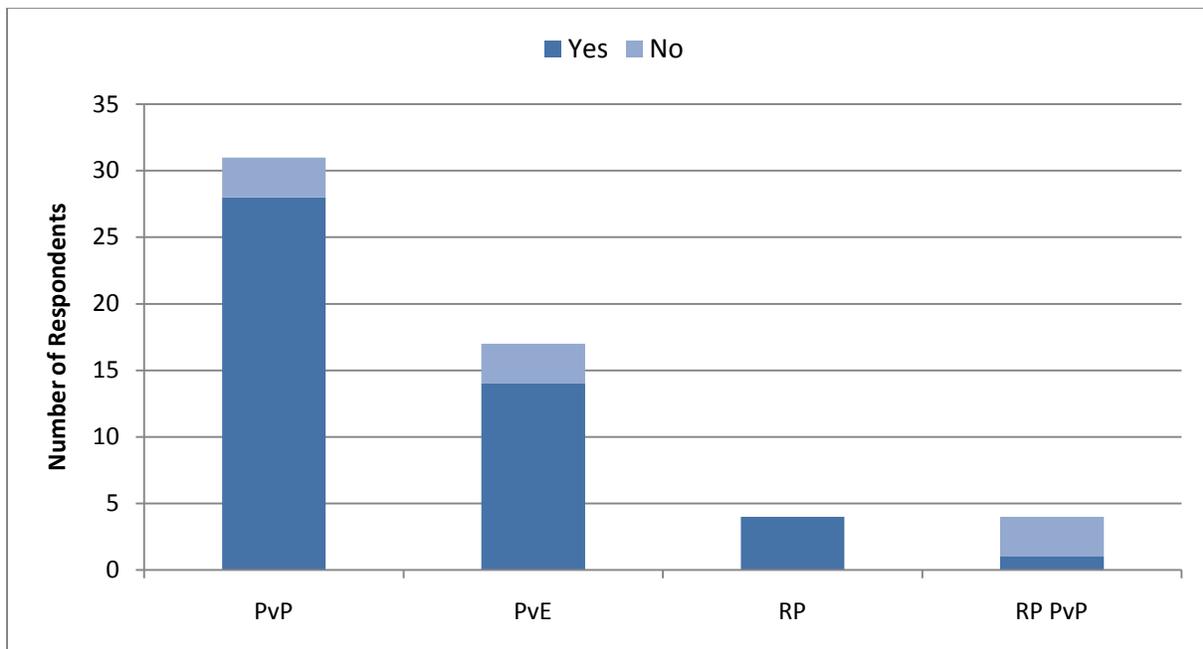
Figure 7: Guild Preference across Different Server Types.

Moreover, there was a weak correlation between the respondents' guild preference and avatar

class preference ($\rho = 0.330$), but no significant correlation existed between avatar race preference

and guild preference ($\rho = 0.028$). The weak correlation between avatar class and guild preference

was due to a large number of respondents who were members of a guild, preferred the "Priest" and "Druid" class for their avatars. Figure 8 and 9 shows the avatar race and class preference and guild membership preference of the respondents.
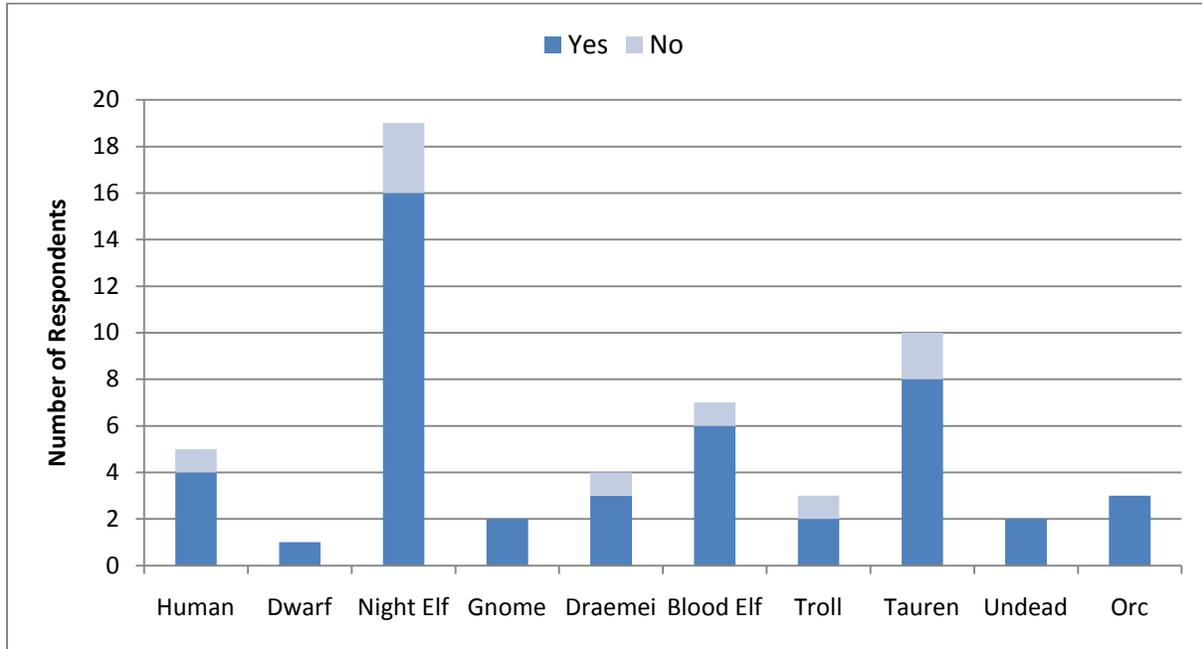
**Figure 8: Avatar Race and Guild Membership.**
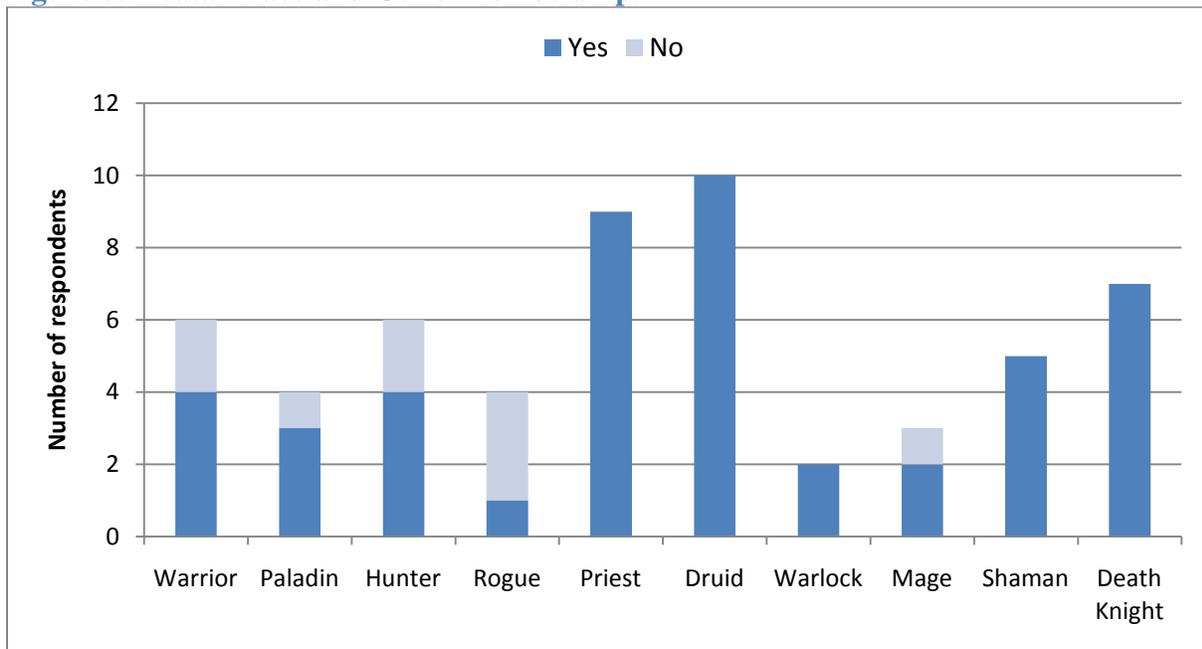
Figure 9: Avatar Class and Guild Membership.

Furthermore, there was no significant correlation between respondents' server preference and grouping habits ($\rho = 0.284$). Correlation coefficients for avatar race and class preference with group play preferences were also calculated, and the results were not significant. The correlation coefficient for avatar race and group play preference was 0.045 and for avatar class and group play preference was 0.104.

### *Time Frame of Play across Different Server Types*

Correlation between the length of time the respondents' have played *World of Warcraft* and their server preference was calculated, and the result was not significant ($\rho = 0.055$). The statistical mode of the length of time the population has played the *World of Warcraft* was "1 – 2 years." The distribution of the length of time of play across the four different server types was analyzed. This analysis revealed that respondents who played the game for a longer period of time preferred the PvP and PvE server types. 10 respondents who have played the *World of Warcraft* preferred the PvP type servers. This was the highest frequency compared to all the other categories. Figure 10 shows the distribution of the respondents across the different server types based on the length of time they have play the game.
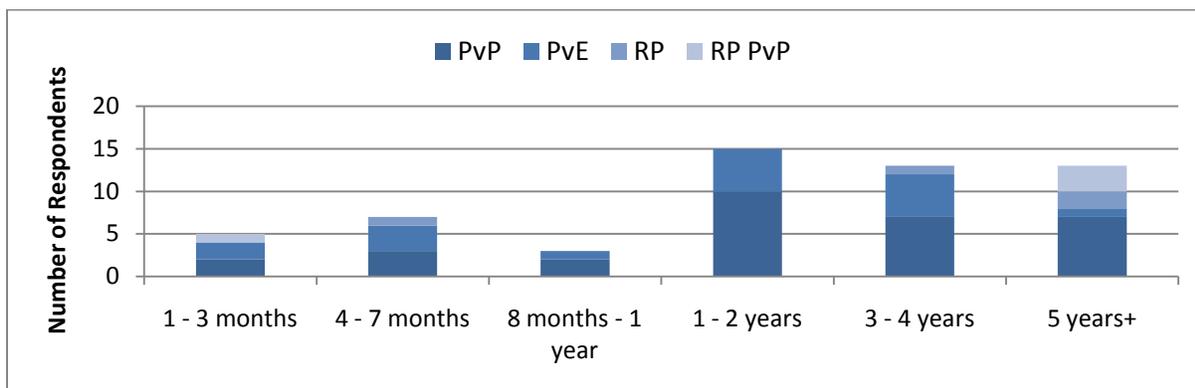
Figure 10: Timeframe of play across Different Server Types.

Reason for Server Preference

As stated above, survey respondents were asked to respond to an open-ended question explaining why they prefer the server that they do. Figure 11 below shows the distribution of the respondents among the 6 categories.
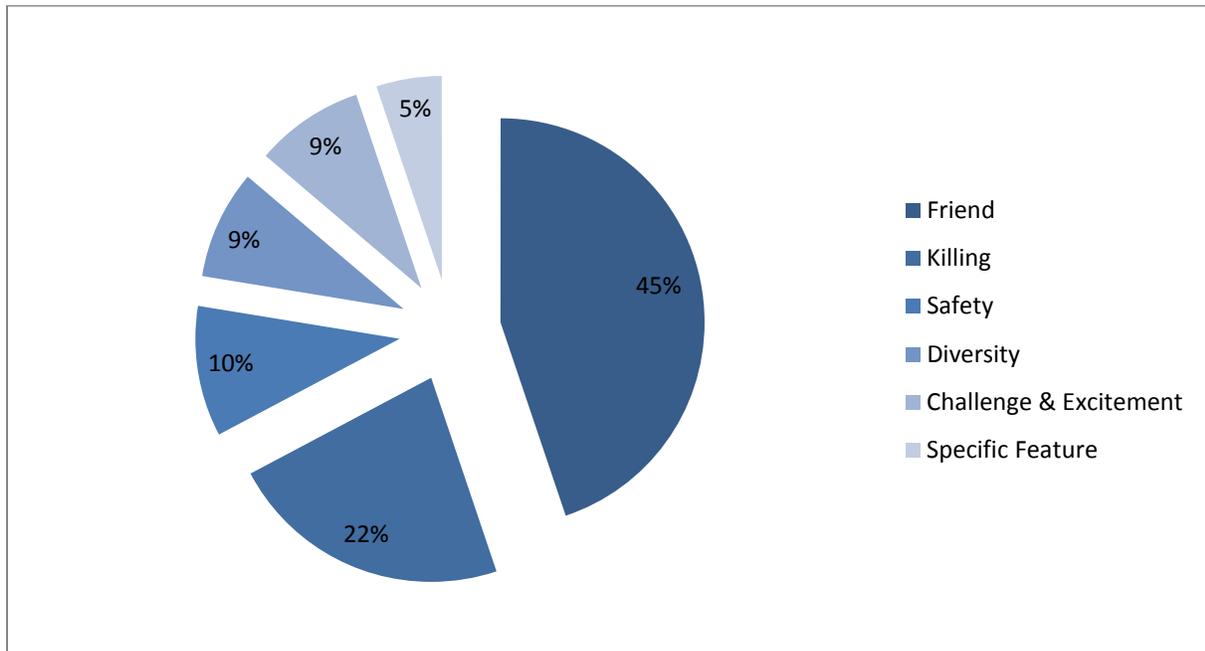
Figure 11: Player Distribution among Different Categories

The responses were categorized under 6 broad groups as follows:

Friend

Respondents who indicated that they joined a specific type of server because they were referred to it by a friend or because they wanted to play with a specific known group of players were put in this category. This was the most popular reason for choosing a specific type of server since 26 out of the 58 respondents were put under this category. Examples of some of the responses were:

i play wit all my frends on the server. personally have no preference over server type, just want to play wit ma ppl (Male, 32, PvP)

I dont, just my friends are there. (Female, 21, PvP)

Battle

This was the second most popular reason for selecting a server, and this only applies to PvP and RP PvP servers because players cannot battle with other players without consent on PvE and RP servers. Out of 58 respondents, 13 stated that they liked to engage in combat with other players on the server. Examples of some of the responses were:

I like the ability to kill anyone I want. Whether they are a lower level than me or a higher level than me. Countless times I have had some of the best experiences in game by this type of world interaction. (Male, 21, PvP)

Because I like to kill people and cant do that on other servers (Male, 15, PvP)

Safety

Some respondents preferred the safety of the PvE server and did not like being attacked by other players in the *World of Warcarft.* Out of 58 respondents, 6 stated that they thought the act of combating other players without their consent was a "distasteful" practice. This category only applies to those who chose PvE or RP server types because players are allowed to engage in free combat on the other two server types. Some of the responses provided in this category were:

It takes a lot of the worry from farming or just questing. If I do see another flagged player I just /wave and be on my merry way. There are some times where I do attack just because I am bored but that's a small chance. (Male, 16, PvE)

You can level by yourself without having to worry about being hassled by high level

characters of the opposite faction attacking you. You also don't have to worry about

'playing a role' (Male, 19, PvE)

Diversity

A few of the respondents ($n = 5$) stated that they choose a specific type of server because

it has a diverse range of players. This category is not specific to any one of the server types and

applies to all the servers. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the respondents who

stated they preferred diversity also stated that they preferred the PvP server type. Examples of a

few responses were:

I prefer this type due to the fact that world pvp is easier to come by. Though it is rare, I

love a challenge every once in awhile. PVP realms are usually more populated than the

other types as well. (Male, 23, PvP)

pvp has more interesting people compared to the other servers (Female, 43, PvP)

Challenge and Excitement

Out of 58 respondents, 5 stated that they choose a specific server type because they felt

that those types of servers offered more challenging and exciting gameplay. Even though this

category equally applies to all the four different server types, all the respondents who stated their

reason for server selection as "challenge and excitement" also preferred the PvP server type.

Examples of a few responses were:

A pvp server adds variation to the game. It's not straight static enviorment. You have to

watch your back, you never know when someone could attempt to kill you. As long as

you know what to do gankers are easily enough avoided. I also enjoy high end arena and

BGs. On a PVP servers there are usually more like minded players that are willing to

participate in arena and BG. (Male, 18, PvP)

Competition (Male, 28, PvP)

Specific Feature

Responses that indicated a specific feature of a specific server type other then "combat"

and" safety" were categorized under the "Specific Feature" label. Only 3 respondents out of the

entire population ($N = 58$) stated that they choose a specific type of server because of a specific

feature provided by that server type. The 3 responses provided were:

It seems this is the server type were I can find the most folks in my age range. Maybe I'm

getting too old for WoW? (Male, 62, RP PvP)

I like having a backstory to my characters, and writing about them. (Female, 34, RP)

Because everyone there likes the storyline of the game and use proper English, instead of

that text talk bullshit. (Female, 16, RP PvP)

Responses from both the interviewees regarding why they choose the server that they

choose could be categorized under the "Friend" group. What emerged from the interview was

both interviewees strong reluctance to change their server type.

Interviewee A

Interviewee A was a 19-year-old male who has played the *World of Warcraft* for the past

3 years. His preferred server type was RP. He started playing when he was in high-school

because he had a lot of "time to kill." He initially started playing on a PvP server and quickly

realized that he didn't like the atmosphere and community there. He initially picked the PvP

server because he had friends on that server, and those were the friends that introduced him to

the game. When asked for the reason why he made the switch to a RP type server, he replied,

"People are very mean on PvP servers and you always have to watch your back and worry about

getting killed. You just can't relax and enjoy the game" (Interviewee A). When asked about how

he initially felt when he first started playing on the RP server, he said, "Pretty Good! Real good

actually. RPs are more fun, the community is a lot better and people are good and cooperative.

Plus, you don't have to worry about getting killed every minute" (Interviewee A). Then he was

asked whether he would change to any other type of server some time, and his reply was a strong

no. He elaborated saying, "I like RP, made a lot of friends here and gotten very attached with

them. We always play together and I'm part of the community here. Leaving this server would

mean screwing over my friends and I'll never do that" (Interviewee A).

     Interviewee B

     Interviewee B was 20-year-old female who has played *World of Warcraft* for the past 2

years. She preferred playing on a PvE type server. She initially started playing on the same PvE

server and never played on any other type of servers. When asked for reasons why she never

played on any other types of servers, she answered, "All my friends and characters are on PvE"

(Interviewee B). Like interviewee A, she was also very reluctant to change to any other type of

servers. She didn't want to change servers because "All my friends are on PvE. I won't enjoy

playing *WoW* if I'm not playing with them. And, I don't want to pay for transfers" (interviewee

B).

***World of Warcarft* Addiction**

The number of respondents who considered themselves addicted ($n = 28$) was roughly equal to those who did not considered themselves addicted ($n = 30$). The average score on the addiction scale for the entire population ($N = 58$) was 5.23 ($SD = 2.81$). Figure 12 shows the percentage of the population that consider themselves addicted, and also the percentage of the population that do not consider themselves as addicted to the game.
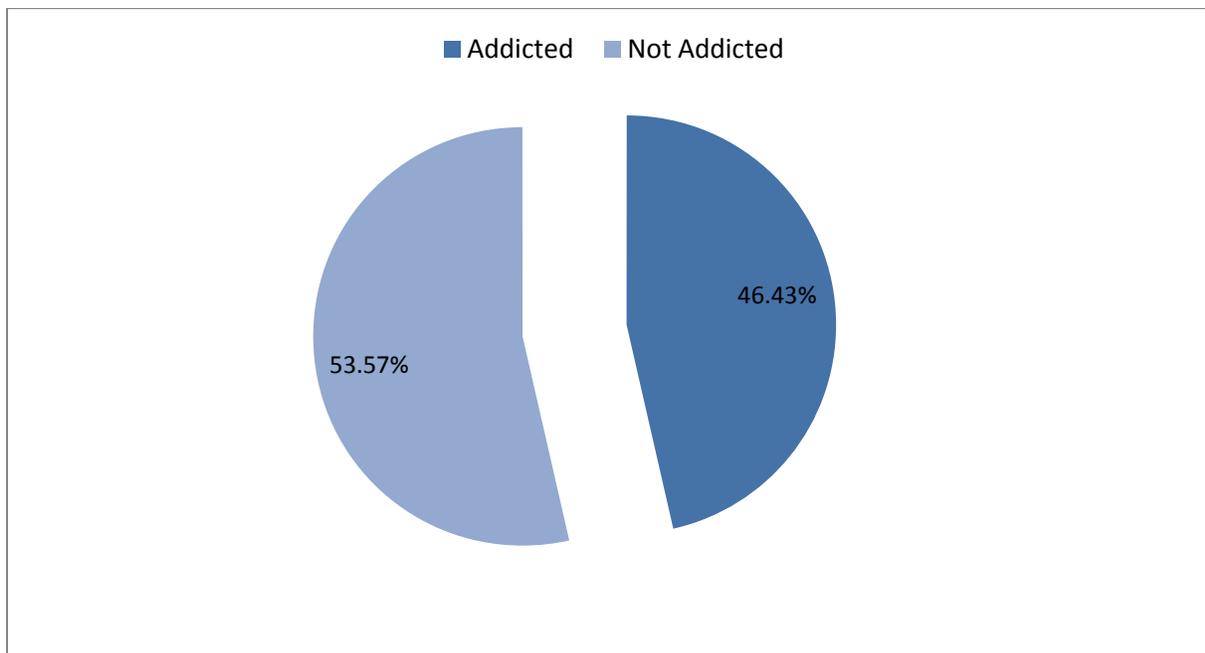
Figure 12: *World of Warcraft* **Addiction**

Correlations between the respondents' answer to the addiction question as well as the addiction scale and the other variables were calculated. The results were not significant. However, unsurprisingly there was a moderate correlation ($\rho = 0.630$) between the respondents' answer to the addiction question and their addiction scale rating. This simply suggests that those who stated they were addicted to the *World of Warcraft* also rated themselves higher on the addiction scale. There was no significant correlation between respondents' avatar race and class preference to

their response to the addiction question; the correlations coefficients were 0.131 and 0.107

respectively. Correlations between the addiction scale and addiction response with guild

preference was computed; the results were not significant, the correlation coefficient for

addiction scale and guild preference was 0.159 and the correlation coefficient for the addiction

response and guild preference was 0.080. The correlation coefficient between addiction scale and

server preference ($\rho = 0.091$), and group play preference ($\rho = 0.256$) were not significant either.

Figure 13 illustrates the distribution of respondents across the different server types based on

their response to the addiction question.
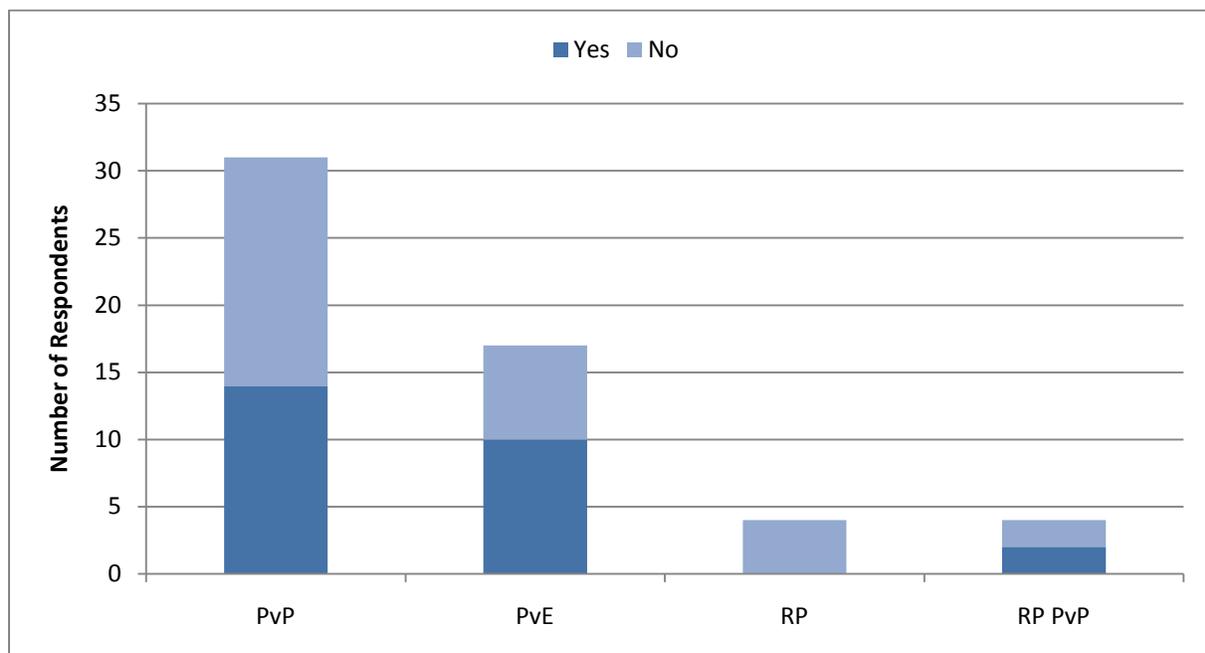
Figure 13: Addiction across Different Serer Types.

Discussion

The findings of this study validate the findings of many other previous studies. This

suggests that the behavior of the *World of Warcraft* players have not changed significantly over

the past few years. This study shows that the average female player is likely to be older than the average male player. Yee also came to the same conclusion when he studied the demographics of MMORPG players. His article titled "Gender and Age Distribution" stated that, "Male players tend to be between 12 and 28, while female players tend to be between 23 and 40" (Yee, 2003). The average age of the players' survey for this study falls with those ranges.

This study also suggests that there is no significant different in the average play time across the different server types. This implies the playing habits of *World of Warcraft* players have not changed significantly since late 2004 when Ducheneaut et al. conducted their study on the prevalence of social activities in MMOGs. Their study also concluded that, "No differences were apparent" (Ducheneaut et al., 2006). However, this study also suggests that the PvP server type is most preferred by the respondents ($n = 31$). This suggests that gamers who play on PvP servers visit the *World of Warcraft* forums on Blizzard's network with a higher frequency compared to those who play on the other server types. Their frequent visit to forums could also imply that players who play on PvP server types are more involved with the game. Another finding suggests that the PvP servers are also the most challenging type of servers because it allows the possibility to freely combat other players. It was observed that more male respondents preferred PvP type servers compared to female respondents; however, the opposite was true in the case of RP PvP servers. Out of the 4 respondents who preferred RP PvP servers, 3 were female. One possible explanation could be that female players prefer the RP PvP server type because of the stricter social rules that Blizzard enforce on such servers. These stricter rules don't allow other players to behave inappropriately in the game. Therefore, the RP PvP server combines the "good community" of a RP server with the "excitement" of a PvP, and this feature of the RP PvP server is more appealing to the female gamers than the male gamers.

Analysis of the respondents' character preference showed that the "Night Elf" race is highly preferred compared to the other classes. Yee's article titled "WoW Character Race Demographics" (Yee, 2005) also had similar findings. Further analysis also revealed that players who played with the "Night Elf" race avatar were more likely to become members of a guild. This suggests that the abilities of the "Night Elf" race are more suited for players who prefer playing with other people. The "Priest" and the "Druid" classes for avatars were also widely preferred across the PvP type servers. One of the reasons for this could be the "free combat" that is allowed to take place on PvP server, and the ability of the "Priest" and "Druid" classes to heal themselves and other avatars. This lowers the likelihood of players dying or getting killed by others during the game. This could also be the reason why the "Priest" and "Druid" classes of avatars are more likely to become members of a guild.

Another significant finding that emerged from this research was the reluctance of player to change their server types. Both the interviewees were members of guilds and stated that they formed very strong ties to their virtual friends. This supports Williams et al.'s findings about "social capital" derived from guild membership in is article titled, "From Tree House to Barracks: The Social Life of Guilds in *World of Warcraft*" (Williams et al., 2006). This suggests that those players who play the *World of Warcraft* today still use their guild members as source for social support.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, there were many limitations to the data collection process. The link to the survey was kept active for a short period of time, and as a result, the survey population is not likely to be an accurate representation of the entire population of *World of*

Warcraft players. Moreover, the population of the interviewees ($N = 2$) was too small to come to any definitive conclusion. Furthermore, the data is biased, as it reflect the views of gamers who are more involved with the game and visit the *World of Warcraft* forums with higher frequency compare to the more casual *WoW* players. Therefore, the data is skewed toward the PvP server types. Another limitation of this study is the lack of a process to determine addiction to the game. No base quantifier was use to judge whether a respondent was addicted or not; instead, the study relied on the responses provided by the participants of the study.

Future Prospects

Future studies using a much larger and more representative survey population could be conducted to observer the behavior of players across the different server types to see whether any significant changes occurred after the launch of the *Wrath of the Lich King* expansion pack for the *World of Warcraft.* Another avenue for possible research could be to look at level of player addiction across the server types using a base threshold for addiction, such as number of hours played weekly. Since this study shows that female player prefer RP PvP to the other server types, future researchers could also investigate the reason for this phenomenon.

Conclusion

Although there are several limitations to this study, the findings can still be very useful for new *World of Warcraft* players. This study describes in detail the player behavior, avatar preference, and guild preference across the four different server types. Such information can be valuable to new player, as they can use this information as a guide to selecting a particular type

of server. They can compare their own preferences with those of other players who populate the

different servers.

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