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# WORLD OF WARCRAFT RESEARCH

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## *Time Spent and Motivations: World of Warcraft vs. Other Videogames*

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### **Abstract**

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This is an extensive research paper that focuses on the motivational aspects that drive players to play *World of Warcraft* over all other games. The following entails in depth research about the length of time gamers spend playing *World of Warcraft* versus other games and essentially why that is the case.

The research concluded that players play *World of Warcraft* far more hours per week than any other game; the motivation to immerse one's self in the *World of Warcraft* was attributed mostly to the immersion aspect of the game. The study also concluded that the immersion aspect of the game was not only the most driving factor. Data yielded from the quantitative survey showed that players most prevalently chose to spend more time on *World of Warcraft* than other videogames because of the deep immersion *World of Warcraft* offers. Although immersion was the most common factor, we found that players did not play just for the immersion, but for multiple aspects of *World of Warcraft* as well. These reasons ranged from progression through *World of Warcraft's* storyline, achievement, and socialization. The qualitative survey handed out in our class reveals individual player motivations for playing *World of Warcraft* and other videogames. Most of the answers to the question "Why do you play *World of Warcraft*?" involved all three categories of motivation, Achievement, Immersion,

and Socialization. However, when asked, "Why do you play videogames?" the answers mostly involved Immersion aspects of the game rather than Achievement and Socialization aspects.

## *Introduction*

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There is something about gaming that has an appeal to the masses. Gaming can provide entertainment, social opportunities, and even comfort. It allows for players to get away from their everyday lives and role-play in a whole different world. *World of Warcraft* arguably allows players the most opportunity for this "whole new world," and more and more people create new accounts every day. According to the Blizzard Press Release on 21 November 2008, over 11.5 million people indulge themselves in the *World of Warcraft*, and the numbers and popularity are just increasing ("*World of Warcraft* Subscriber Base Reaches 11.5 Million Worldwide"). The rising popularity of *World of Warcraft* as opposed to other MMORPGs, since the year 2004 (*World of Warcraft's* Release), can be seen on Bruce Woodcock's website [mmogchart.com](http://mmogchart.com). In fact, the University of Denver is now offering a research-based writing course where all research revolves around *World of Warcraft* ("*WRIT 1133 Course Descriptions*"). The game offers something for everyone; there is a different array of races, quests, and opportunities to make a character one's own. These qualities are what separate *World of Warcraft* from most other games. The ability to make choices, interact with individuals, and play the game however the gamer likes, puts *World of Warcraft* on a whole different level than many other games. It is a game with no boundaries or limits where players find themselves spending countless hours playing.

Previous studies have analyzed player motivations to play online games. The research on motivation is widespread and constantly expanding. As Tychsen et al.'s research points out, motivations to play are "not simple constructs, but rather composed of multiple motivational drivers that are heavily interrelated and act in concert" (57). Nick Yee categorizes the topic of motivations in play for online games in his study called "Motivations of Play in Online Games." This study "revealed 10 motivation subcomponents that grouped into 3 overarching components (Achievement, Social, and Immersion)" (5). The achievement component consists of advancement, mechanics, and competition. The social component consists of socializing, relationships, and teamwork. The immersion component is the largest group of the three and consists of discovery, role-playing, customization, and escapism. Figure 1 below contains a more in-depth view of the 10 different subcomponents and the categories they fall under.

Achievement	Social	Immersion
<b>Advancement</b> Progress, Power, Accumulation, Status	<b>Socializing</b> Casual Chat, Helping Others, Making Friends	<b>Discovery</b> Exploration, Lore, Finding Hidden Things
<b>Mechanics</b> Numbers, Optimization, Templating, Analysis	<b>Relationship</b> Personal, Self-Disclosure, Find and Give Support	<b>Role-Playing</b> Story Line, Character History, Roles, Fantasy
<b>Competition</b> Challenging Others, Provocation, Domination	<b>Teamwork</b> Collaboration, Groups, Group Achievements	<b>Customization</b> Appearances, Accessories, Style, Color Schemes
		<b>Escapism</b> Relax, Escape from RL, Avoid RL Problems

Figure 1

Source: "Motivations of Play" by Nick Yee

Even though Nick Yee has conducted research on player motivation in MMORPGs based on earlier studies of RPGs by Bartle, no study has compared motivation of World of Warcraft to

that of other videogames. This research seeks to find out if *World of Warcraft* subscribers play *World of Warcraft* on average more than other types of video games, and to find out the motivation behind players who play *World of Warcraft* over other games using Nick Yee's three major categories or Achievement, Immersion, and Socialization (772).

## Method

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To address the research question, research was conducted using two different types of surveys. Examples of these two surveys can be found in the appendix. The first survey that was conducted, shown in Appendix 1, was posted on mmo-champion.com where *World of Warcraft* enthusiasts could respond. The data yielded from the mmo-champion.com survey helped make multiple observations. For example, the demographics of the population involved and average hours played was calculated using the answers in the survey. This same survey helped evaluate what motivates players to play *World of Warcraft* in contrast to what motivates players to play other videogames. In an effort to control the myriad of different answers of what motivates gamers to play *World of Warcraft* and other videogames, motivations were split up into three different categories. The three categories were Achievement, Immersion, and Socialization. For *World of Warcraft*, the Achievement category involved game aspects such as PvP, raids, and general in-game achievements. The Immersion category consisted of the storyline, lore, questing, and gaining levels. The Socialization category involved making friends and playing with guilds. For other videogames, the categories were a little different because not all other videogames offer the same modes and gameplay that *World of Warcraft* offers. Achievement for other videogames involved achievement points (like those rewarded on Xbox 360), trophies

(like those rewarded on PS3), and rankings. Immersion consisted of the storyline of the videogame, and leveling. Socialization was playing with friends, co-operative play, and online gaming. In the survey, participants were asked to rate these three categories on a 1-5 scale where 1= Strongly Not Interested and 5= Strongly Interested.

After posting the survey on mmo-champion.com, a week was given to let responses accumulate. The projected goal was to get 30 responses; however, this goal was not reached and only 22 responses were collected. In a second attempt, the survey was then posted a second time on mmo-champion.com to try and acquire more feedback; however, no other responses were given within a three day period. With the 22 responses obtained, the data was calculated.

The second survey was more qualitative in nature. Students who were enrolled in the University of Denver WRIT 1133 class that incorporated *World of Warcraft* into the curriculum and students around the University of Denver campus were asked to fill out the survey. This yielded a total of 20 responses. This survey, which is viewable in Appendix 2, generally asks the same questions of our online survey, but instead of giving a number scale to evaluate the players' motivations, the second survey asks specifically why players play *World of Warcraft* and other videogames. This survey gave the opportunity for a player to give an exact answer to why they are motivated to play videogames rather than condensing their answer into a 1-5 point scale in the three different categories of Achievement, Immersion, and Socialization. Therefore, participants were not limited in any way in the answers they could give on the survey. After the answers were collected, the data was evaluated to see if there were any

similarities among the answers. This qualitative data yielded a much deeper illustration of player motivations about videogames.

## Results

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The first part of the research question asked if those who have an active subscription to *World of Warcraft* played on average more hours per week than other videogames. After all the survey responses were completed, the data was collected and calculated. It was found that the average amount of hours played on *World of Warcraft* per week ( $\mu=26.81$  hours  $\sigma=10.12$ ) was more than the average amount of hours played on other games ( $\mu=8.45$  hours  $\sigma=8.59$ ). This data was collected from a population of individuals whose average age was 20.18 ( $\sigma =3.35$ ). Figure 2, located below, compares the amount of hours played on *World of Warcraft* and other videogames. This is significant in that it shows that those who have an active subscription to *World of Warcraft* play *World of Warcraft* more than other videogames. This concluded the hypothesis that people who play *World of Warcraft* play *World of Warcraft* on average more hours per week than other videogames.

Types	<i>World of Warcraft</i>	Other Videogames
	<i>Mean (<math>\mu</math>)</i>	
Average Hours per Week Played	$\mu=26.81$	$\mu=8.45$
	<i>Standard Deviation (<math>\sigma</math>)</i>	
Average Hours per Week Played	$\sigma=10.12$	$\sigma=8.59$

Table 1

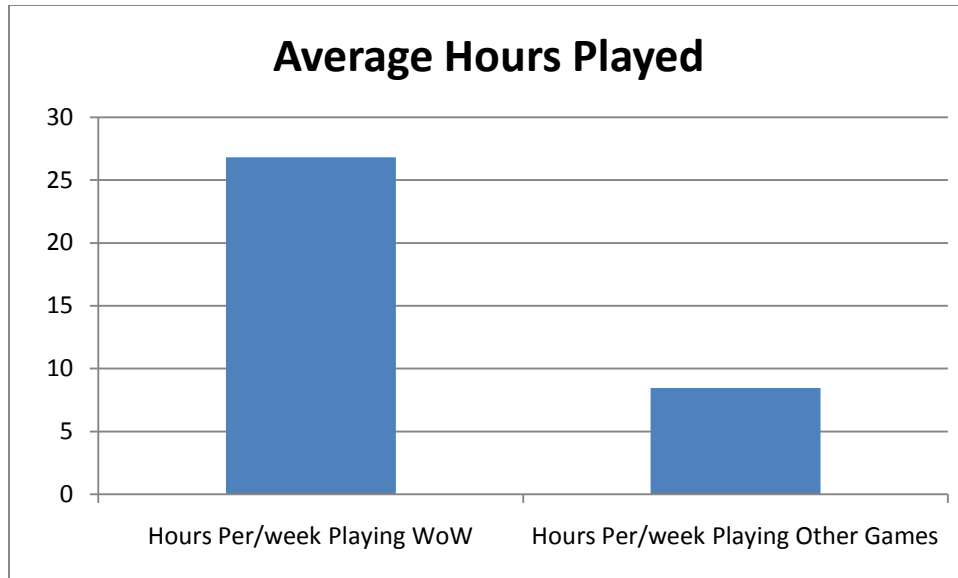


Figure 2

The next part of the research question was to determine what the motivations are for those to play *World of Warcraft* and other videogames and to examine the similarities or differences found. In order to determine these motivations, three different categories of motivation were created: Achievement, Immersion, and Socialization. The 22 individuals all assigned a value from 1-5 for each category of motivation (with 5 being the highest). The statistics for each motivation category for *World of Warcraft* and other videogames were calculated to find the average and standard deviation on the 1-5 point scale. The values can be found in the table and chart provided below:

Types	<i>World of Warcraft</i>	Other Videogames
	<i>Mean (<math>\mu</math>)</i>	
Achievement	$\mu = 3.64$	$\mu = 2.38$
Immersion	$\mu = 4.18$	$\mu = 4.14$
Socialization	$\mu = 3.68$	$\mu = 2.29$
	<i>Standard Deviation (<math>\sigma</math>)</i>	
Achievement	$\sigma = 1.14$	$\sigma = 1.99$
Immersion	$\sigma = .80$	$\sigma = .96$

Socialization

 $\sigma = 1.17$  $\sigma = 1.70$ 

Table 2

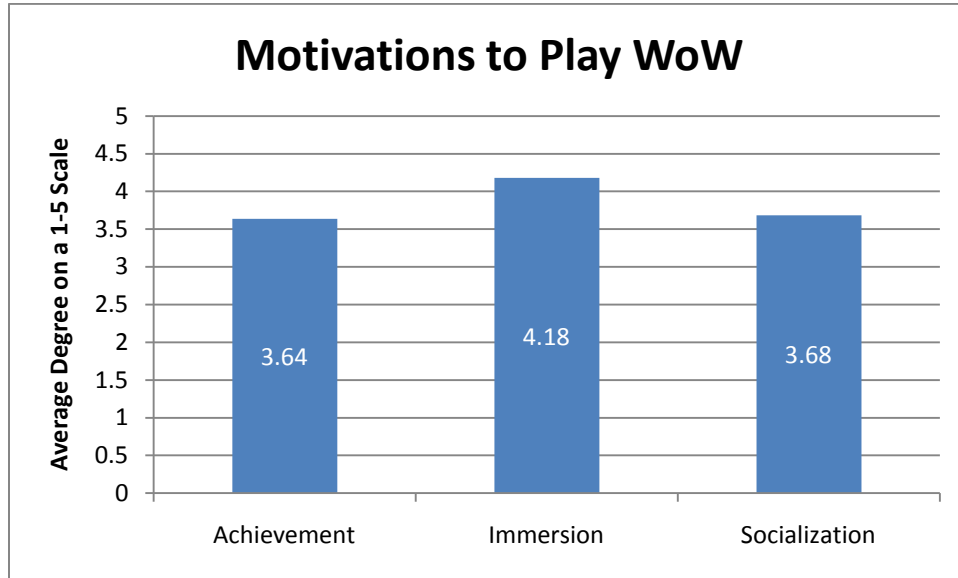
Source: *World of Warcraft* Research

Figure 3

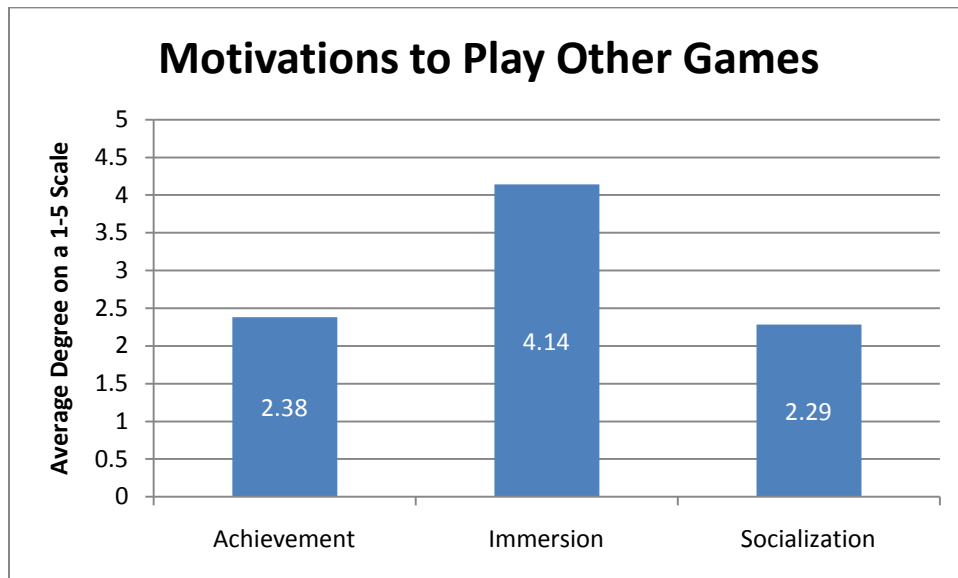


Figure 4

The results shown above in Table 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 reveal that there are some differences and similarities in the motivations to play *World of Warcraft* and the motivations to play other videogames. In the above charts, it can be seen that gamers play both *World of*



*Warcraft* and other videogames mainly for the immersion aspect of the game. This is found by the high average means for the immersion categories of *World of Warcraft* and other videogames,  $\mu = 4.18$  and  $\mu = 4.14$  respectively. This means that overall, gamers play *World of Warcraft* and other videogames for the immersion aspect over the socialization and achievement aspects that the different types of games bring them. It can also be seen in Figure 3 that in both the Achievement and Socialization categories, there was a higher degree of motivation in *World of Warcraft* as opposed to other games. This signifies that players of *World of Warcraft* are not only motivated to play *World of Warcraft* because of the Immersion aspect of the game but also the Achievement and Socialization aspect the game provides them. This also means that players are more motivated to play *World of Warcraft* because of the Achievement and Socialization aspects than they are motivated to play other types of videogames for the Achievement and Socialization aspects.

The last part of the research question was to give gamers an opportunity to qualitatively express their individual motivations for playing either *World of Warcraft* or other videogames. For the group sampled the average age was 19.56 ( $\sigma = 2.07$ ). In the survey, the gamers who had an active subscription to *World of Warcraft* were asked "Why do you play *World of Warcraft*?" After coding and categorizing the responses, participants confirmed the data found above in Figure 3 above that Immersion ( $\mu = 4.18$ ) was the main motivator to play the game followed by Socialization ( $\mu = 3.68$ ) and Achievement ( $\mu = 3.64$ ). When asked "Why do you play *World of Warcraft*?" the responses from the participants indicated that Immersion was the most important motivator, writing "I play *World of Warcraft* because the fantasy setting is highly immersive" (19, Female) and "For the in-depth storylines that I can play with my friends online"

(19, Male). Socialization was next; some participants wrote "to socialize while playing a game" (19, Female) and "I like to be able to group with others and play the game together" (19, Male). Achievement was last with one participant writing, "I like the sense of progression and accomplishment" (20, Male). In the survey, the gamers who did not have an active subscription to *World of Warcraft* were asked "Why do you play videogames?" After categorizing the responses for those who do not play *World of Warcraft*, participants confirmed the data found in Figure 4 above that Immersion ( $\mu = 4.14$ ) was the main motivator to play videogames, followed by Achievement ( $\mu = 2.38$ ) and then Socialization ( $\mu = 2.29$ ). The responses for those who do not play *World of Warcraft* indicated that immersion was the main reason to play videogames, writing "To immerse myself in the game" (25, Male), "For the story lines and entertainment" (19, Male), "To prevent boredom or create a distraction" (19, Female), and "For an escape" (18, Male). Participants ranked Achievement next, writing "I play to get achievements online. I have over 24,000 achievement points on Xbox 360" (19, Male). Socialization was last with participants stating, "I play videogames for the online shooter games with my friends" (19, Male), and "To have something to do with my friends when they come over" (17, Female).

For the supporting questions on the survey such as "Race and Class of Character most played" and "List three other games that you frequently play (whether it be on Xbox 360, PS3, or Wii)" some interesting commonalities occurred. In the data for "Race and Class of Character most played" it was found that out of the 22 responses, 10 of the respondents said the race of the character they most played was a Blood Elf. The rest of the answers consisted of an array of races from both factions. It was also found that 10 of the 22 respondents said that their most

played character was a paladin. In the data for "List three other games that you frequently play (whether it be on Xbox 360, PS3, or Wii)" it was found that many of the answers provided by different individuals contained many of the same answers. Among the answers it was seen that of those who play *World of Warcraft*, many play other games made and produced by Blizzard such as *Diablo I and II*, the *Warcraft* series, and *Starcraft*. It was also noted that many answers contained the *Halo* series, *Battlefield*, and the *Call of Duty* series. These both are significant in that with these answers it can be concluded that those who play *World of Warcraft* also like to play other games that Blizzard made and produced and also like to play games that involve online multiplayer capabilities.

### ***Discussion***

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From the data collected, it can be concluded that those who play *World of Warcraft* choose to play this game over all other games. There are specific qualities to *World of Warcraft* that keep people so engaged and for long periods of time. *World of Warcraft* is a never-ending quest that keeps gamers engaged. Gamers play *World of Warcraft* because it offers an opportunity to get engaged in something to get away from their everyday lives. One subject to the live interviews described their reasons behind playing as the ability "To immerse myself in the game," and another described it as an "escape." Other games can be completed where there are no longer anymore achievements to be completed, and then the game gets boring and is put away. *World of Warcraft* is so successful because of all the opportunities it offers its players. The results showed that the *World of Warcraft* was higher in all the aspects gaming offers compared to other games. *World of Warcraft* had a higher mean in immersion,

achievement, and socialization in comparison to all other games. It is these specific qualities of immersion, achievement, and socialization that keep gamers interested and for extended periods of time.

It was seen when looking at the other games that gamers had interest in that the games had the ability for multiplayer play. It seems that all the most popular games in today's world involve online play. Games such as *Halo*, *Call of Duty*, and *Battlefield* all involve multiplayer opportunities. There was a lot of evidence that gamers who enjoy playing *World of Warcraft* also enjoy playing other Blizzard games such as *Warcraft*, *Starcraft*, and *Diablo*, which all involve the online game-play.

There were also a few limitations to this research study. For the first survey that was posted on mmo-champion.com, the goal of 30 responses from forum posters was not reached. Only 22 responses were acquired. This was very limiting in that we had a smaller population from where data was collected. This small population might have skewed our data or not have clearly represented the whole population of *World of Warcraft*. Also, in the study the data was taken from those who avidly play and comment on *World of Warcraft* forums. This might have misrepresented the *World of Warcraft* population. There might be some *World of Warcraft* players who play less *World of Warcraft* than other videogames. There were also some limitations in the second qualitative survey. The population for those who participated in this survey was limited to those in the proximity of in and around the University of Denver. As found in this study, *World of Warcraft* ranks high in levels of motivation for the elements of immersion, achievement, and socialization, and these are what drives gamers to play *World of Warcraft* and continue to play. However, as stated before in the introduction, the area of

motivators is broad and expanding for *World of Warcraft* and other videogames and there are still answers out there to be researched. The study shown here is only a small part as to why this is the case; there is room for more research to find out more answers as to why the specific qualities of *World of Warcraft* keep gamers so interested.

## Works Cited

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**Appendices**

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**Appendix 1.**

Survey

Gender: Male/Female

Age:

Race and Class of Character most played:

How many hours per week do you spend playing WoW?

What motivates you to play WoW?

- 1= Strongly disinterested
- 2= Disinterested
- 3= Indifferent
- 4= Interested
- 5= Strongly Interested

Achievement: (PvP, Raids)	1	2	3	4	5
Immersion: (Storyline, Lore, Questing, Gaining Levels)	1	2	3	4	5
Socialization: (Making Friends, Guilds)	1	2	3	4	5

List three other games that you frequently play (whether it be on Xbox 360, PS3, or Wii)?

How many hours per week do you spend playing these other consoles or games?

What motivates you to play these other games?

- 1= Strongly Not Interested
- 2= Disinterested
- 3= Indifferent
- 4= Interested
- 5= Strongly Interested

Achievement:	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Achievement Points, Trophies, Rankings)						
Immersion: (Storyline, Level Increase)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Socialization: (Making Friends, Co-op)	0	1	2	3	4	5

**Appendix 2.**

*World of Warcraft* Research Survey

**Gender: Male/Female**

**Age:**

Why do you play *World of Warcraft*?

**If you do not play *World of Warcraft*...**

Why do you play videogames?

**If you do not play videogames...**

Why do you not play videogames?