MMORPGs And Women:

An Investigative Study of the Appeal of Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games

and Female Gamers.

Julia Jones

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Abstract:

More and more women are becoming part of the ever-growing part of the gaming community, yet there hasn't been a great deal of research into the motivations for women to play games. Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games is a genre of video games that have a high percentage of their player base women. This study investigates the motivations of female gamers on playing an MMORPG. In order to understand the motivations of female gamers, data gathered from previous studies and from recent survey were compared against each other. Results showed that women are more motivated by the immersion or established environment of an online world and community, and by socialization, and interacting with people online of the game. However, women still highly rate achievement as a primary motivation indicating while they may prefer immersion and socialization achievement is still an important motivation factor.

Introduction:

In recent years those who enjoy and play various types of video games have created a culture and community that has grown into a massive part of greater society. Today, 67% of American households play videogames with an average age of "gamers" being 39 years old (Entertainment Software Association, 2012). While there has been an increase in growth in the "gamer" community, there still exists controversy over the inclusion and acceptance of women. Although the "gamer" community has a history of a much greater majority of male members, over the years there exists a continual growth and greater increase of the participation of female members of the "gamer" community than there has been ever before. While female gamers have a greater part of the "gamer" community there exists a difference of appeal of female gamers. The Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) genre is a genre of video games that has been regarded as having a high percentage of female players (Moore, 2009). This information prompts a question of "Does the MMORPG genre attract and/or have more participation from more female members of the gaming community and if so why?

Past Studies:

There have been few studies that have focused mainly on women and their motivations and interest in playing MMORPGs, and more often than not including them as a part of the sample population of the study. There has been an increase of videogame players worldwide, where more of these new players are women. According to a study by the ERSB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) over 40% of all gamers are female. Furthermore, in 2012 the ESA (Entertainment Software Association) reported that this percentage of female gamers have increased to 47%, which is almost half of the gamer market. These studies show a remarkable increase of female gamers in recent years and indicate a still increasing percentage of the

demographic. The populations of female gamers of the MMORPG genre is similar to the previous percentages due to study a by the BBC in 2008, where 40% of all MMORPGs players were female, and indicates that the population had the potential to grow even more (Osbourne, 2008).

Previous studies have focused on the motivations of players for MMORPGs. One such study in particular looked at the, rarely focused on, gender roles of men and women in an online world (Williams et al., 2008). The authors took an opportunity for research in gender roles on MMORPGs studies using gender role theory in online environments such as this study found that female players surprisingly play more hours than male players. It was the women who were the most intense and dedicated ''hardcore'' players, playing more often and with more dedication than the males. Researchers found that male players were more motivated for achievement-oriented purposes and tended to be more aggressive. Women were more motivated to play MMORPG by socialization with other players. For example, the female players who had in game relationships were generally happier and played more than their male counter parts and on average were healthier. Another article looked at 7000 MMORPG players of Everquest 2 to study the types of people who play MMORPGs (Williams et al., 2009). The article looked at all the demographics of MMORPGs players. In the article motivations for female gamers were also used in order to reinforce the article main topic of who plays MMORPG's and why. The related study found that more female gamers played more hours of their game than their respective counter parts. The article also shows that there main categories for determining motivation as achievement, immersion and, socialization. According to the data of this article, males had a higher factor of motivation for achievement goals than the females. However, females had a greater motivation factor for socializing and immersion for playing the MMORPG Ever Quest 2.

Method:

The main focus of this study is to find the motivations for female players in order to better understand the appeal of MMORPGs to women. The investigation used and categorized data from previous studies that have looked for the motivations of players from many backgrounds. The data gathered from the previous studies from this research project recorded the data for the motivations of female players. In addition, information about male motivation was included in order to compare the female player motivation to the male player motivation for MMORPGs. Comparing previous data gained from previous studies with the results of this more recent research method will create more insight to the motivations and appeal of MMORPGs with regards to women. In addition, it will provide the supporting and/or contrasting evidence in relation to the relevance, correlation, and causation of previous data gathered and the data gathered recently.

In order to gain more information and insight about the motivation of female MMORPG players and why the genre appeals to them more data needs to be gained from a relatively large sample size of MMORPG players, preferably from an independent source. This study focuses on data of a survey that was submitted for response of players for the MMORPG game World of Warcraft.

The survey questions were compiled by 45 students in a first-year writing and research course at the a private university in the western United States to address a descriptive research question about the attitudes and practices of World of Warcraft players. The anonymous survey was administered through the Qualtrics application, and a link was posted on select Internet forums and Twitter. The survey was kept active for 1 week and had 653 usable responses

(excluded responses included those who reported under 18 years of age and respondents who did not complete the majority of the questionnaire).

In this survey 67 of the 635 responses indicated that they were female. All the responses that indicated that they were female were then organized together in order to better code the data. There are three main categories for motivations for playing MMORPG: Socializing includes talking and interacting with people online, Achievement includes the competitive and more gameplay oriented goals, and Immersion which includes being invested in the lore and story of the game. There is a miscellaneous category that doesn't cover the three main categories and offer more discussion into the appeal of MMORPGs to female gamers. A random assortment of 67 male players from the survey will act as comparison of their motivations to that of the female motivations.

Results:

In order to investigate purely female and purely male categories all female participants and an equal population of sample responders were separated from the total population of the survey in order to categorize their data more efficiently. The data collected from the survey was first organized based in the questions that the survey asked. This data was organized according to frequency of the answers displayed by both the female population and the male population. The three questions that were used as the basis of the data in the study were: What motivated you to join World of Warcraft, When you play World of Warcraft to what extent do you socializes and What motivates you to continuously play World of Warcraft. Figures 1-4 show that follows shows the frequency of the responses from participants. In order to represent the data from motivations of players a Likert scale was used where "never" was considered a 1 and "all the

time" a 5. Tables 1 and 2 shows the means and standard deviations of this survey and previous

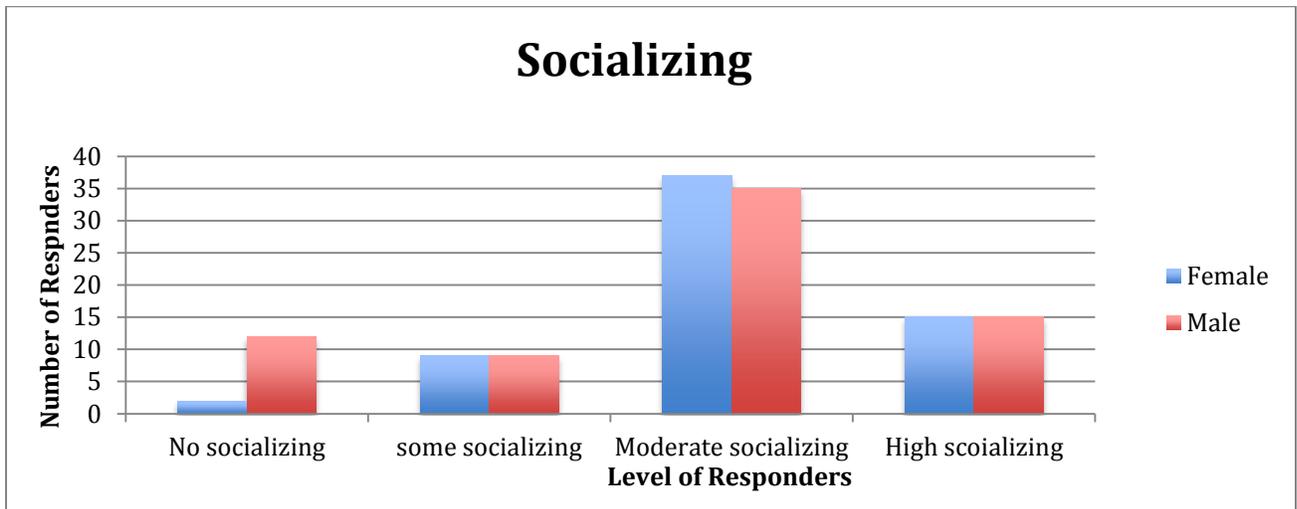research in order to compare and contrast each other.

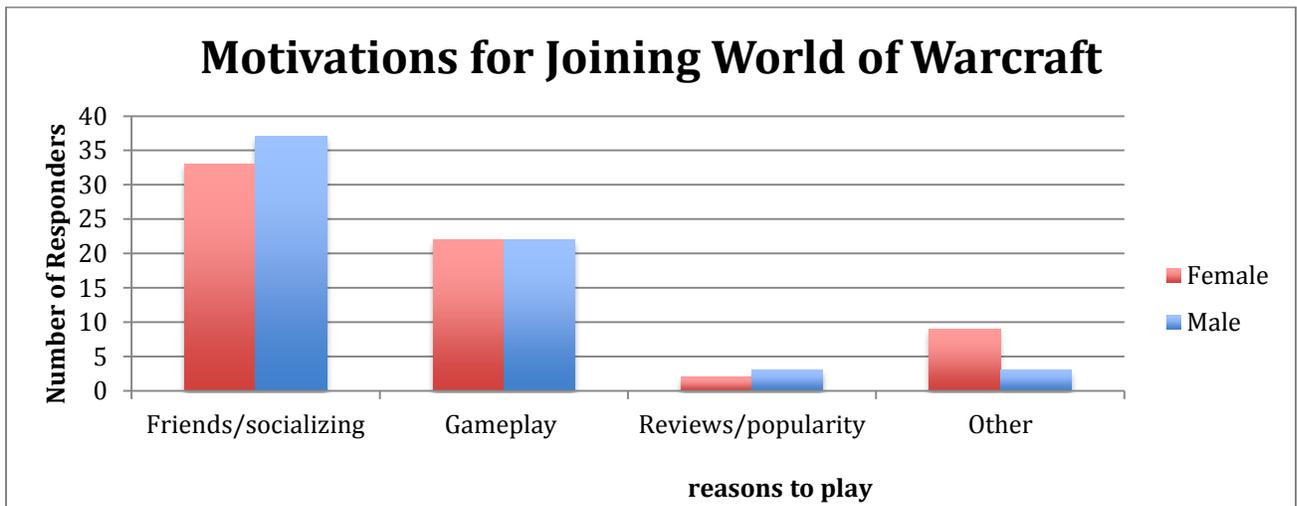**Figure 1 Level of Socialization among Female MMORPG Gamers**
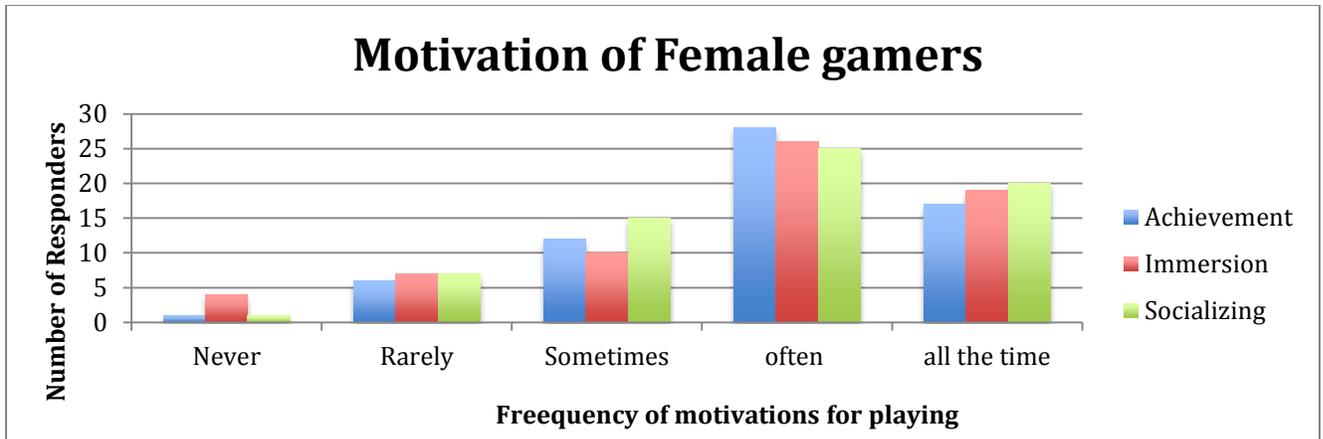

Figure 2 Motivations for joining World of Warcraft
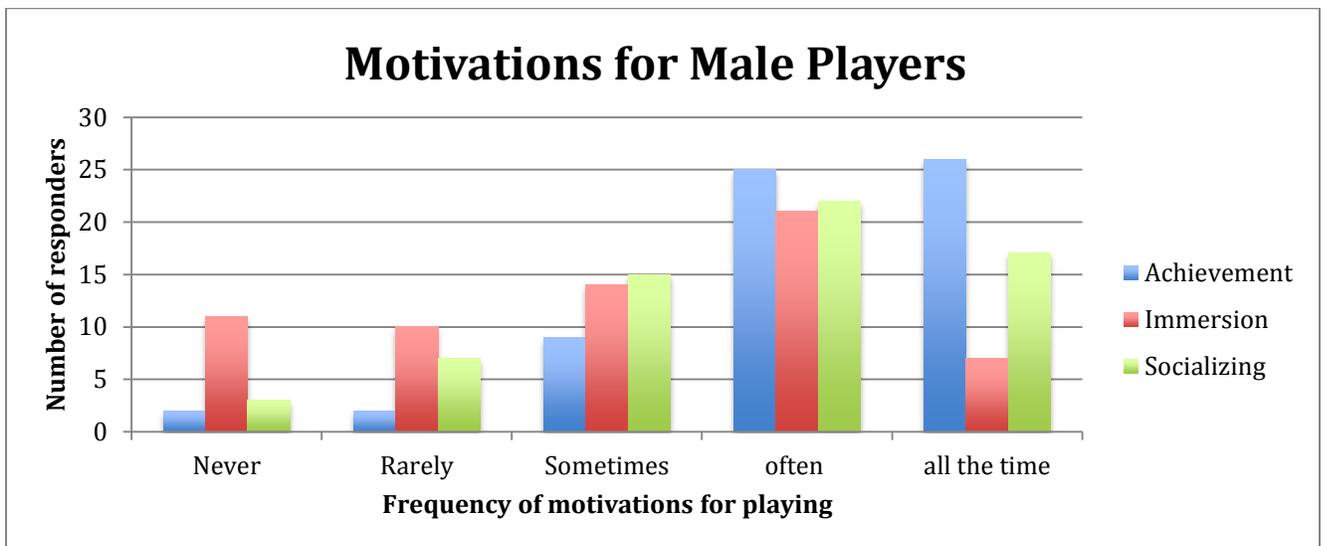
Figure 3 Motivations for Female Gamers

Figure 4 Motivations for Male Players

Table 1 Means and SD of Motivation by Gender (Survey)

Means and Standard Deviation of Motivation Factors by Gender from the Survey				
	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Achievement	4.11	0.98	3.81	0.97
Immersion	3.03	1.28	3.70	1.16
Socializing	3.67	1.13	3.82	1.03

Table 2 Means and SD of Motivation by Gender (Williams, et.al. 2009)

Means and Standard Deviation of Motivation Factors by Gender from "Debunking" by Williams				
	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Achievement	3.5	0.88	3.17	0.91
Immersion	3.14	0.94	3.22	0.98
Socializing	3.29	0.87	3.38	0.86

According to Figure 1 that details the importance of socializing from both male and female players are very similar with both genders regarding socializing equal to each other in the some socializing and all the time socializing section. However, women are less likely than men to never engage in socializing than men and are more likely to engage in moderately socializing than men. In Figure 2 the data indicates less women have joined the game due to friends and socialization than men. The data from Figure 3 and 4 were combined and then coded to show the means and standard deviations of the data. According to Table 1 Female players value all their motivation categories highly and with very close average. For females, Socialization is the highest motivating factor at 3.82, with Achievement a very close second at 3.81 and Immersion last at 3.70. Men on the other hand have a more stratified ranking of their motivation factors with Achievement being very highly ranked at 4.10 with socializing at 3.67 and immersion last. The immersion category for both parties possesses highest standard deviation. In Table 2 the mean and standard deviation values from the article of Williams et al. 2008 in order to compare the data from the recent study and this previous study. In contrast to the recent study, the participants of the article respond to their motivation factors less highly. However, the achievement factor ranked higher with male players than female players and female players having socialization be their highest motivation factor. In the Williams et al. 2008 article, female players rated socialization and immersion as greater motivating factors than achievement oriented motivators.

Discussion:

The data contained within the survey used questions that were relegated to the motivations of both female and male players in order to have comparable data from text based resources and to answer   and to reinforce and answer to the appeal of MMORPGs to women. The data from the graphs indicate that both male and female levels of socialization are very similar. For example, in Tables 1 and 2 detailing the motivations for MMORPG players it is shown that male players rate gameplay as a high motivating factor with a 3.5 in the Williams et al. 2008 data and a 4.10 form the survey data. However, females seem to have a slightly larger frequency for moderate socializing and sample players have a higher frequency for no socializing while playing. The motivations for joining World of Warcraft contain similar results as both have a very similar frequency of number of responders to each category. However, more female players has reasons labeled as "Other" for joining the game which may not be able onto be classified in the three main categories of achievement, immersion, and socialization. An example of a reason of the "Other" category is a majority of the responses indicated a past knowledge with Blizzard games or was in a relationship with someone who already played World of Warcraft. In comparison to the motivations of Playing World of Warcraft data between male and females were fairly similar. However, males seemed to believe that immersion was important to them than female players and achievement was somewhat higher to a motivation than with female players. Also, while female players have a similar motivation as male players they rank immersion and socialization consistently high with achievement if not greater. In relation to the previous sources the survey data collected supports the past studies of appeal and motivation of female players. While in this study achievement motivations were higher rated than immersion by female players the motivation by immersion is still rated highly and more frequently than male players. The large standard deviation factor of the immersion category may

suggest that immersion has the potential to be rated higher than achievement with a larger sample size. Women find socializing and being a part of a community more appealing then purely achievement-based forms of motivation. However, that is not to say that female gamers are not disinterested in achievement motivations as they still scored relatively high as achievement being a motivational factor. It is also noteworthy that women had a greater frequency of responses to the "Other" category in joining World of Warcraft. It seems that women are more willing to join the game by being more familiar with the material first. More women joined World of Warcraft if they played Blizzard games beforehand or was in a relationship with someone that is more familiar with these games. This may indicate that women find games more appealing if they are exposed to the world more and have more experience interacting with the world. Also, since immersion of playing the game is a bigger factor in women than men that may indicate that women like being a part of an established setting and community and thus prefer to have experience in that community. Also, being a part of an established community is appealing for female gamers who prefer the socializing as a main motivation.

Limitations and Possible Future Work:

There exist many limitations for this project that may be addressed in future work or continuing study of this issue. First, time was a limiting factor of this study. With more time this study could become more developed and create its own survey to collect data from the populace. By having more time for the study it not only allows for data that is more recent and specifically designed for this experiment but also allows for the potential for a larger and therefore more diverse sample size for the study to more accurately the motivations for female gamers. While, this survey was helpful in answering the research question creating a new survey specifically on

this topic could be more helpful in identifying exact details of interest for the categories of

achievement, socialization and immersion. The survey used can be considered a limitation as the

data this study is and the questions from the survey is not designed entirely for this research

project but for wide variety of topics for MMORPG players. By creating an additional survey

specifically designed for the motivation of female gamers and having a more detailed depiction

of each responders life could potentially reveal more motivations of female gamers in deciding

what they play. In addition, in order to understand and gather more from users in-depth

interviews could help in finding motivation on a personal level. Also, the survey had about 67

responses out of 635 that identified themselves as female. The percentage of female players in

the previous study range around 19% and the survey used in the report is about 12% showing a

difference of female participation percentages but not a huge impact on the results. However, this

population difference can be considered a limitation as the percentage of female MMORPG

players is considered 40% and thus this sample group does not accurately portray the

demographic of gender of MMORPG players and thus the study may be skewed. However, this

could be lead into another study of female gamers that play MMORPGs frequency of

participation in online surveys or the online community. A limitation of the project is

comparison from the survey data to the data of the different articles used. For example, the data

from the article by Williams et al, 2008 included related results tied to achievement, socialization

and immersion. However, the information presented was tied into information incomparable to

data from the survey and other article. Therefore, without the raw data from the article it is hard

to create comparable data for this project.

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