The Daedalus Project

Welcome to the Daedalus Project

Motivation for The Daedalus Project

It's hard to believe that I've been doing these online surveys and presenting the findings for almost 3 years now. Over the course of the past 3 years, I have surveyed over 25,000 MMORPG players, and covered issues ranging from demographics to gender and personality differences, from motivation to addiction, from gender-bending to how these virtual worlds can help people grow.

I see "The Daedalus Project" as a way to present findings in a more direct and accessible format. Instead of a full-length presentation with introduction and discussion, the entries at "The Daedalus Project" are short, concise and to-the-point. "The Daedalus Project" isn't a replacement for the fuller presentations, but instead, it provides a channel for me to publish findings that don't fit directly into those presentations.

The weblog format allows me to quickly update the information here, and it is all automatically archived, and searchable. Furthermore, readers can make full use of the commenting and trackback features.

I'm also interested in trying to build a more dynamic community around this research, both to facilitate respondent rate when I run surveys, as well as to be tied closer to the player community.

How Do I Subscribe?

The subscription mailing list to "The Daedalus Project" is the same one as the "Online MMORPG Study list", so there is no separate list to subscribe to if you are already on the "Online MMORPG Study" list. I'm hoping that I can put out a new issue every month.

How You Can Help

You can help my research by telling your MMORPG friends and guildmates about this site. If you are part of a message board or forum community, please consider posting a link to either the HUB or The Daedalus Project.

I am interested in your other available presentations on the HUB. But there's so much. Where do I start?

If you are not an MMORPG player, I would recommend starting with Mosaic, which discusses how the virtual lives and identities of players affect their real lives and identities.

If you are interested in demographic information, I would recommend this page at The Norrathian Scrolls which focuses on EQ players, and this page in Codename Blue which includes players from 5 MMORPGs.
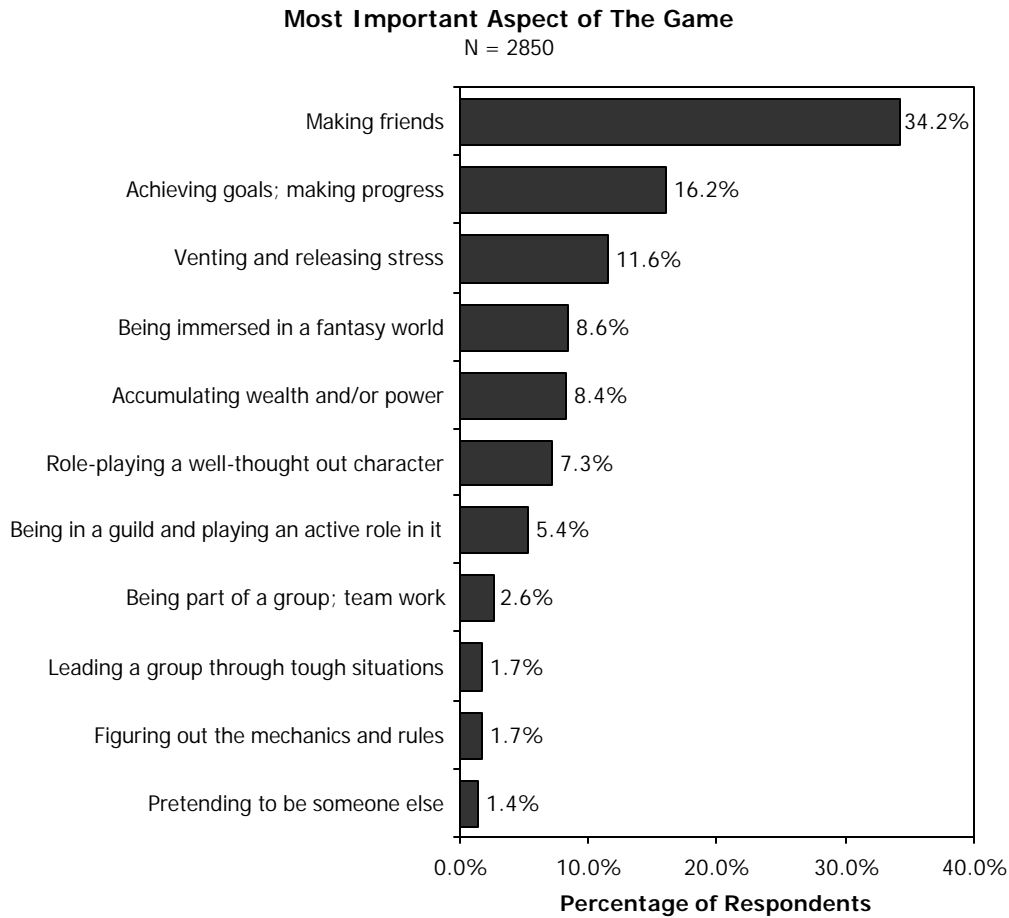
If you are interested in learning about addiction, I would recommend the full presentation Ariadne, and these pages at The Norrathian Scrolls (narratives and essay).

If you are interested in learning about the different motivations for why people play, I would recommend the Facets study.

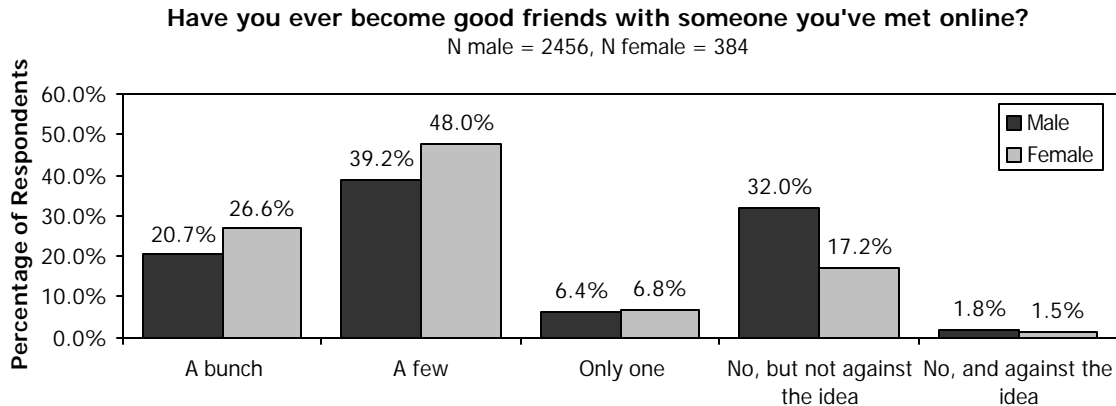If you are interested in how men and women play the game differently, I would begin with this essay.

Most Important Aspect of the Game

Most Important Aspect of The Game
N = 2850

Aspect	Percentage
Making friends	34.2%
Achieving goals; making progress	16.2%
Venting and releasing stress	11.6%
Being immersed in a fantasy world	8.6%
Accumulating wealth and/or power	8.4%
Role-playing a well-thought out character	7.3%
Being in a guild and playing an active role in it	5.4%
Being part of a group; team work	2.6%
Leading a group through tough situations	1.7%
Figuring out the mechanics and rules	1.7%
Pretending to be someone else	1.4%

Percentage of Respondents

Female players are more likely than male players to choose "Making Friends" as the most important aspect of the game. 50% of female players (N=385) chose it as the most important aspect, compared with 32% of male players (N=2459).

As the following graph shows, most players have made some good friends online.

Have you ever become good friends with someone you've met online?
N male = 2456, N female = 384

Response	Male	Female
A bunch	20.7%	26.6%
A few	39.2%	48.0%
Only one	6.4%	6.8%
No, but not against the idea	32.0%	17.2%
No, and against the idea	1.8%	1.5%

These findings underscore the importance of thinking of MMORPGs as an environment where relationships form and social networks are created, rather than just a hack-and-slash playground.

This also goes along well with the finding in "Facets" that the desire to form relationships online, as opposed to other factors (such as achievement, or role-play), is the best predictor of attachment to a game, as measured by hours played per week. (http://www.nickyee.com/facets/tying.html)
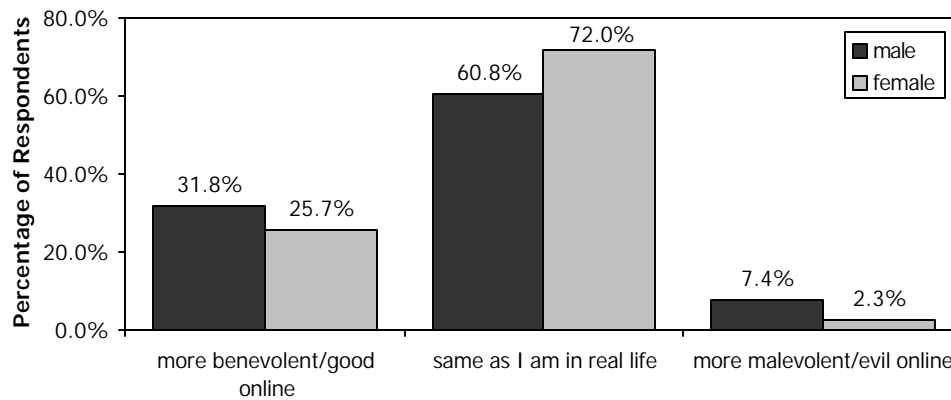

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

While most people might think that people are more likely to lie and misbehave online, the opposite is probably more true. As the following graph shows, about one-third of players feel that they act more benevolent online than they do in real-life.

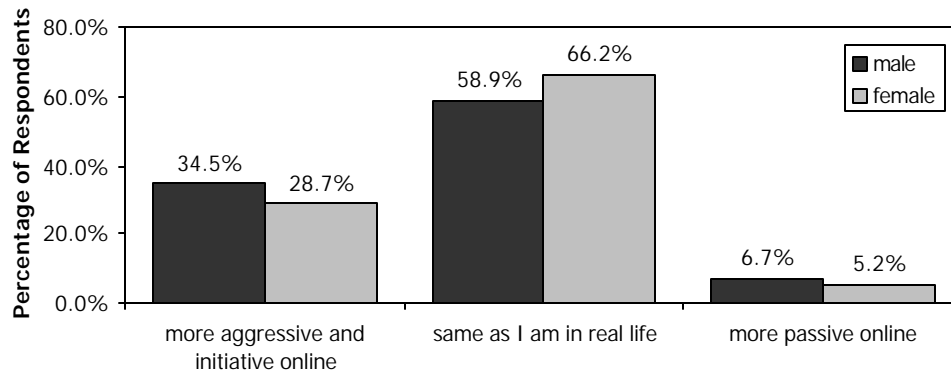**More Benevolent or Malevolent Online (By Gender)**
N male = 2444, N female = 385

It is also the case that about one-third of players feel they are more aggressive and initiative online.

More Aggressive or Passive Online (By Gender)
N male = 2443, N female = 384

The internet does indeed allow people to feel less inhibited, but as this pair of graphs suggest, the internet doesn't turn people into pathological liars and thieves, but rather, courageous knights and brave warriors whose motives are benevolent.

Gender and Age Distribution

Gender and Age Distribution
N male = 2439, N female = 404
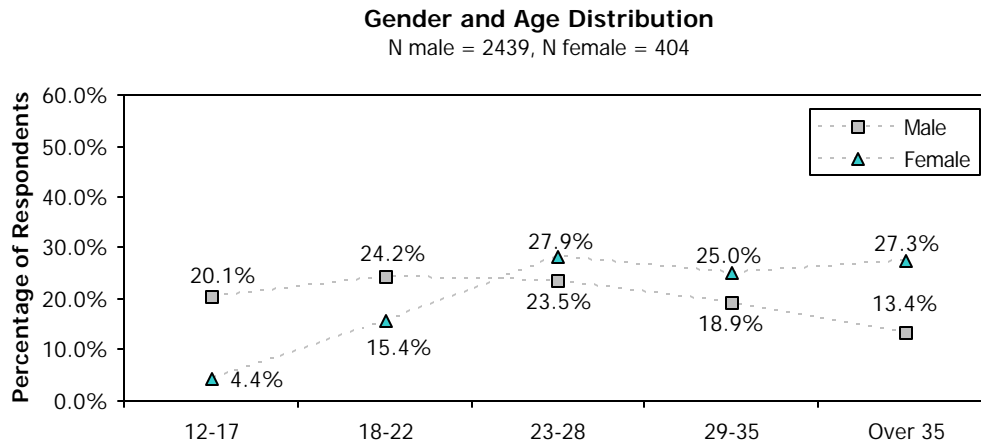
In an earlier essay titled "Men are from Ogguk. Women are from Kelethin", I argued that male and female MMORPG players have very different motivations and reasons for playing. (http://www.nickyee.com/eqt/menwomen.html)

The graph above plotting gender against age highlights another very important gender difference. Male players tend to be between 12 and 28, while female players tend to be between 23 and 40. Rather than categorizing MMORPG players as male and female players, it perhaps makes more sense to think of the two main groups as younger male players and older female players.
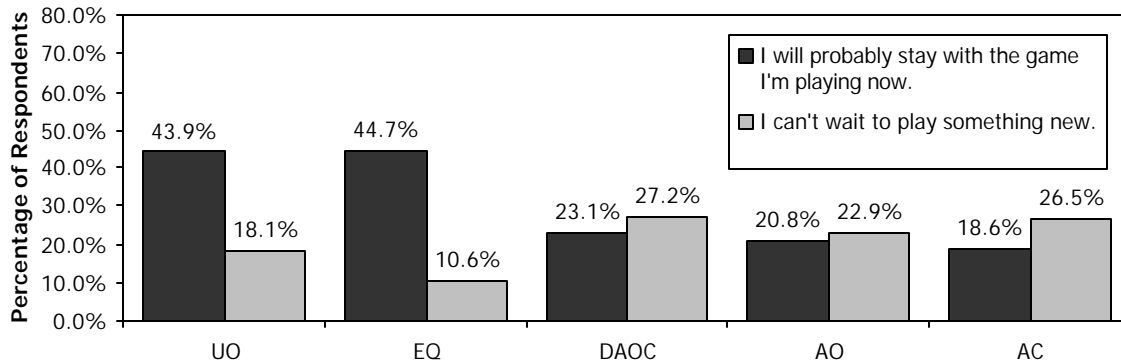
Will You Switch To A New Game?

Players were asked whether they were looking forward to switching to an upcoming MMORPG, and the following graph shows how players from 5 current MMORPGs answered. The loyalty of UO and EQ players is quite impressive in contrast with players from DAOC, AO and AC.

Will You Switch To A New Game?

N uo = 221, N eq = 2054, N ao = 48, N ac = 102, N daoc = 416

Because socialization is more important to female players than to male players, as demonstrated in "Men are from Ogguk. Women are from Kelethin", it would be expected that female players are less likely to want to switch to a new game when compared with male gamers. This is because the existing social networks would be broken if a player switches to a new game. (http://www.nickyee.com/eqt/menwomen.html).

Will You Switch To a New Game? (by Gender)

N male = 2450, N female = 403
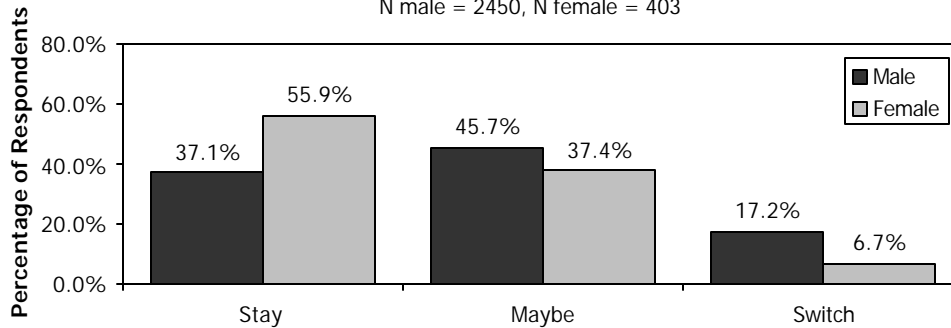
Players were asked to type in the game they were looking forward to trying out, and Star Wars Galaxies came out as the most frequently listed.

Game	
SWG	25.3%
EQ 2	12.5%
ShadowBane	11.2%
Other	13.8%
No Answer	37.2%

An interesting finding was that players who are anticipating the 3 main games had different average ages.

Average Age and Anticipated Game	
Game	Age
SWG	26.2
EQ 2	25.3
SB	21.8

How Much Would You Sell Your Account For?

About one-third of players answered that they would not be willing to sell their accounts.

How Much Would You Sell Your Account For?
N = 2876
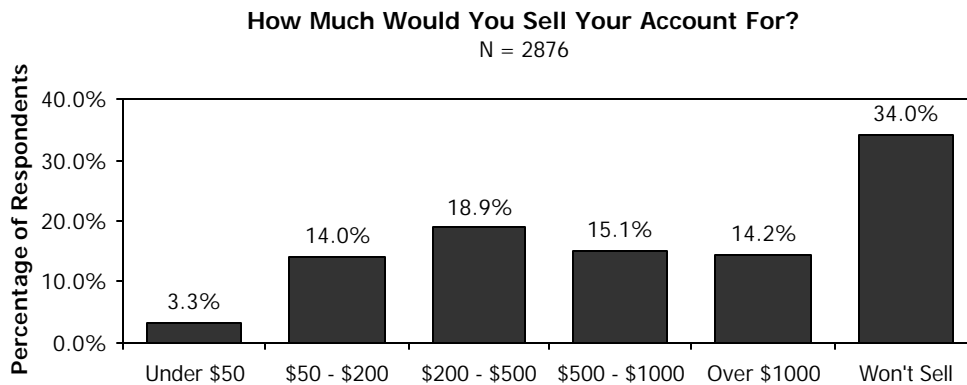
Further analysis showed that female players are significantly less likely to be willing to sell their accounts. Perhaps this is because selling the account means losing the social relationships that a player has formed, and these relationships are more important to female players than male players.

Selling Account (By Gender)
N male = 2439, N female = 404
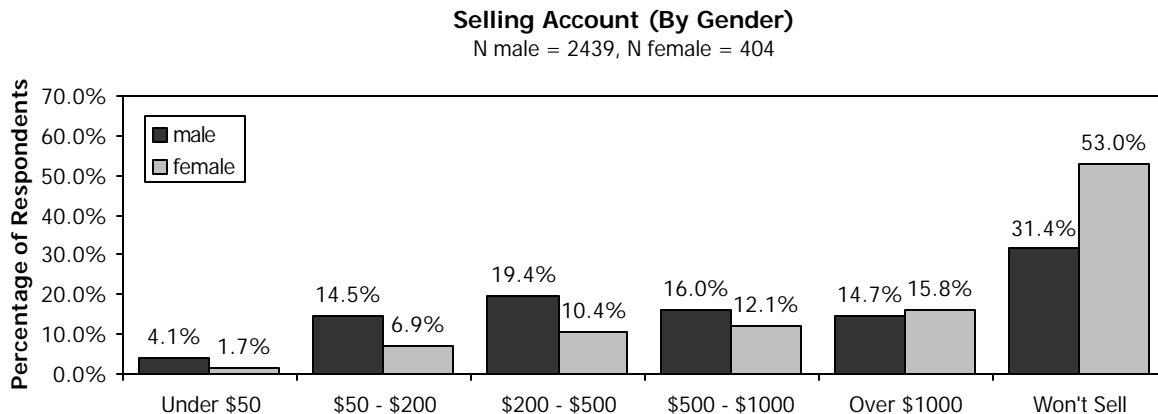
The average amount that players from different games were willing to sell their account at is presented below. This amount is probably directly correlated to the attachment a player has to that game.

Average Amount Player Would Sell Account For	
Game	Amount ($)
EQ	574
UO	534
AC	422
DAOC	399
AO	330