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Real World Demographics In:
World of Warcraft

Introduction

The goal of our research was to grasp a better understanding as to what traits in a player correspond to what race and faction they choose to play with in World of Warcraft. The specific traits we looked at in each player were their age, gender and nationality. Because our research was completed on a mostly U.S. server we defined nationality as what state each player was from. We then used the data collected from 100 participants to look for a relationship between a players general demographic (age, gender and nationality) and their choice of race and faction. Before beginning our research we stated two general Hypotheses'. We believed that players of younger ages (under 18) would show a greater tendency towards characters on the Horde side, while older players (19 and over) would be more likely to use characters from the Alliance faction. Our second hypothesis was that we would find a larger ratio of males to females on the Horde side and a smaller ratio of male to females on the Alliance side. More simply put, there would be a smaller number of females playing with Horde characters than with Alliance characters. Because of the numerous possibilities, we made no hypothesis as to the relationship between nationality and faction or race. We decided the best method would be to later interpret our data and look for correlations.

Materials and Methods

The data used for our research was gathered through personal interviews that took place during various times through the game of World of Warcraft. In order to obtain an equal amount of data from both the Horde and Alliance faction we used two characters. We used a human warrior to conduct and record fifty interviews in the city of Stormwind and a Tauren hunter to conduct and record fifty interviews in the city of Orgimmar. In order to eliminate any variables, both characters were played on the Silvermoon server and asked the same uniform questions to participants in order to obtain information on player age, gender and nationality. In order to classify the different age groups within our study we determined the most effective categorizing was to divide players into two groups. Younger players were considered to be 18 years old and younger, while older players were defined as 19 and above. When interviewing all characters we used the whisper tool so that each person would feel more comfortable sharing their information with us. We then recorded the responses along with the characters race. Players were picked at random and we conducted interviews at various times of the day. The study took about two weeks to complete and began on April 27, 2009. After gathering out data we looked for the strongest correlations between age, gender and nationality with faction and race. Below is a screen shot of a typical interview.

<u>Results</u>

Age

After compiling our results we first looked at the relationship between age and faction preference. We found that of the fifty players interviewed from the Alliance faction the average age was 21.92. The average age of the Horde players interviewed was 20.76. Because both ages were relatively close our results did not support or reject our hypothesis that younger players would have a tendency to prefer classes in the Horde faction. In both cases the number of players 18 and under was very close. There were 23 players 18 and under in the Alliance section which made up 46 % of the Alliance subjects interviewed. 20 players or 40% of the Horde section were under the age of 18 as well. One noticeable result was that the Alliance faction had much more older players than the Hordes. The oldest Horde player found was 35 while there were 7 players (17 %) who were 35 and older in the Alliance section. Below is a table summarizing the results we recorded for age.

Age	Average	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
	20.76	20	16 and 27	9	35
	21.92	19	23	8	52

Gender

Our hypothesis that there would be more females found in the Alliance faction was supported by our data. We recorded 20 females in the Alliance section (40%) as opposed to only 12 (24%) in the Horde section. This means that there were 16% more females playing with characters from the Alliance section than the Horde section. In total, female players made up 32% of the sample size for the data. Below is a table showing the statistics related to age and gender from the study.

Gender age statistics	Average	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
	20.9	19.5	16 and 27	8	47
	22.29	21	16	10	52

As you can infer from the table the average age of the females is older than that of the males. There is a wider range of ages for females as opposed to the range of ages for the males. The male age group ranged from 8 to 47 years of age and the female age group ranged from 10 to 52 years of age. One interesting result is that the modes of the males and females are the same. What this means is that there are more 16 year old males and females playing the game as opposed to any other age. We found that there were 13 16 year old players in the game which made up 13% of our sample. The median age of women is higher than the median age of males. It is interesting to correlate the table above with the previous table containing the information on the average ages of Horde vs. Alliance players. The mode for males in the table above is 16 and 27 which is the same mode of the Horde players. The data supports our hypothesis that more females play in the Alliance faction instead of the Horde faction.

Nationality

We found that 12 people that we interviewed were from Canada, which makes up 12% of the population of our study. A few other notable nationality totals were seven people from California (7 % of the population), five from Oregon (5 % of the population), four from Arizona (4 % of the population), Colorado (4 % of the population), New York (4 %), and Texas (4 % of the population.) The other 60% of our data came from the states of New Jersey (4 %), North Carolina (4%), South Carolina (2 %), Pennsylvania (2%), Maine (1%), Florida (4%), Kansas (2%), Michigan (4 %), Rhode Island (2%), Washington (4%), Alabama (1%), Illinois (4 %), Nevada (1%), New Mexico (2%), Utah (1%), Indiana (1%), Louisiana (4%), Massachusetts (4%), Wisconsin (4 %), New Hampshire (2%), Ohio (3 %), and Virginia (4%). There was a large spread in where

people were from however, Canadians were the dominant nationality of people who we

interviewed. We generalized every province of Canada to simply Canadian. People from

Canada made up 12 % of the population that we interviewed and the other 88% of the

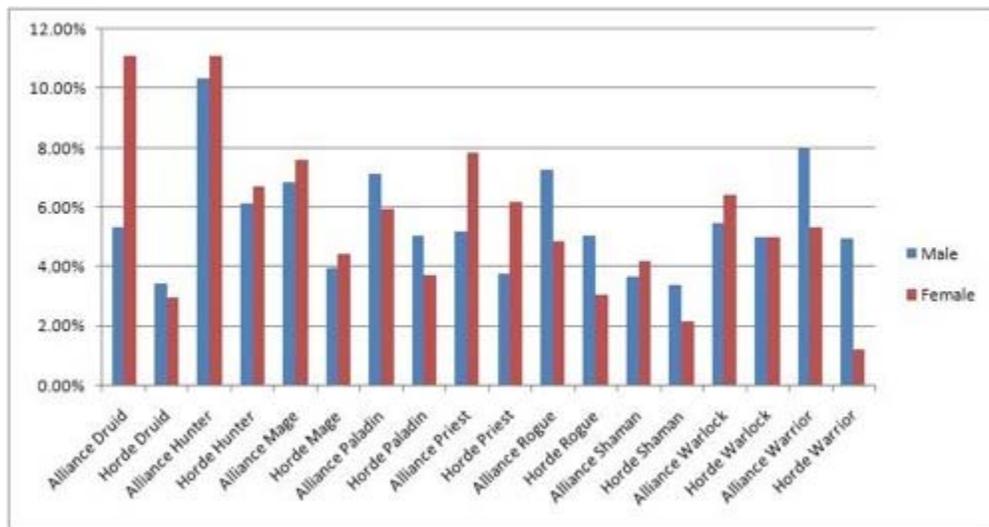population were from the United States.

Discussion
Our results show that our hypothesis that older players (19 and older) would be more

likely to play on the Alliance side is not necessarily true. We found that the average age

of player in both the Alliance and Horde factions were very close. The median ages in

both factions were close as well. The minimum ages of players in each faction were

close. However, the maximum age of a player in the Alliance faction was 52 which is 17

years older than the oldest player from the Horde faction, thus proving that our

hypothesis that there are older players playing on the Alliance side as opposed to the

Horde side.

Our second hypothesis that there would be more females playing in the Alliance

faction as opposed to the Horde faction was proven true by our data. Our data showed

that there were 20 females playing in the Alliance faction and only 12 playing in the

Horde faction. The article, "Our Virtual bodies, Ourselves?" By Nick Yee (2009) also

contains information showing that females pay more attention to attractiveness of a

character as well as race. A possible reason for this is that women are more drawn to

characters in the alliance faction because the characters are humans as opposed to the

Horde faction where the characters are not. In the article "The Ideal Elf: Identity

Exploration in World of Warcraft" by Sara Kiesler and K. Bessiere (2006) the authors

talk about when people choose a character to play in an online game, that character is an

online representation of themselves. What this means is that a female could be more conscious of the appearance of their character as opposed to a male player and humans are generally depicted more appealing in the game as opposed to a fictional being. Another study which supports this finding is the article "World of Warcraft demographics: no big surprises" by Lowell Cremorne (2008.) Below is a table that shows how females favor the alliance side.

We found that 12% of the population surveyed was from Canada compared to 88% from the United States. However, we interviewed subjects from 32 of United States and only subjects from two provinces in Canada. There was no substantial outlier of percentage subjects from any specific area and 64% of the United States was represented leaving only 36% of the United States not represented. This means that there are players playing from the vast majority of the United States and it also means that players from Canada only come from a small section of the Country as opposed to the spread in the United States. We did not find any correlation between where people came from and their age or character preference. In our findings we found that there were no female players

from Canada and that the female's that we did find in the study were all from the United States.

The data that we collected did not directly support our first hypothesis that there would be older players (19 and up) playing in the Alliance faction. However, our second hypothesis was supported by the data we collected therefore proving it true. As was previously stated, a reason for more women playing in the Alliance faction is that women are drawn more to human characters instead of the characters in the Horde faction. Although it is a stereotype, it is possible that females would be more likely to play with a character that they thought was cute or more visibly attractive.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were that we only interviewed 100 people, which is only a small sample of the entire population playing World of Warcraft. We were limited because it takes a lot of time to conduct interviews because not all players are willing to answer our interview questions. This study cannot be generalized to the greater population because of the fact that our results were only the results from a small sample of the greater population of WOW. Also another limitation of the study was that we were only able to conduct interviews in a few cities because none of us are very high level players and have not explored all of the cities that higher level players have been to.

References

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