

Dueling Habits in World of Warcraft

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Introduction

Massive multiplayer online role playing games have become increasingly popular as the Internet has evolved. Games such as *League of Legends* and *World of Warcraft* have captured players' attentions globally. Players of *World of Warcraft* commonly refer to the game as WoW. The game, developed in 2004 by Blizzard, has amassed, at one time, 12 million subscribers (Molina, 2010). The highest grossing video game of all time, *World of Warcraft* also holds the Guinness World Record for most MMORPG subscribers (Langford, 2009). This massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) provides a realm where players can create an avatar for activities ranging from social encounters to in-game warfare. The online world is designed as a stage for players to interact with others and the environment. There are many different game types, which differ depending on the type of gamer one is. Player vs Player (PvP) game type is the focal point of this study, and involves a certain type of culture that has been growing since the game was created.

According to Nick Yee (2006), players play WoW for four general reasons: to socialize, be apart of a community, to attract to other characters, and to complete achievements. A player is free to do whatever they please in *World of Warcraft*. The only limitations become prevalent with level of the player and what the game will allow. Numerous players (41%) have reported that the best part about the game is social interactions (Griffiths et al.,2003). Players continuously game to unite with guilds, complete dungeons, or finish quests. While dueling is not a major part of the game, it is still a unique way to socially interact in the game, and becomes an important element to study.

Dueling allows two players to battle with no devastating consequences. The ways to duel are simple. Right clicking on a character or being in range of one and writing “/duel” in the message box will send a flag crashing to the ground to establish a fighting zone. However, the fight will not initiate until the challenged player accepts the duel. From then on, the player can forfeit by leaving the dueling zone or by being lowered to one hit point (the measure of one’s health in the game). These duels are meant purely for pleasure and the excitement of being the strongest player around. A player’s character does not sacrifice any personal belongings or XP (a measure of one’s progress in the game).

Because little formal study has been conducted on dueling in WoW, we began reading through the official *World of Warcraft* forums to determine motivations and attitudes. Our analysis revealed two noteworthy responses that captured most player attitudes about dueling. The first of the four collected responses was from a level 100 Gnome Mage, Findakin, who said “Personally I found them [duel challenges] to be annoying when I first started about a year ago. If you want to play PvP, then by all means go ahead and duel. If, like me, you prefer to play the PvE game, just ignore them. And make sure you have PvP turned off.” Players like Findakin found dueling to be bothersome and distracting. The consensus amongst players is that dueling is generally annoying, even though it had no net effect on the game. Rafella, a level 90 Night Elf Hunter agreed saying,

There's no reason that you shouldn't duel other players if you want to, your quests will still be there for you. Of course there's nothing wrong with declining duel requests. But I know from experience that when you are trying to focus on doing one thing, having duel requests constantly pop up can be a little irritating. It seems there are a couple of

unofficial hot-zones for dueling: Golshire on the Alliance side, and just in front of the Orgrimmar south gate on the Horde side. I don't know when I've passed through Goldshire without having a duel request pop up.

In her response, Rafella talks about dueling hot-zones and her opinion how dueling can eventually become annoying. All in all, the public seemed to agree with the fact that dueling, over time, can become frustrating.

Since dueling is a PvP activity in the game, there are several unwritten rules or a type of etiquette (WoW Wiki). Actions such as talking smack before a duel, healing during a duel, or being a bad sport are considered bad dueling etiquette (Poisso, 2010). Players have a choice to have a fair and justifiably earned duel or they can use tricks and potions to help them win a battle they would lose. Along with using potions, it is frowned upon to ask someone to duel repeatedly even after they have declined (Poisso, 2010). These rules are merely established ways players should conduct their battles. Our study's intention was to investigate said etiquette as well as the various factors which affected acceptance rates.



Figure 1: A Proposed Duel in *World of Warcraft*

Method

For our research study, we wanted to see player's habits with dueling. The basis of our research lies in our observational study on players across the Dragonmaw realm, a PvP realm in North America. Furthermore, we surveyed players to better understand the general public's take on dueling etiquette. While our data is primarily quantitative in nature, although we did take qualitative notes on each observation while challenging players to a duel, especially on dueling etiquette.

Observational Study

Our observational data was taken after prompting characters to duel. After the challenge, we recorded as many observations as possible, especially on their etiquette. Specifically, we recorded each of the opposing character's level, race, class, gender and current region. We chose to look in variety of regions to reduce lurking variables of region. Each region tends to have different leveled characters, so choosing just one would have added significant bias to our results. Specifically, we challenged 20 different characters to duel from 5 various regions of the game (N=100). These regions were Durotar, Mulgore, Dark Shore, Northern Barrens, and Teldrassil. Our results held both quantitative data, as well as qualitative data in form of our own observations on a case-by-case basis. The characters we used were a level 12 Night Elf Monk named Torgon, and a level 12 Tauren Hunter named Hormouth.

Survey

The survey questions were compiled by 15 students in a first-year writing and research course at the University of Denver that addresses descriptive research questions 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 53 usable responses (excluded responses included those who reported under 18 years of age and respondents who did not complete the majority of the questionnaire).

Results

Observational Study

In total, we challenged 100 players to a duel. We were able to find correlations by class, race, gender, and level. We collected qualitative observations on each challenge, most

importantly taking note of etiquettes. After looking at the 55 challenges accepted, we broke down the various etiquette demonstrated into four categories: poor sport, good sport, cheater, and neutral

Opposing Player Class

From our data, we were able to find only slight correlations by class (see Figure 2). Warlocks, Paladins, Shamans, Monks, Druids and Warriors showed a higher acceptance rate to dueling than the average (M=83%). Shamans had the highest acceptance rate (83%). However, the Shaman class also received a low number of total observations (n=6), so it was not the most substantiated. Along with Shaman, Paladins also had a low number of observed characters (n=3). The data on Warriors was the most substantiated, having the highest number of observations (n=15). Meanwhile, players who played as Priests, Mages, and Rogues had an acceptance rate substantially lower than the average. Priests exhibited the lowest of them all (13%). Across all regions, only one Priest accepted our challenge while seven declined. From Figure 2, the greatest difference in dueling acceptance rates was between the Shaman (80%) and the Priest (13%).

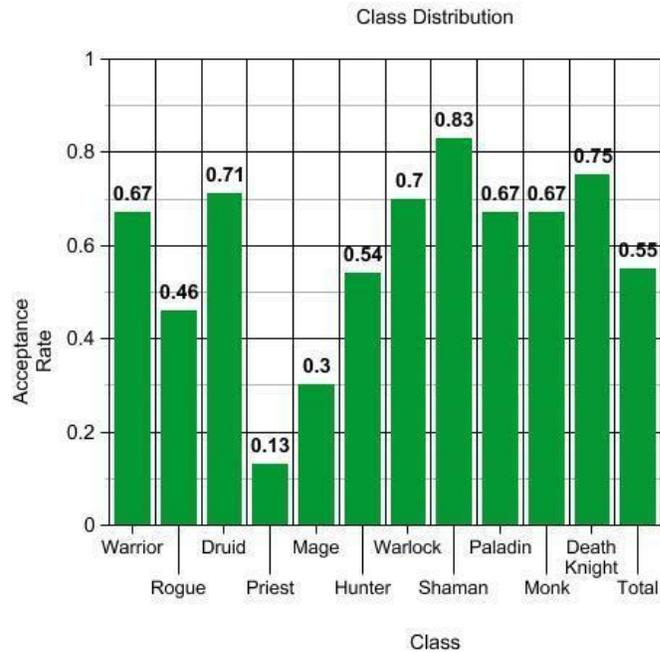


Figure 2: Dueling acceptance rate by class.

Class	N
Warrior	15
Rogue	13
Druid	7
Priest	8
Mage	10
Hunter	13
Warlock	10
Shaman	6
Paladin	3
Monk	6
Death Knight	8
Total	100

Table 1: Quantity of characters challenged by class.

We found a minor correlation between gender and dueling acceptance in World of Warcraft (see Figure 3). The acceptance rate was highest in males (60%). Females, however, fell below the average ($M=55\%$) with a rate of 46%. Also, we observed a higher number of males than we did females. We followed 65 males, as opposed to 35 females. All in all, there

was a correlation with regards to gender, and males certainly accepted duels more frequently.

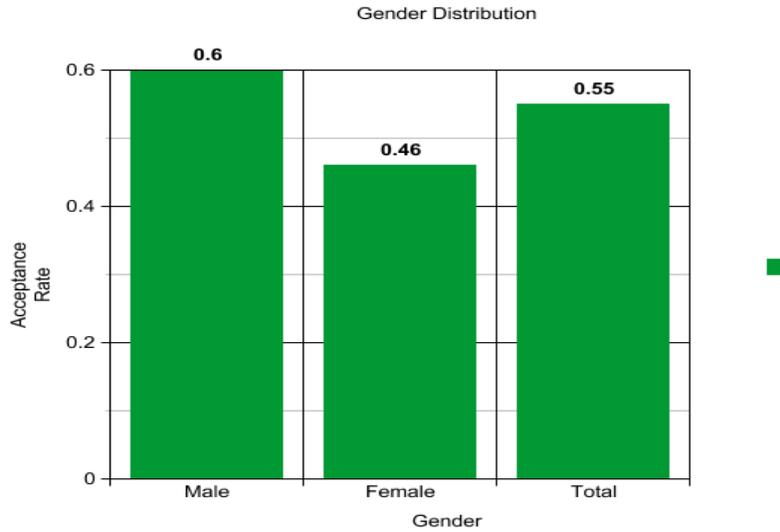


Figure 3: Dueling acceptance rate by gender.

Gender	N
Male	65
Female	35
Total	100

Table 2: Quantity of characters challenged by gender.

Opposing Player Level

As far as player level, we were able to find out a few things from our data. We categorized players compared to our level, 12. Those who we categorized as slight favorites or whose level fell between 13 and 30, accepted our duels the most frequently (60%). Underdogs, or players leveled 10 through 12, were right on par with the average (M=55%) having a rate only slightly greater (56%). Heavy favorites, or those level 31 and over, had the lowest acceptance rate (46%). As far as number of players observed under each category, we found that slight favorite was again the most studied (n=40). Heavy favorites had 16 less players observed

(n=24). All in all, from our data, players who were slight favorites accepted duels most frequently while heavy favorites accepted duels least often (see Figure 4).

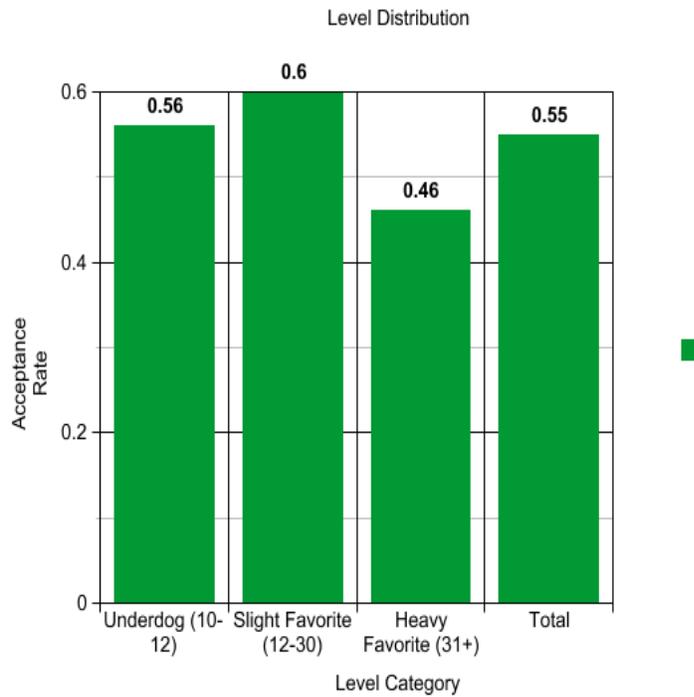


Figure 4: Dueling acceptance rate by level.

Level Category	N
Underdog (10-12)	36
Slight Favorite (13-30)	40
Heavy Favorite (31+)	24
Total	100

Table 3: Quantity of characters challenged by level.

Opposing Player Race

As far as race, we found that a few classes accepted our duel challenges more often. Humans, Dwarves, Worgen, and Blood Elfs all exceed the average (M=55%) by 11 percentage points. Of these character races, Dwarves had the highest rate (83%). Humans were not too far behind Dwarves, with an acceptance rate of 80%. Those who dueled least frequently were Draenei (29%), Trolls (44%), and Orcs (44%); all exceeded the average by 10 percentage points or more. Of these, Draenei accepted the challenge the least frequently (29%). This was a little over half the average, being 26 percentage points lower. The races we followed most often were Tauren and Goblins, with respective number of characters observed at 12 and 11. With our class being Tauren, this is a stat we cannot ignore. All in all, Humans (80%) and Dwarves (83%) accepted duels most frequently by far, whereas Draenei declined duels most often(29%).

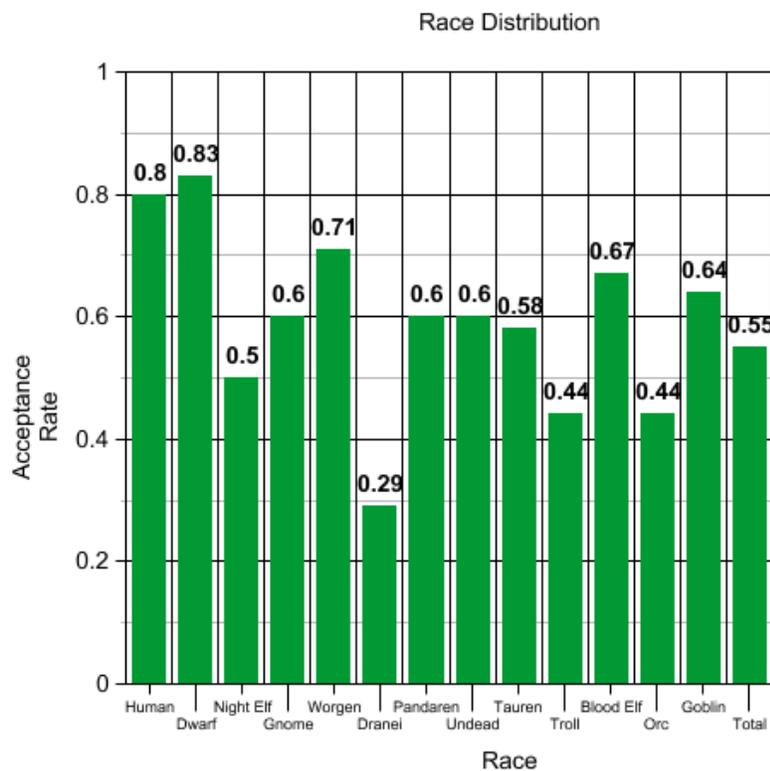


Figure 5: Dueling acceptance rate by race.

Race	N
Human	5
Dwarf	6
Night Elf	8
Gnome	5
Worgen	7
Dranei	7
Pandaren	5
Undead	5
Tauren	12
Troll	9
Blood Elf	9
Orc	9
Goblin	11
Total	100

Table 4: Quantity of characters challenged by race.Etiquette

Our study discovered the breakdown of etiquette amongst 55 WoW players, since 45 percent of players declined our duels. After reviewing our results we created 4 different categories. The first was “good sports.” This group consisted of players who either healed us after the match or showed good sportsmanship. Ways of showing good sportsmanship included bowing after the match, saying nice things over the chat interface such as combat tips, and being courteous. We found that 36% of players were good sports. The next category was “poor sports.” These were players who talked smack via chat interface, danced after dueling, or were plain rude. Our data revealed that 27% of players were poor sports. We also had another, more specific category, cheating. These were players who opted to use healing potions mid-duel. This is often considered amongst the WoW community to be a violation of dueling etiquette (Poisso, 2010). We found that 7% of players used “bad etiquette” mid-duel. Finally, we had a category for players who neither were bad sports or good sports, and we categorized

them as “neutral”. They represented 29% of players. In conclusion, of players, 27% were poor sports, 7% were cheaters, 36% were good sports, and 29% were neutral.

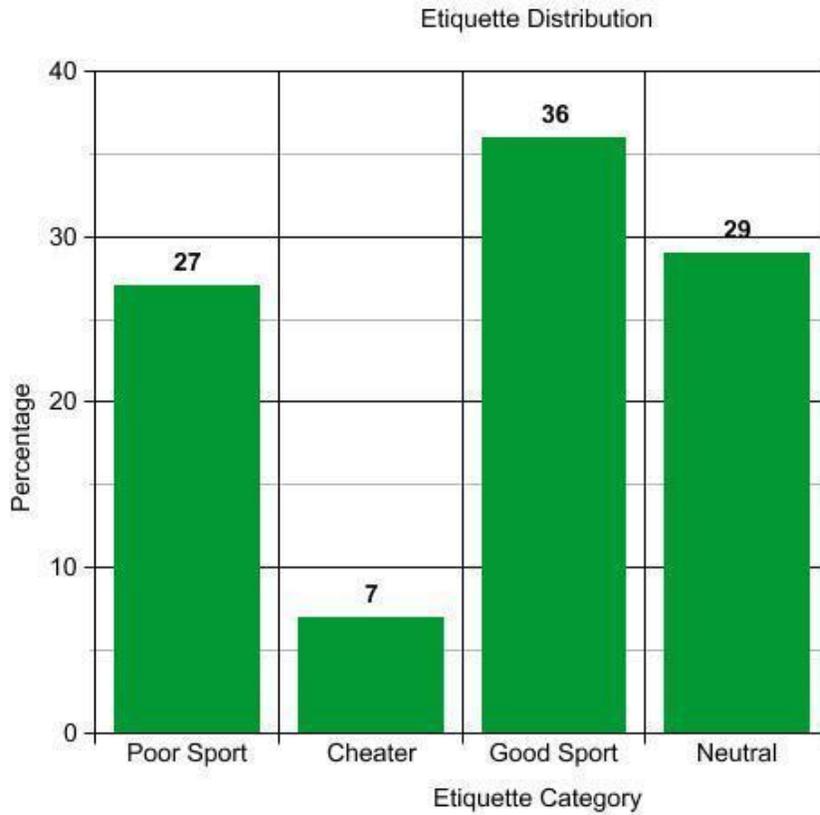


Figure 6: Distribution of etiquette by category in dueling.

Etiquette Category	N
Poor Sport	15
Cheater	4
Good Sport	20
Neutral	26
Total	55

Table 5: Quantity of responses by etiquette category.

We surveyed 100 various players, asking them what they thought the most important part of dueling was. Twenty-nine players responded to this question, 28 being level 100. The one player who was not level 100, was level 33, and responded to this question saying, "never heard of etiquette in dueling." After looking at the other responses, we found players thought good sportsmanship (79%) and not cheating (21%) were the most important pieces of dueling etiquette.

When looking at race, we found no dependable correlations by race and what players thought the most important piece of dueling etiquette is (see Figure 7). The majority of races thought being a good sport was most important (M=79%). We did not receive any responses from characters playing as Undead, Night Elf, and Pandaren. There were a low number of responses for every race besides Blood Elves, who had 8. All in all, the data was not substantiated enough to call any of the trends dependable.

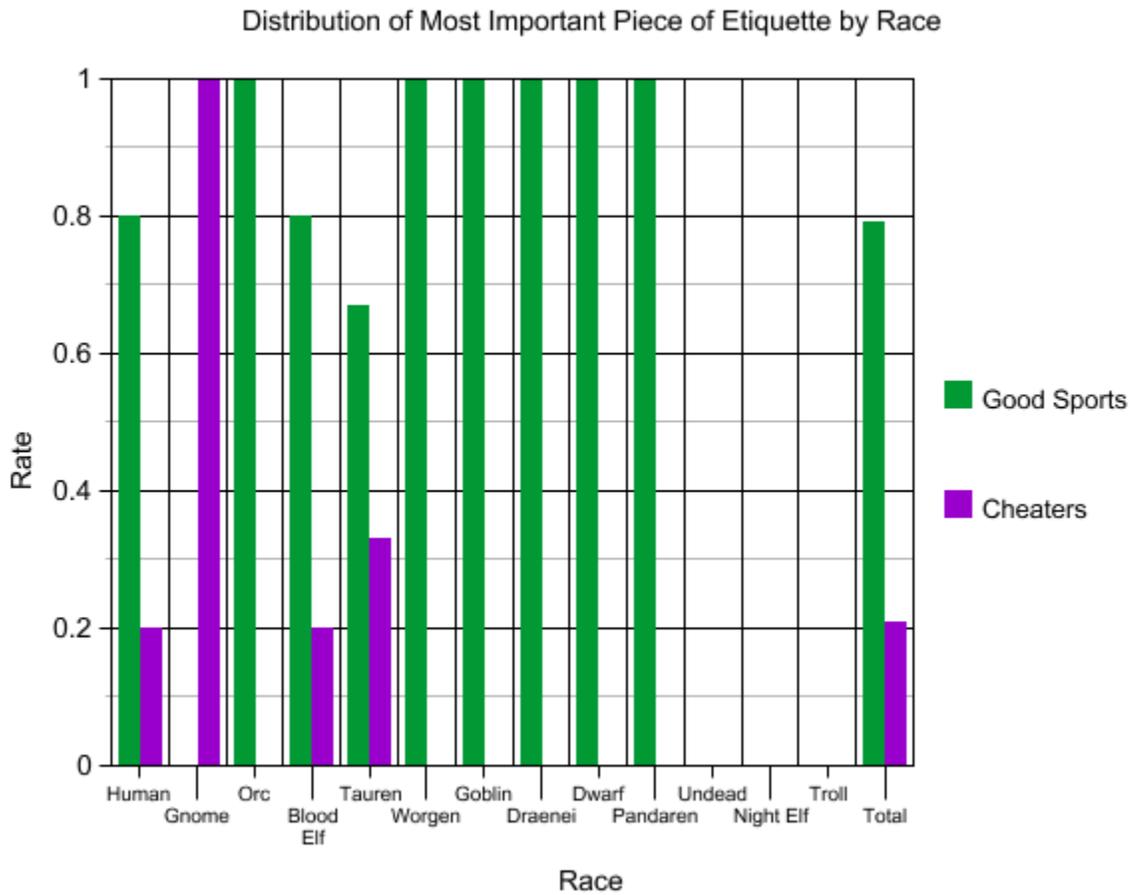


Figure 7: Distribution of most important piece of etiquette by race.

We had similar, unreliable trends as far as class (see Figure 8). The only substantial data was for characters playing Paladins, who had 8 total responses. They thought being a good sport was the important piece of etiquette (M=100%). All in all, there were too many total

classes and too few total responses to make this data reliable.

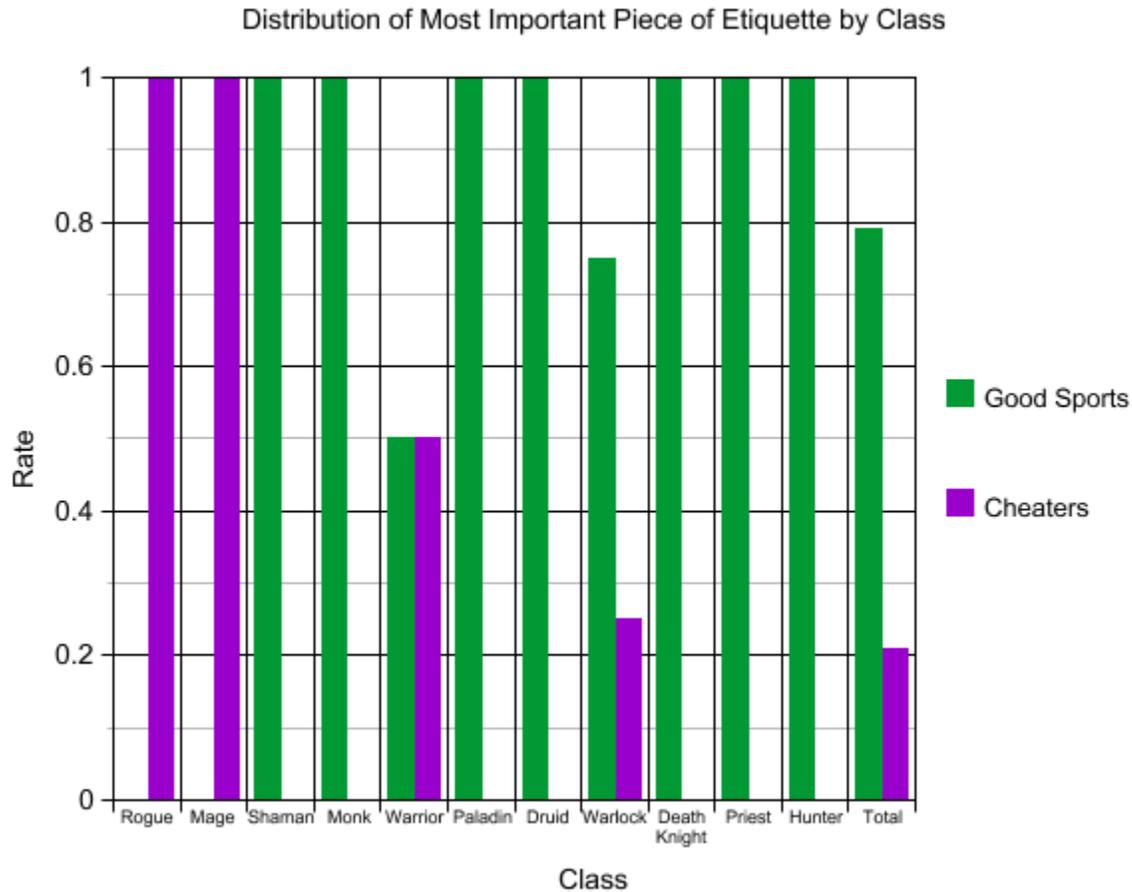


Figure 8: Distribution of most important piece of etiquette by race.

Discussion

Our study, which followed 100 different players from 5 different regions, found some interesting correlations, or lack thereof, on a player's race, class, gender, and level. Gender seemed to play a slight role on dueling. Whether this was attributed to some variable in gender, we do not know. Opposing player level played a similar role with a player's dueling tendencies. We categorized players by their level according to ours. Players level 12 and under were considered underdogs, and had an acceptance rate of 55%. This was very similar to players who

were slight favorites; they had an acceptance rate of 60%. Finally, for those considered heavy favorites or over level 31, we found a rate of 46%. We conclude that this is primarily due to the fact that higher players are more likely to win. For those who were slight favorites they accepted most often, likely because the duel would be challenging but they would still have a good chance of winning. Heavy favorites, though, declined most often, likely because the duel would have no challenge to them at all, or because they were potentially too busy with other game activities. Higher leveled players are probably more dedicated to the quests in the game or to their guild, and have less time to spare for dueling. Higher level players executed better dueling etiquette as well. They healed us much more often than any other level and demonstrated better sportsmanship in the chat log. We conclude this is most likely due to the fact they have more experience with dueling, thus giving them a better understanding of these “unwritten rules”.

We found that race and class both had interesting correlations as well. Characters whose race was Human or Dwarf, and had a class of Shaman were most likely to accept our duels. There were limitations here, however. Shaman also had the second least number of characters observed (n=6), so it is more likely that this stat is not fully representative of this class. Those who played as Dranei and were Priests, were the least likely to accept our dueling request. We have no reason to explain why these classes and races experienced high and low duel acceptance rates, but the correlations were still interesting.

We lastly found a nice understanding of what players’ etiquette is. From our 55 accepted duels, we found out that 27 percent were poor sports, 7 percent were cheaters, 36 percent were good sports, and 29 percent are neutral. We summarize that most players, 65 percent to be exact, play the game using proper etiquette, and do not cause any issues when dueling.

We found no dependable correlations by race and class on what players think the most important piece of dueling etiquette is. We only had a net 28 responses, which was not enough to substantiate correlations on 12 races and 11 classes. We also chose not to look at level, since all but one of responders were level 100 and we did not chose to look at in game gender because it was not available in the survey. All in all, we did find that being a good sport is most important to players (M=79%).

Limitations and Future Research

Throughout the process of collecting data we tried to be as precise among class, race, gender, and level. However, gender and level made it difficult to get even males to females or an even distribution of player levels. Our characters were only level 12, which many consider a “noob,” or someone who is new to the game and is generally a referred to newbie. Our newbie level limited us to dueling mainly with other lower-leveled players. We also experienced limitations with the unbalanced amount of responses on race and class. Some races and classes had very few characters observed, so the data may not have been totally reflective. Paladins, Shaman, and Monks experienced this the most.

A place where we could expand our research is looking at time of day. Time of day is often considered the biggest factor in determining how often serious players are online. We could potentially delve into the acceptance rate and its relationship to this variable. Furthermore, we believe expanding our survey to a greater number of people could help give us more reliable results. All in all, social interactions like dueling are the reasons why players love *World of Warcraft* (Griffiths et al.,2003). They make the game more entertaining and interactive. Our

study built upon this, and found the correlation between a variety of character factors and their respective acceptance rate.

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Brian and Keith,

Much better in a number of different ways. Thanks for removing the stats part. I see a lot of work went into it, but it just wasn't relevant. You do have a lot of sloppy little things here. It needs a good proofreading. I marked many things but not all. You don't have to revise, but I would like to make this a featured project on the website, and to do that, it has to be a mostly error free.

GRADE: B