

World of Warcraft - The Relationship Between Achievements and Motivation
Does a Player's Achievements Reveal Their True Motivations for Playing?

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Abstract

Examining the relationship between what a player said their motivation for playing World of Warcraft is and their achievement completion rate can shed light on whether or not what they said was accurate. Looking at this relationship can reveal what a player's true motivation for playing the game is, as well as their favorite aspects of World of Warcraft. By looking through a survey on a player's motivation for playing and collected data about what percentage of achievements were completed by the average level 100 player, gives the ability to see if they accurately match up. The analysis revealed that they indeed do match up, and that what players say their motivation for playing is is accurately represented in their achievement completion rate.

Introduction

The extremely popular video game World of Warcraft, created by Blizzard in 2004, is well known by both gamers and non-gamers alike. Its influence has spread into several other video games, including games not in the MMORPG genre, as well as influencing real life. The implications that World of Warcraft has in the real world is exactly why there have been so many different kinds of research and papers about the game. Whether it's about how players become so motivated to play the game [1, 2], or how different parts of the game attract different kinds of people [3], there is much to explore when it comes to motivation for playing this fascinating video game.

One specific aspect of the game that could use more research attention is the achievements that player can collect, and how these achievements influence both the game and the real world. In a video game, an achievement is a trophy or badge of sorts that is awarded to the player after the complete a specific task. In World of Warcraft, these achievements can vary

from exploring certain areas to collecting a certain amount of items. Each player has their own list of achievements that pertain to their character or account, and each achievement is placed in its own specific category (i.e., exploration achievements are placed under Exploration category, etc.). It's interesting to look at these achievements of each player because it is a type of marker that indicates what a player enjoys doing. For instance, if a character has more Questing achievements than Dungeon achievements, it can be deduced that the player probably spend more time leveling up through quests than going through dungeon runs. Since this concept has potential to show a lot about how and why a person plays World of Warcraft, this paper will be dedicated to researching how a player's achievements might reflect what they enjoy doing in the game, and why they choose to spend their time in the virtual world that is Warcraft.

An example of research on what motivates people to play World of Warcraft is Nick Yee's paper on "Motivations of Play in Online Games", in which he gave out a survey to players of World of Warcraft where they could answer what they enjoy most about the game. His study found out that players are more often than not motivated by advancement, followed by mechanics, then teamwork [1, 2]. Similarly, Graham et Al.'s research of "Personality Profiles Associated with Different Motivations for Playing World of Warcraft" looked at what kinds of people play the game in different ways, reaching out to more than just demographics, but also personality types. His study showed that there were several different motivations correlating with the type of person the player was, such as how extraverted players focus on the social aspects, and how agreeable players focus on the immersive aspects [3]. Therein lies the research gap, however, as these studies look at general motivations based on a survey response and not actual player data. The achievement scores that each character has is an indication of the type of motivation that players have. By comparing the data they collected and comparing it to in-game

achievement completion ratios, some correlations may arise. While achievements cannot be a perfect representation of what a player enjoy doing, it does shed light on the topic and allows for easier research in the future.

Methods

In order to figure out an accurate way to compare achievement completion percentages with what players said their motivations were for playing, I first had to divide the achievements into specific categories. These specific categories would later be compared to survey answers from a variety of World of Warcraft players. The survey answers were taken from a previous survey taken in 2015, which consists of randomly selected players answering what motivated them to play the game, ranging from 1 (does not motivate at all) to 5 (huge motivator) [4]. The achievement completion percentages are compliments from the World of Wargraphs website, which lists all the achievements in the game and what percentage of a randomly selected group of level 100 players achieved them [5]. The list of achievements on World of Wargraphs was then compared to the list of achievements on Wowhead, a website dedicated to all things World of Warcraft, in order to make sure no achievements were missing from the list [6].

The first thing to do would be to look at the list of achievement available in the game and organize them all into categories for later comparing. Since all the achievements vary wildly in the game, it was important to organize them, or else comparing to motivations later on would be impossible. The categories of the different achievements are: Questing, Professions, Player vs. Player, Instances (dungeons and raids), Garrisons, Pet Battles (only PvP in order to categorize as social), Exploration, and Collecting. It is important to note that there are other kinds of achievements as well, however from the surveys, they had little influence on a player's motivation for playing. Also, only valid achievements were put into each category. I did not

include achievements that were only possible to get if a player's character was of one specific faction (i.e., if there was an achievement for completing a certain amount of quests that were Alliance specific, it was not included). However, if there were any quests that were faction specific but had a mirror achievement for the other faction, the achievement percentages were averaged out and included into the data as one achievement.

With the achievements separated into different categories, I now needed to compare their completion percentages from category to category, as well as compare them to survey answers for motivation. Problems arose, however, when the list of achievements on World of Warcraft was only organized by the completion percentage, instead of having raw data of how many players out of the group (N=2200+) actually did it. So, in order to combat this, I organized all the achievements into different subcategories depending on what percentage of players had completed it. I counted all the valid achievements and put the total number into each respective subcategory, those being 100-80%, 79.9-60%, 59.9-40%, 39.9-20%, and 19.9-0%. For instance, the achievement "5 Daily Quests Complete" has a completion percentage of 99.4% throughout all observed players, so I put it in the 100-80% subcategory of the Quest achievements. I then divided the count of each subcategory by the total for that category in order to create a readable graph. For instance, the Questing category had 211 total achievements, 15 of which were completed by 100-80% of all observed players, so that makes up 7.11% of all achievements.

Now that all the achievements were organized into tables by percentage completion, I had to take the previous survey answers (N=52) as to what motivates people to play the game and average the values. The survey organized the different forms of motivation into Conquest (raiding, PvP), Immersion (questing, story, character development), and Socializing (guilds, friends). In order to compare these categories to the achievement categories, I matched each

achievement category with one of the survey categories, and added the numbers of the achievement categories together. So, under the Conquest category would Player vs. Player and Instances, the Immersion category would be Questing and Professions, and the Socializing category would be Garrisons and Player vs. Player Pet Battles. Similarly to what was done earlier, the three categories were divided into subcategories (100-80%, etc.) and were counted and turned into percentages.

The total amount of all achievements, as well as the percentages that those amounts made up, were then put into tables, and later into graphs. The amount for the achievements that fit into each survey category were also put into a table, as well as the averaged numbers from 1 to 5 that players said motivated them to play the game, and was similarly put into a graph.

Results

Achievement Completion Percentage

By organizing the different kinds of achievements into different categories, it becomes much easier to compare them to one another. To do this, I counted the total number of achievements, and divided them into subcategories based on the percentage of how many players out of the group at gotten them (Table 1). I then got the percentages of how many players out the group had gotten the number of achievements by the total amount of achievements for each category (Table 2). The results of the latter were then placed into a line graph to show the differences between the categories, showing what achievements players favor doing.

It appears that the large majority of achievements are left undone, as most of the achievements were in the 19.9-0% category. This is to be expected, as there are a lot of difficult achievements in the game that cannot be earned without an immense amount of time. However, what's interesting is that the majority of players have completed a large percentage of the

Exploration and Garrison achievements, while forgoing most of the Player vs. Player and Questing achievements. Professions, Instances, and Collecting achievements were somewhere in the middle, and Pet Battles were largely left behind (most likely because players prefer the solo-aspect of Pet Battles as opposed to fighting other players).

The reason as to why Exploration achievements were obtained by so many level 100 players is most likely because there is a much higher chance of just getting them while simply playing the game, as the players are required to go to many different places throughout. However, there are a decent amount of those achievements that require a lot of extra work, as depending on what faction the player is in, it could be much harder to explore certain areas. Garrisons are prevalent as well for similar reasons, as it is most likely that players build their houses, and thus get the achievements, because it will help them more in the long run, as a garrison is very convenient. However, just like the Exploration achievements, there are a decent amount that are rather difficult to get, so some players must have gone the extra mile to get them.

Player vs. Player achievements were possibly ignored because there is not a lot of reward for doing those tasks. For instance, a lot of the achievements are based around dueling people, which does not give much of a reward, if any. Perhaps it can also be said that the average player enjoys the social aspect, but not the competitive aspect, of the game. This would explain why the Garrison category was so highly completed, but the Player vs. Player category was not. Quests, which were also on the lower end, do have decent rewards, but are somewhat time-consuming to complete. Since most of the achievements in the Questing category are based off of completing all the quests in a specific area, it would be difficult for a player with time constraints to complete them all.

There is a noticeable difference between all the different sub-categories, as the graph appears to be increasing as the percentages completed goes down. This is possibly because achievements in World of Warcraft, and most video games, are supposed to be great feats, so they may require a bit of time. It's no surprise that there are so many achievements left behind by players, as most players are probably more inclined to play the game than to get those extra achievements that require a lot of work.

	Total # of Achievements	100-80%	79.9-60%	59.9-40%	39.9-20%	19.9-0%
Questing	211	15	19	31	61	85
Professions	231	28	28	17	66	92
PvP	245	19	22	39	52	113
Instances	864	112	247	178	145	182
Garrisons	123	23	16	26	21	37
Pet Battles	10	0	0	0	0	10
Exploration	131	32	37	28	16	18
Collecting	34	6	4	6	5	13

Table 1: Number of achievements completed, separated by percentage.

Note: Percentage comes from what percentage of players (N=2200+) got the achievement.

	Total # of Achievements	100-80%	79.9-60%	59.9-40%	39.9-20%	19.9-0%
Questing	211	7.11%	9.01%	14.69%	28.91%	40.28%
Professions	231	12.12%	12.12%	7.36%	28.57%	39.83%
PvP	245	7.76%	8.98%	15.92%	21.22%	46.12%
Instances	864	12.96%	28.59%	20.60%	16.79%	21.06%
Garrisons	123	18.71%	13.00%	21.14%	17.07%	30.08%
Pet Battles	10	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Exploration	131	24.43%	28.24%	21.38%	12.21%	13.74%
Collecting	34	17.65%	11.76%	17.65%	14.71%	38.24%

Table 2: Percentage of achievements for each category

Note: Data comes from dividing the number of achievements in each category from the total.

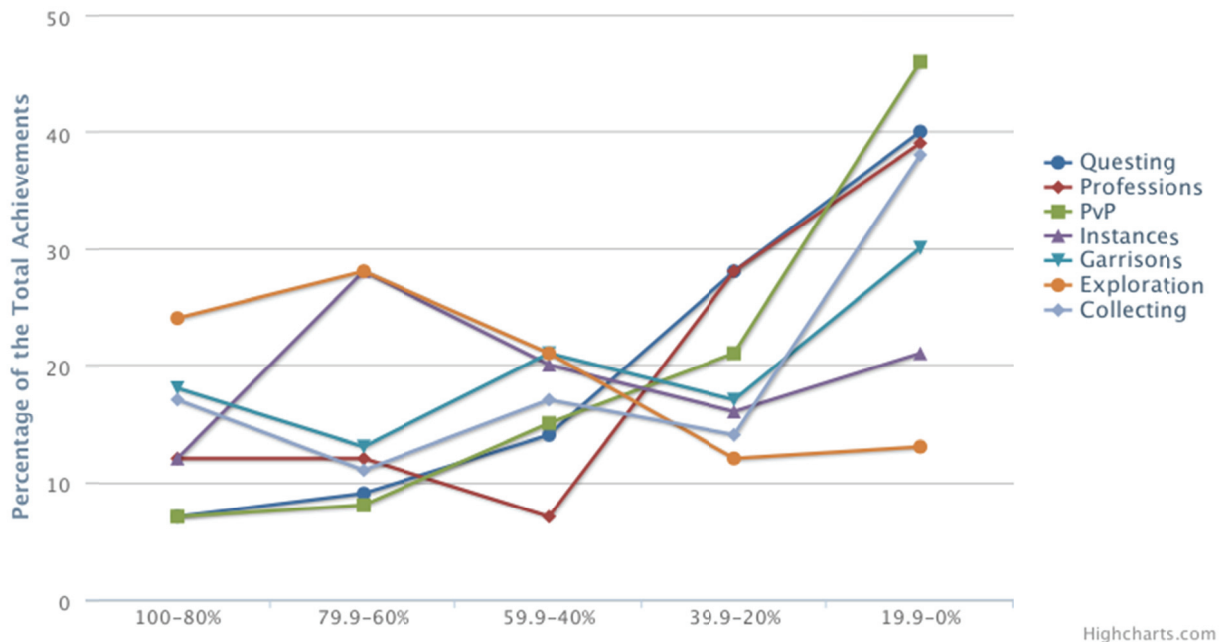


Figure 1: Visual Representation of the percentage of the total achievements by each category

Note: Pet Battles is forgone in this graph to prevent skewing of the lines.

Comparison of Motivation to Achievement Completion

In order to compare the different achievement completion percentages, they are organized into three specific categories that were used during the survey of what motivates players. The average number people said their motivation to play the game was, ranging from 1 (does not motivate at all) to 5 (biggest motivator), was put into a table, alongside the total number of achievements for each category (Table 3). Just as they were organized before, each achievement was placed into a specific subcategory depending on how many players of the group had gotten the achievement. Also similarly, the percentages of how many players had gotten the number of achievements by the total amount of achievements for each category was put into another table (Table 2). Then, the latter was made into a line graph in order to visualize the differences between the categories (Figure 2).

The large majority of the achievements are left undone, as stated before. The interesting part, however, is that the Conquest and Socializing completion percentage rates are very similar, with Conquest having a slightly higher completion percentage, and the Immersion category in dead last. The reason that the Conquest category is the highest is most likely because the late game of World of Warcraft is mostly Player vs. Player, and the road to that late game is paved with Instances. Since the Conquest category is so much higher than the Immersion category, this could show that players actually enjoy doing instances, such as dungeons, more than doing quests to level up. Then, once the late game is reached, players would prefer to do Player vs. Player activities than working on Professions and the like. However, since the Player vs. Player aspect of the game is ignored more than others based on the achievements, as shown in Figure 1, then it would seem that most players actually enjoy the Instances aspect of the Conquest

category, and prefer to spend their time running dungeons instead of questing or leveling up their profession.

In the middle of achievement completion percentages is Socializing, which consists of the Garrisons and Pet Battling aspects of the game. World of Warcraft is an MMO, which means it's a massively multiplayer online game, so it's no surprise to see that socializing is a huge aspect of why people play the game. However, since it's impossible to advance in the game by only socializing, it's easy to see why people have more achievements for the Conquest category than the Socializing category. Whether it's lower because of that reason, or if it's because people actually enjoy advancing through the game more than interacting with others is hard to say.

The category with the least amount of achievements, the Immersion category consisting of questing and professions, shows that perhaps players don't care about the immersion aspect of the game more than the other parts. Questing can get a bit repetitive, as World of Warcraft is somewhat famous for its "Collect 10 bear pelts" missions, and it can be hard to get Profession achievements since they require a decent amount of money to do. This can reflect that players would rather go through epic fights, like in a dungeon, than killing random animals in a forest, like in a quest. It also can show that players would rather fight than work on their professions.

When it comes to what people said their motivations were for playing the game, they actually match up quite nicely with the achievement completion ratio. When taking the average results for what people said motivated them of the three categories, Conquest being first, Socializing second, and Immersion third, the ordering matches up with data collected from the achievements. Therefore, it appears that what people say they enjoy in the game is actually indeed true, and is reflected by how many achievements they have in each category.

	Avg. Motivation	Total #	100-80%	79.9-60%	59.9-40%	39.9-20%	19.9-0%
Conquest	3.94	1109	131	269	217	197	295
Immersion	3.59	442	43	47	48	127	177
Socializing	3.71	133	23	16	26	21	47

Table 3: Number of achievements separated by percentage, and average rating for motivation
 Note: Average rating for motivation comes from player responses of what degree that specific aspect of the game motivates them to play, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely).

	Avg. Motivation	Total #	100-80%	79.9-60%	59.9-40%	39.9-20%	19.9-0%
Conquest	3.94	1109	11.82%	24.26%	19.56%	17.76%	26.60%
Immersion	3.59	442	9.73%	10.63%	10.86%	28.73%	40.05%
Socializing	3.71	133	17.29%	12.03%	19.55%	15.79%	35.34%

Table 4: Percentage of achievements for each category
 Note: Data comes from dividing the number of achievements in each category from the total.

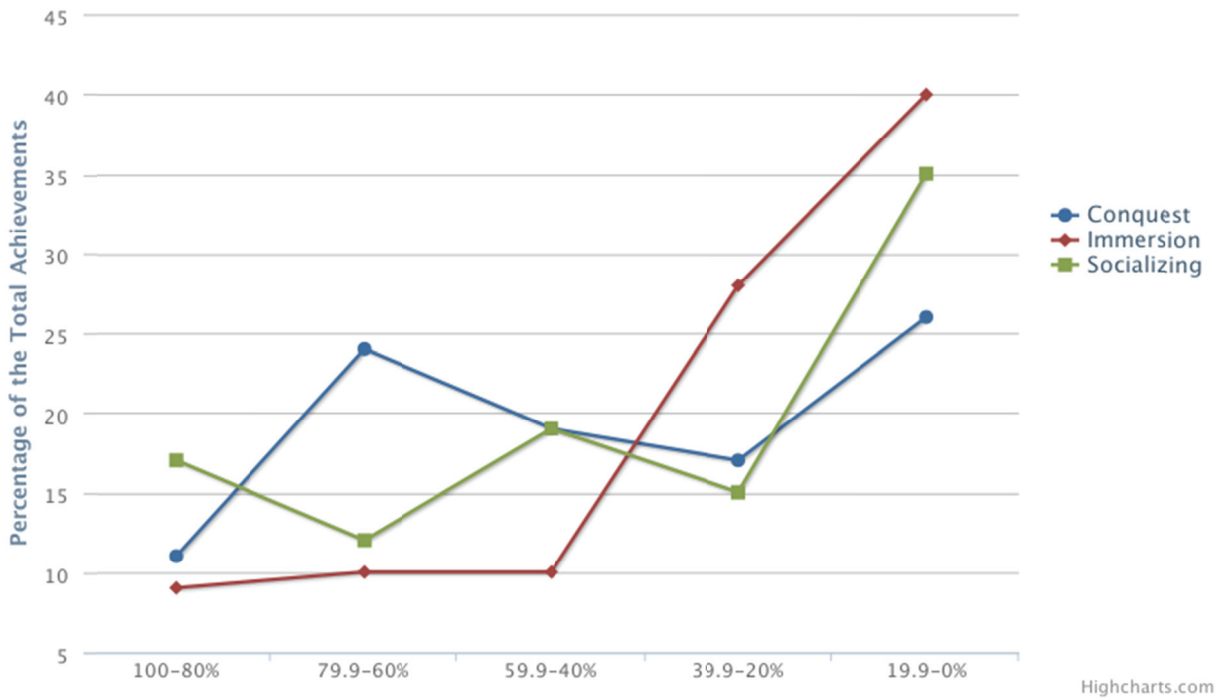


Figure 2: Visual Representation of the percentages of the total achievements by category

Discussion

While I originally thought that the results would show that what people said their motivations were playing for was going to be much different than what the achievements reflected, it actually ended up matching up. What people said their favorite things to do in the game is actually indeed shown by how many achievements they have in each specific category. If a player likes questing, they'll have a lot more Questing achievements, and so on. The achievements in the game must be fairly balanced between each category in that case, as it wouldn't be true if they weren't.

This research paper has shown the relationship between what players say their motivation for playing is with their achievement completion rate. When collecting data and organizing it into different categories, however, it may have imbalanced each category, so to speak. While it's easy to categorize achievements, it becomes more difficult when putting them into very open-ended categories, like Conquest, Immersion, and Socializing, because the survey results may not match up with the actual achievements. There may have also been some problems when collecting the percentage data from World of Warcraft, as there are several achievements that are faction based. This could have interfered with certain achievements, as they could be much easier to get for one specific faction, lowering the overall percentage of how many players had gotten it. Similarly, since there are more Alliance players than Horde players in World of Warcraft, there could be a higher completion rate for Alliance achievements from the randomly selected players. Also, some achievements are definitely harder to get than others. While it appears to be overall rather balanced between each categories, it's impossible to tell if one category has much harder achievements than others. Since it's impossible to factor this into the data, the results may be a bit askew as a result.

If another researcher were to use this paper as a reference for their own, and are looking for a research gap, I would recommend analyzing achievements for players of different factions. Horde players and Alliance players may have different reasons for playing the game, and thus would have different achievement completion percentages. I would also recommend asking a player for their motivations for playing the game and then looking at their achievements on a case-by-case basis. This would allow for much more accurate data, as the randomly selected players who took the survey could have much different motivations than the players who achievement percentages I looked at.

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