

AN INVESTIGATION INTO NEGATIVE

VIEWS OF THE MMORPG

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

BY

JACK SCHMITT

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Introduction

The relationship between video games has been researched extensively for many years now. A far-reaching amount of research has gone into the possible negative effects of these games, like obesity or social problems (Wack, E. And S. Tantleff-Dunn). A correlation has even been made to suggest that gameplay can negatively affect the self-esteem of an individual (Colwell J, Payne J 307). But many overlook the research that suggests gameplay may even be beneficial towards the education of children (Griffiths 47). As these topics are debated back and forth, online gaming will continue to grow as technology enhances and the experience becomes more realistic. But a factor that is consistently ignored is the constant negativity shown towards many of these gamers.

Many people assume avid video gamers must be anti-social, reclusive people. World of Warcraft is a great example of a game plagued by stereotypes as the Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game requires extensive amounts of time and effort. A pressing question exists though. Why exactly are so many people prone to the idea that WoW is a completely negative influence on the millions of people who play it? Although there is a sample of people who show a non-substance dependence on video games, (Tejeiro Salguero, R. A. and Morán), the majority of players use video games as more of a hobby. Many of the players who I spoke with in my research feel that they, and the community have received an unfair judgment that is based on stereotypes and generalizations. The question is raised by both the WoW gaming

community and even the non-gaming community as to what these stereotypes are and why they exist. In this exploratory paper, I will use surveys and interviews to investigate the opinions of both sides and determine the reasons and assumptions made that reflect negatively on this gaming community.

Hypothesis

In my research, I found that there was a substantial gap in research regarding opinions of video games that were notorious for excessive gaming like World of Warcraft. Before I had begun playing World of Warcraft, I had a fairly negative opinion of the game. I believed that it was almost socially unacceptable due to its very odd and different role playing type world. Now as a player, this perceived hatred towards the game has much to be researched. The relationship between the two groups of non-players and players seems to be strained at times, but one needs to look deeper to see the true background of this relationship. I believe in my research, I will find that non-players have a negative attitude towards the World of Warcraft community and this is due to incorrect, old stereotypes and a deep misunderstanding of the game.

Methodology

To collect a sufficient amount of results, I used a mixed method approach in my research. This means I collected qualitative data (individual in-depth analysis) as well as quantitative data (numbers and facts). However, I had much more qualitative data in my results. The quantitative aspect is simply to determine the demographics of my

population. I focused much more on the individual responses to gain a large number of unique opinions on the subject. I used a simple Question and Answer methodology to create a survey and several forum posts in World of Warcraft communities. Once these methods gained a sufficient amount of responses, I took the data and analyzed it. It all helped in making general observations about my research question and hypothesis. On top of this qualitative research, I included more quantitative data to create fact based observations about my population and their responses.

Population

In this research, there were two main audiences that I was focusing on. These were the WoW players and non-WoW players. It was essential that I saw both sides to make connections and observations. The survey I created had several questions that focused on the non-WoW players and their specific views on the game. To obtain raw data from the WoW community, I posted a candid question on the General WoW forum that incited numerous responses detailing important aspects of my research. These responses came from dozens of different people who had different experiences and were of numerous demographics. I received responses from older players, brand new players, men and women alike, and very experienced players. The survey collected data from a very different group of people. I sent this survey to mostly young people, whom many of were non-gamers and some knew very little about the gameplay of WoW.

Forum Posts

To gain data from the WoW community, I posted to the General Discussion forum on the official website of World of Warcraft. My post not only asked questions,

but it also had aspects to incite conversation and draw in opinions that I usually would not see in a simple survey. But to obtain this sensitive data, I had to make my post appear non-academic and rather from the viewpoint of a regular player. This allowed me to see more honest and sincere posts rather than seeing users overthink their responses. This environment turned out to create a fun and easy conversation that produced over 40 responses as of this writing. Some of the responses turned into ongoing jokes, but I also found nearly 20 useful responses to my post, and also to other responses. I did not gain any age or sex from these players, but from their level of writing, I could tell that most all of them were very intelligent. They were all very experienced as well. Not one respondent was below level 65.

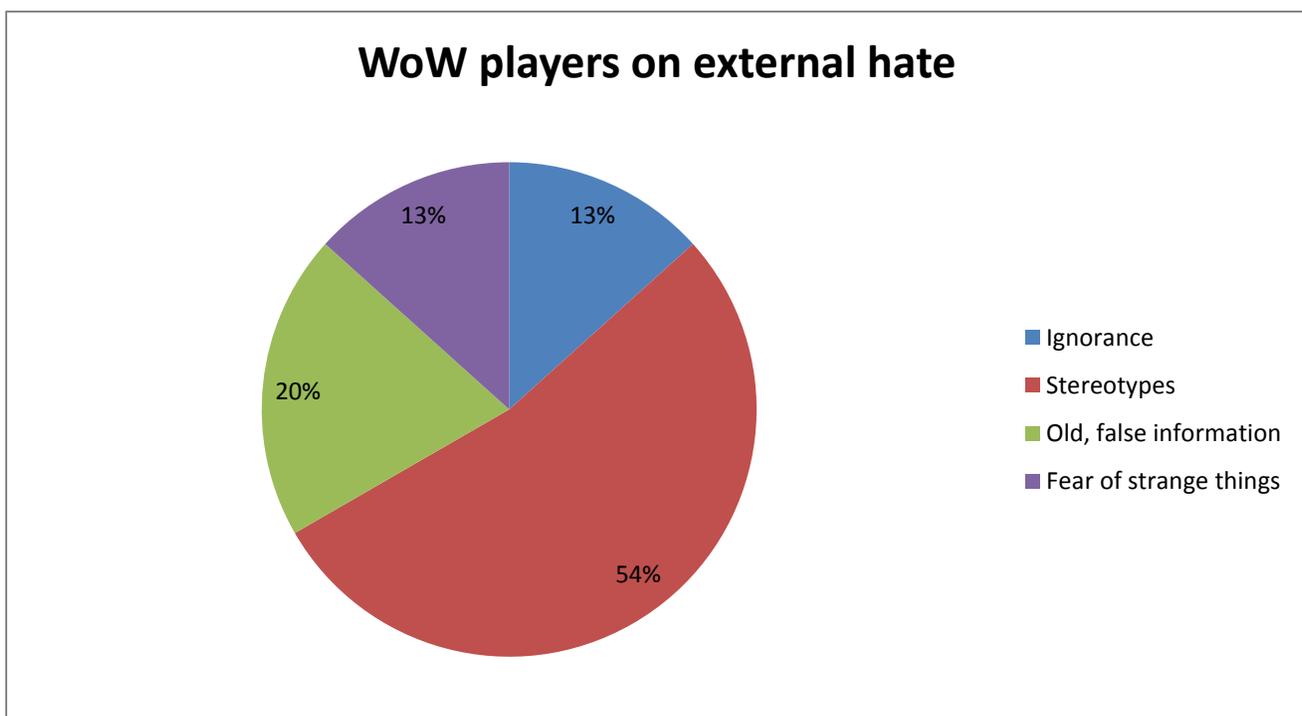
Survey

The short survey created on www.Surveymonkey.com was made to collect data from the non-WoW gamers I was focusing on. And since there is no general forum to get opinions on this, I created this survey and distributed it to a diverse group of friends and family, almost all of which have never played WoW. At the time of writing this, I had received 17 completed surveys. While this survey does have some quantitative questions to determine demographics, the majority of it contains qualitative data. This includes two Yes or No questions asking the history of the respondent's gameplay. Then three more questions regarding the person's personal views on WoW and WoW players.

Results

Throughout these surveys and questions, it has become apparent that my hypothesis was indeed correct. Sifting through the forum posts and the results of the survey, a clear pattern has been shown. In analyzing my results, most non-WoW players have negative feelings towards the game and its players. I have also determined that this fact is due to multiple stereotypes and severe misunderstandings of World of Warcraft. Not only do non-WoW people dislike the game but they also have negative feelings towards the participants of the game.

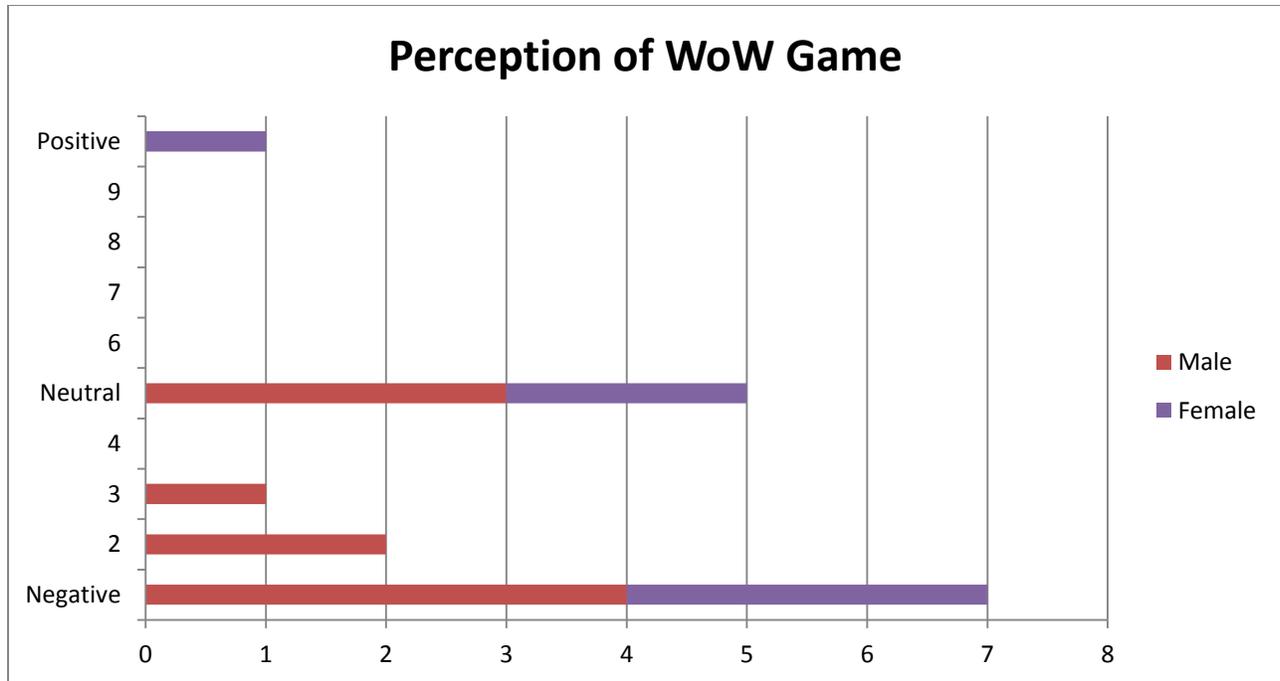
This first graph is showing the data I collected when I asked the WoW forums to comment on this research. It should be noted that each of the players that responded happened to be very experienced in WoW. All were at level 65 or above.



These are the opinions of WoW players on why they believe non-players show so much negativity and hate towards WoW and WoW players. Out of 15 discernible responses, 8 players had noted from personal experience, that non-players had generalized ideas about the WoW community. One player explained that many non-players thought all WoW users were nerdy, socially awkward, and obese. The user *Xanith* sarcastically stated that all players are viewed negatively “Because everyone who plays this game is a fat, sweaty, greasy, 40 year old nerd who lives in his mom's basement, eats hot pockets, drinks soda and has a monitor tan. *No exceptions.*”

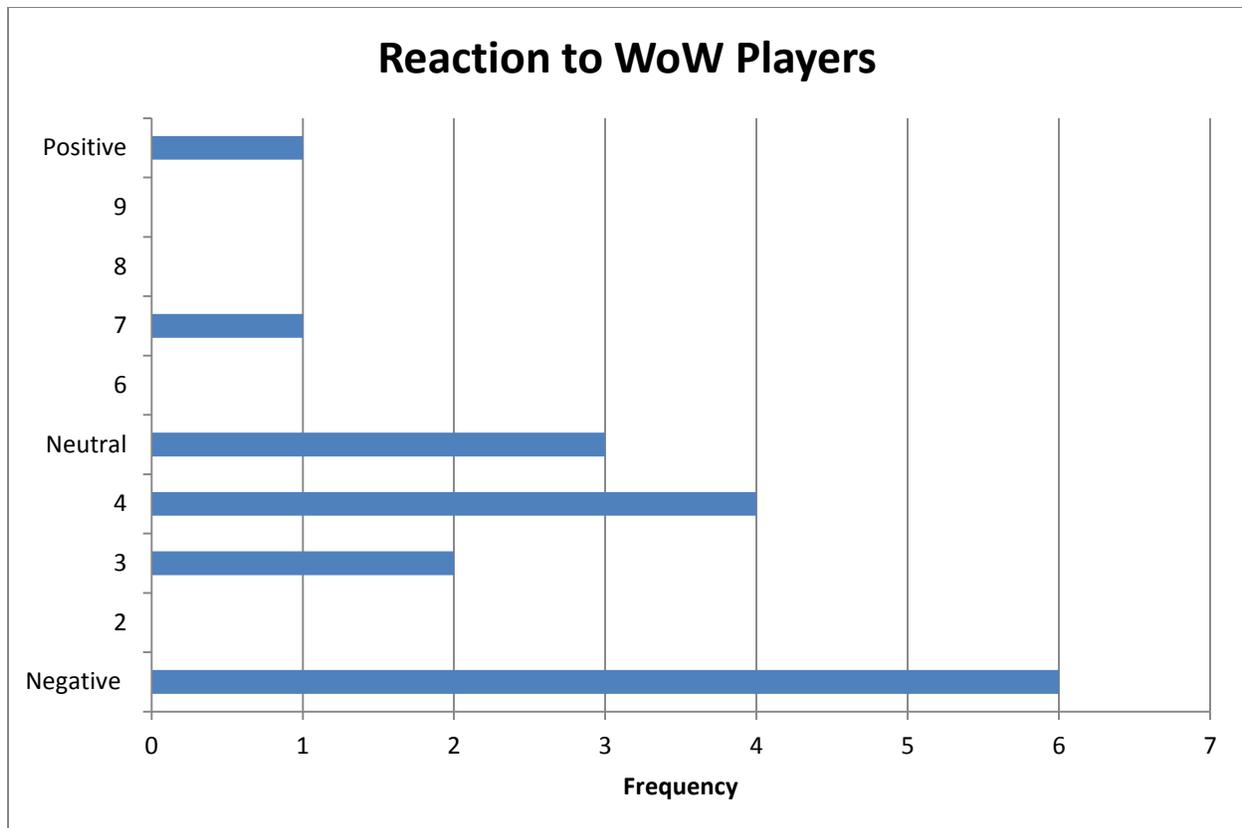
Other than this statistical data, the responses were very passionate and well thought out. Respondents went more into depth on the roots of these stereotypes that come from media and entertainment mostly. However, while recognizing that these falsehoods exist, the majority of the community clearly stated that they did not pay attention to the hate. Many stated that they knew the information was false, thus they paid no attention to it.

The next set of data comes from the survey given to mostly non-WoW players. This first bar chart shows non-gamers perception of World of Warcraft. Whether this be positive or negative, the surveyed population had 10 options to choose from on a 1-10 scale.



This chart is noticeably leaning towards the more negative side while only one person chose a positive perception of the game. It is important to note that while many people still chose the neutral option, 10 of the 16 who answered the question view WoW in a negative sense. In this sample population, WoW is viewed, by the majority, in a very negative way.

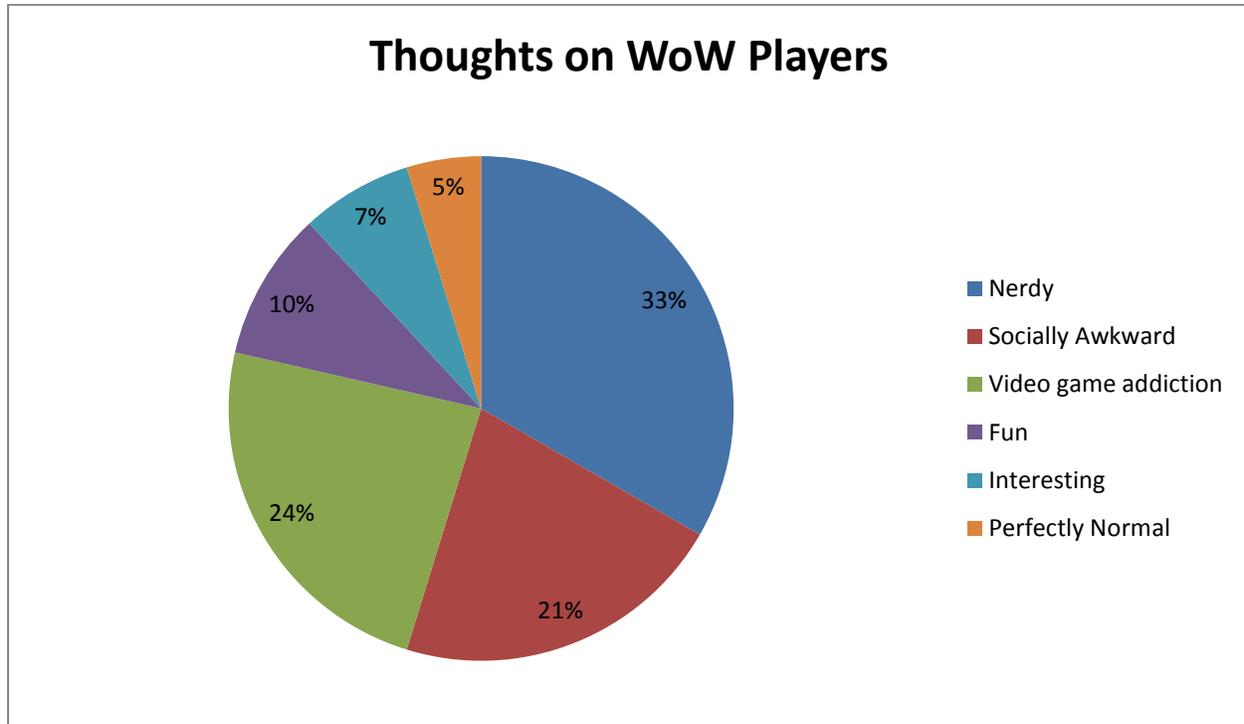
The next chart goes deeper into the feelings of non-gamers. WoW is just a game, and it is not hard for a person to simply hate a game. But when speaking of real people, the hatred must be more profound. This question asked the respondents if the knowledge that a person plays WoW affects their feelings towards them. The full question was, “How do you react when someone says that they play World of Warcraft?”



Once again, the graph is leaning considerably towards the negative side. One thing to note is that there are fewer responses in the most extreme negative answer. However, in total, there are more negative responses in this graph than the last one. Of the 17 who answered this question, 12 answered below the neutral reaction. It appears that in this sample population, people dislike the players of WoW more than the game itself. While these charts may be helpful, they only answer the question whether or not these subjects are hated.

This last pie chart shows the responses to the last multiple choice questions in the survey of mostly non-WoW players. It asked the respondents to check each thing that came to mind when they thought of WoW player. Three of the answers were

positive, three were negative and there was an open ended option for any other response although no person chose that.



As shown on the graph, over 78% of the boxes chosen were negative thoughts. That amounts to 33 out of the 42 responses from 17 respondents. To obtain these categories, I simply went to the forum posts and found some of the things that players thought were being stereotyped about them and the game. On an even more interesting note, the "Perfectly Normal" answer was answered less than "Interesting" and "Fun". It appears that although they dislike this unorthodox game, they still believe that a person can participate in an activity that is fun and interesting even though it is not normal.

Discussion

I have found that my hypothesis was correct in stating that non WoW users dislike the game and its players due to misunderstandings and stereotypes. Although it has been known by many that the game of World of Warcraft has been looked upon negatively since its inception, I wanted to try to answer the question why exactly. I had my own views of the game before I began playing, but I was interested in the views of a larger group. Of course, an essential aspect of this research was to ask those were being hated on. The forums gave me a large amount of data of which they thought were reasons why so many hated them. It turns out that most all of their reasons coincided with the non-gamers. However, the players described in detail why all of these reasons are pure generalizations and are, for the most part, untrue.

In determining my hypothesis of whether non-gamers use stereotypes to view WoW, my research and survey helped immensely. I believe the appropriate questions were used in the survey. However, an open-ended question asking the respondents where they got their views of WoW would have been more helpful. Also, an open ended question asking respondents which specific details and characteristics of the game may have led to more information. Further research may include questions about the role-playing aspect of the game or the mythical world. These factors may affect the opinion of non-gamers whether it be for the positive or negative.

Overall I discovered that many people tend to make generalizations about complicated subjects that they know nothing about. This leads to stereotypes which tend to spread quickly and prevent people from discovering things that they may enjoy. For the large majority, all of these stereotypes associated with World of Warcraft are

wrong. And if some of these non-gamers merely tried the free trial available through WoW, I believe they would realize their misconceptions very quickly.

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