A Pure World: Moral Cognition and Spiritual Experiences in Chinese *World of Warcraft*

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2012

Word Count: 78,228

Abstract

This dissertation is about moral cognition and the production of spiritual experiences in the Chinese version of the massively multiplayer online game, *World of Warcraft* (C*WoW*). Chapter 1 introduces the game, field sites, data collection methods, and the questions and paradigms that structure the dissertation's narrative. This chapter explains that during fieldwork C*WoW* players frequently described gameplay as yielding positive moral and spiritual experiences. Chapter 2 outlines the cognitive mechanisms – Haidt and Joseph's 'moral foundations' (2004; 2007) – that are hypothesised to inform the in-game experiences to which players attributed moral significance. Chapter 3 argues that some aspects of the *WoW* gameworld are high in cognitive 'relevance' (following Sperber & Wilson, 1986) for Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations. This relevance yields the game a capacity for cross-cultural appeal. Chapter 4 argues that social agencies operant in the lives of C*WoW* players motivated players to utilise these morally relevant aspects of gameplay as a 'religion-like tool for group cohesion' (following Sosis & Alcorta, 2008). These extra-game agencies help explain why these aspects of gameplay were cultivated in lieu of, or as superordinate to, aspects that may be 'relevant' to other cognitive mechanisms. Chapter 5 argues that reports of soul merger experiences obtained in C*WoW* resemble Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]) and may be understood at the cognitive level as 'flow' (Csikszentmilhalyi, 1990) experiences conjoined with affective outputs from Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations. Chapter 6 summarises the key points made in the preceding chapters and concludes that in the

contexts sampled here, high-contingency aspects of C*WoW* gameplay may be viewed as Durkheimian religious rituals.

Acknowledgements

I wish first and foremost to thank my adviser, Dr. Justin Barrett, for all his guidance, patience, and friendship these past several years. My debt to him is immeasurable and one that I look forward to repaying for many years to come.

I wish to thank all those who do or who did at one point in time call our warm little Centre for Anthropology and Mind home. Persons include but aren't limited to Harvey Whitehouse, Emma Cohen, Nicola Knight, Peter Rudiak-Gould, Justin Gregory, Emma Burdett, Tenelle Porter, Jean-Luck Jucker, Dan Mullins, Rachel Watson, Ann Cowie, and Igor Miklousic. Thank you all for your support and your stimulating conversations!

Also numbering in this group but deserving of his own paragraph is my good friend and tireless mentor Jonathan Lanman. He cannot imagine how much I value his opinion, his intellectual curiosity, and his companionship.

I wish to thank all my kind, patient, infinitely hospitable Chinese colleagues for dealing with this 外国人 and his ridiculous questions these past few years. Thanks especially to those who provided translation assistance, including Ellinda (龚程), Emma (王义娣), Fox (曹雪春), Will (吴晓伟), Esther (郑梦婷), Rui (马瑞臻), and Harry (缪汉超).

Most of all, thanks to my wonderful parents, all four of them, and my brother Michael. At 31 years of age I have lived in three different continents and have switched residences on average once every three years, and I have never met anyone blessed with a more wonderful family.

Minus those listed in the acknowledgments, all student and in-game character names given in this dissertation have been modified to preserve those persons' anonymity.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction 10
(1.1) Initial Motivations for This Project 11
(1.2) Two Worlds: Azeroth and Wuhan 13
(1.3) Two Worlds: Azeroth and Wuhan 19
(1.4) My *WoW* – Bellicose, Gladiatorial Individualism 26
(1.5) Their *WoW* – 'A Complete Morality' 31
(1.6) Chapter Summaries 35
1.6.1. Chapter 2 – Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations 35
1.6.2. Chapter 3 – Why Would Anyone Play in a Virtual World? 36
1.6.3. Chapter 4 – In-game Spiritual Experiences and *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion 37
1.6.4. Chapter 5 – *WoW* as a Platform for Collective Effervescence as Moral Flow 38
1.6.5. Chapter 6 – Conclusion: *WoW*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Ritual 39
(1.7) Data Collection Methods 39
1.7.1. Participant Observation 40
1.7.2. Testimonials 44
1.7.3. Analysing the Testimonial Data 48
1.7.4. Additional Information on the Testimonials 55
1.7.5. Interviews 56
1.7.6. Surveys 56
1.7.7. Data about Religious Affiliation 57
(1.8) Contributions 58
1.8.1. CSR and the Naturalness Theory of Religious Cognition 58
1.8.2. Media Studies and the Mediatisation of Religion 59
1.8.3. Game Studies and the Appeal of *WoW* 61

Chapter 2 - Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations 77
(2.1) Widening the Moral Domain 78
(2.2) Introducing Four Aspects of *Intuitive Cognition*: Non-Reflective Beliefs, Modularity, Emotions, and Feelings 81
(2.3) Introducing Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations 90
2.3.1. Harm/Care 93
2.3.2. Fairness/Reciprocity 94
2.3.3. In-group/Loyalty 95
2.3.4. Authority/Ranking 96
2.3.5. Purity/Sanctity 97
(2.4) What about Cultural Differences? Introducing Proper and Actual Domains 101
(2.5) Becoming a Morally Competent Social Actor – The Importance of Narratives and Actions 105

Chapter 3 - Why Would Anyone Play in a Virtual World? 112
(3.1) Inferential Potential, Relevance, and the Success of Cultural Concepts 113
(3.2) Introducing *WoW*'s Moral Inferential Potential 121
(3.3) Morally Relevant Narratives in *WoW* 125
3.3.1. Entry Narratives and Moral Acclimatisation 128
3.3.2. Lowbie Quest Narratives and Moral Acclimatisation 136
3.3.3. 'Of Love and Family' – An Epic Quest 145
(3.4) Moral Action Potentials in *WoW* 150

3.4.1. Caring Actions 154
3.4.2. Actions that Indicate Superior Status or Deference to Superior Status 163
3.4.3. Actions that Effect Group Solidarity 170
3.4.4. Actions that Effect Fairness 175
(3.5) Conclusion – A Pure World 180

Chapter 4 – In-game Spiritual Experiences and *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion 185
(4.1) *Jingshen*, *Linghun*, and the Moral-Spiritual Dyad 186
(4.2) Examples of Spiritual Experiences Reported in C*WoW* 195
(4.3) Pressure to Quit Playing *WoW* – Government River-Crabbing, Addiction Rhetoric, and Internet Addiction Recovery Centres 202
4.3.1. Government River-Crabbing in Azeroth 203
4.3.2. Anti-Net Game Propaganda – Thugs, Addicts, and Freaks 208
4.3.3. IAD Clinics 213
(4.4) C*WoW* Players Under Pressure 215
(4.5) Pressure to Quit Playing *WoW* – Parents and the 4-2-1 Problem 219
(4.6) Defections from C*WoW* to Real Life are Costly for Remaining Players 222
(4.7) *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion 226
4.7.1. Establishing *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions 229
4.7.2. Variations on *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions: The Materialistic Ethic 236
4.7.3. Purity Regained – Reducing Variability in Perceptions of *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions 247
(4.8) Conclusion 256

Chapter 5 – *WoW* as a Platform for Collective Effervescence as Moral Flow 259
(5.1) Collective Effervescence and In-game Soul Mergers – Descriptive and Functional Similarities 261
(5.2) Collective Effervescence at the Cognitive Level 268
(5.3) Survey Overview, Methods, and Results 272
5.3.1. Introduction and Basic Information 273
5.3.2. Spiritual Experiences 274
5.3.3. Flow Experiences 276
5.3.4. Experiences of Moral Emotions 278
5.3.5. Mapping Players' Experiences 280
5.3.6. Results 283
(5.4) Discussion 290

Chapter 6 – *WoW*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Ritual 295
(6.1) CSR and the Naturalness Theory of Religious Cognition 296
(6.2) Mediatisation of Religion 297
(6.3) Game Studies 299
(6.4) Conclusion 300

Appendices 301

Appendix A: Helpful Information about *WoW* 302
(A.1) Communicating with Other Players 302
(A.2) Guilds 304
(A.3) *Wangba*s 305
(A.4) PvP vs. PvE 306
(A.5) Expansions, Patches, and Hotfixes 307

(A.6) Miscellaneous 309

Appendix B: Additional Information for Chapter 2 311

(B.1) A Narrowed Moral Domain – The Influence of the Enlightenment, Reason, and 'Quandary Ethics' on 20th Century Moral Psychology 311

(B.2) Modularity 318

(B.3) Inferences from Cognitive Mechanisms Dedicated to Fear Responses (taken from Cosmides & Tooby, 2000) 320

(B.4) Ecological Psychology, 'Affordances,' and Feelings 322

(B.5) Additional Support for the Five Moral Foundations 323

Appendix C: Testimonial Interpretation Scheme 326

Appendix D: Testimonials 329

Testimonial 1 332

Testimonial 2 335

Testimonial 7 337

Testimonial 8 339

Testimonial 11 341

Testimonial 12 344

Testimonial 13 348

Testimonial 17 351

Testimonial 18 354

Testimonial 20 356

Testimonial 23 361

Testimonial 24 365

Testimonial 25 371

Testimonial 28 377

Testimonial 29 380

Testimonial 30 382

Testimonial 32 383

Testimonial 34 386

Testimonial 35 390

Testimonial 37 396

Testimonial 38 398

Testimonial 40 400

Testimonial 41 401

Testimonial 43 404

Testimonial 46 408

Testimonial 47 410

Testimonial 48 415

Testimonial 49 418

Testimonial 51 420

Testimonial 53 422

Testimonial 55 425

Testimonial 56 428

Testimonial 58 431

Testimonial 61 434

Testimonial 62 439

Testimonial 64 442

Testimonial 66 445

Testimonial 67 ..... **447**
Testimonial 73 ..... **453**
Testimonial 75 ..... **457**
Testimonial 76 ..... **460**
Testimonial 78 ..... **465**
Testimonial 79 ..... **469**
Testimonial 80 ..... **472**
Testimonial 82 ..... **475**
Testimonial 84 ..... **477**
Testimonial 86 ..... **482**
Testimonial 89 ..... **484**
Testimonial 94 ..... **491**

References **494**

It is hard to look at a society and determine which things are games and which things are not. – Edward Castronova (2007, p. 77)

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Our world is increasingly full of hustles and bustles, and we are looking for a pure land. They say we are addicted to the Internet, but we are actually finding a utopia.
Testimonial (T) 35

This project examines the production of moral cognition and spiritual experiences in the Chinese version of the massively multiplayer online game (MMOG), *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*). The following chapters advance three main arguments: (1) Some aspects of the *WoW* gameworld are high in cognitive 'relevance' (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) for five cognitive mechanisms dedicated to moral cognition (i.e., the 'moral foundations' identified by Haidt & Joseph; 2004; 2007). This relevance yields the game a capacity for cross-cultural appeal. (2) Certain social agencies operant in the lives of C*WoW* (i.e., the Chinese version of *WoW*) players motivate players to utilise these morally relevant aspects of gameplay as a 'religion-like tool for group cohesion' (Sosis & Alcorta, 2008). These extra-game agencies help explain why these aspects of gameplay were cultivated in lieu of, or as superordinate to, aspects that may be 'relevant' to other cognitive mechanisms. (3) Finally, reports of soul merger experiences obtained in C*WoW* resemble Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]) and may be understood at the cognitive level as 'flow' (Csikszentmilhalyi, 1990) experiences conjoined with affective outputs from Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations.

This chapter prefaces these arguments by introducing the personal motivations, field sites, theoretical frameworks, and data collection methods that inform this project. Section 1.1 outlines the initial motivations and cross-disciplinary considerations that underlie this project. Sections 1.2 and 1.3 introduce the project's two field sites, C*WoW*

and Wuhan. Stretched across these two sections is a first person account of a *WoW* gameplay experience, included here as an example that will assist the reader in visualising gameplay activities discussed throughout succeeding chapters. Section 1.4 outlines the cognitive and social dynamics I expected to find during fieldwork, and Section 1.5 outlines those that actually were found. Section 1.6 illustrates how these findings will be analysed in the following chapters. Section 1.7 outlines the data collection methods utilised. Section 1.8 illustrates how this project may be read in the contexts of the cognitive science of religion (CSR), the mediatisation of religion, and game studies. Finally, and for readers who are unfamiliar with MMOGs, basic information on the *WoW* gameworld and gameplay can be found in Appendix A.

(1.1) Initial Motivations for This Project

This dissertation is the product of my interest in three separate academic disciplines: cognitive anthropology, Sinology, and game studies. Initially, two broad questions motivated this project. The first question was inspired and informed by cognitive anthropological literatures on cultural transmission: Why is the *WoW* artefact such a massive cross-cultural success, or 'epidemic' (following Sperber, 1996)? I reasoned that *WoW*'s cross-cultural success indicated a need to understand the game artefact as an especially effective purveyor of common denominators of human experience. Perhaps, I reasoned, the gameworld is replete with evolutionarily salient stimuli that activate cognitive mechanisms that were designed by natural selection to effect fitness enhancing behaviours and that are present in all naturally developing human minds. This leads to the question of which cognitive mechanisms? And what are these aspects of gameplay?

China was selected as a field site for the investigation of these questions because data gathered from non-Western milieus are necessary for projects that seek to illuminate pan-cultural features of human cognition. China was also chosen for reasons of convenience. As of 2008, China was home to approximately five million *WoW* players (Fletcher, 2009) and thousands of Internet cafes that permitted access to those players. I went to Wuhan, China, to gather data that might reveal connections between aspects of gameplay and the human mind's evolved cognitive mechanisms.

The second question was motivated by the central aim of game studies to 'help explain the role of games in our lives' (Consalvo, 2009, p. 409): How do the 'mangles' (following Steinkuehler, 2006) of agencies concomitant to players' offline lives influence the types of experiences players seek in the gameworld? In other words, regarding this Chinese sample, how were those in-game experiences meaningful within the broader contexts of players' everyday lives as students, as inheritors of the complex social issues concomitant to China's 'One Child Policy,' and as residents of a rapidly changing urban cultural landscape? In short, what roles did this game, this locus of 'relevant' experiences, play in the wider lives of young adult, C*WoW* players?

These two sets of questions would to some extent be mutually informing. On one hand, when queried on which in-game experiences were especially powerful players would reveal not only the game's *cognitive affordances*[1] but also offline circumstances that made those in-game experiences particularly meaningful. On the other hand, once those cognitive affordances had been revealed, relevant literatures in the mind sciences could help explain why the game was more proficient than the 'real world' in facilitating

[1] In this dissertation, the term 'cognitive affordance' refers to an evolutionarily salient stimulus, or a close analogue thereof, that catalyses processing from intuitive cognitive mechanisms.

these common denominators of human experience[2]. In consequence, (some of) the gameworld's cognitive affordances and (some of) the mangles of offline circumstances common to players' lives would be mutually revealed by reports of experiences obtained in *WoW*.

(1.2) Two Worlds: Azeroth and Wuhan

At the summit, Arthas, the Lich King, sat towering over us on the Frozen Throne, as yet unaware of our presence. We went about readying ourselves: Crithappens poisoned his daggers, Epoch soulstoned Bunnyhugs, Lakotas summoned his pet, Pepsicoke slipped into bear form. I cast my mage buff, [arcane intellect[3]], on my teammates and looked on, inwardly aglow with the satisfaction of having made a small contribution to the group, as my arcane insignias blazed momentarily over their heads. My nine teammates, as if cued by some inward drive to reciprocate, jumped up and cast their buffs. The sky effervesced with glowing insignias, glyphs, runes, and totems; they burst overhead, giving us [strength], [intellect], [spirit], and [agility]. Battlemouse, our main tank, instructed: 'Let the drudge ghouls live so we can dispel the [infest] stacks on them, Pepsi, tank that shambling horde so that he faces away from the DPS because it one-shot Epoch last time,

[2] Social anthropologist Tom Boellstorff has pointed out that using the term 'real' to describe non-computer mediated interactions is problematic in that it falsely presumes there is nothing 'virtual' about such interactions (Lattin, 2007). While this is a valid point, this dissertation retains the use of 'real' to refer to non-computer mediated interactions in order to minimise theoretical asides and also in order to stay true to the terminology used by informants, who conceptualized clear divisions between a 'virtual' *WoW* and a 'real' offline world.

[3] Throughout this dissertation, terms that denote *WoW* spells, abilities, resources or equipment will be put in brackets. In addition to indicating that these are aspects of the game, these brackets signal that these terms have special in-game meanings that may differ substantially from those attendant to their usage elsewhere (e.g., adding [intellect] increases one's [mana], not intelligence per se).

Crit, get the [anaesthetic poison] on that shambler, at 72% don't forget to get to the edge, in phase 2 everyone stay stacked on Pepsi and me or else the valkyrie…'

I rehearsed it all in my mind. My fingers swam in the air as I imagined the keys I should type. Battlemouse ran forward to engage Arthas; the music began; my fingers galloped away from me, clattering furiously over the keyboard; I tried to rein them in; they were unsupervised; what if they made a mistake; just push the buttons; I pushed the buttons; I dodged [raging spirit], evaded [shockwave], strafed around pools of [defile], eluded [pain and suffering]. Blizzards, fireballs, and frostbolts arose from my fingers, tracing colourful arcs across the snow-lit sky, slamming into the Lich King. I was maypole dancing in an avalanche, clinging desperately to fireball-ribbons while trying to weave them around that vile centre. I was hopscotching through a snow-drenched Notre Dame, ducking all the shattered stained glass that had quickened and come chasing after me. I was playing speed chess in a winter-hued kaleidoscope, gingerly placing my pieces on squares that tumbled and fractured and vanished and regenerated anew. My fingers galloped on ahead of me.

In my mind, there were no thoughts. There were only feelings that registered as daguerreotypes of the battle. I feared the pools of noxious materials. I was anxious about making a mistake that would lead to a wipe[4]*. I felt powerful seeing Arthas recoil from the afterburn of my [pyroblast]. I admired Pepsicoke and Battlemouse for their skilful tanking of Arthas and his minions. I was grateful for and warmed by Tigera and Bunnyhugs, our healers, whose names appeared over my head ([Tigera]+8950 HP) with*

[1] I.e., a situation in which everyone dies.

each healing spell they cast upon me. I was awestruck by the spectacle of it all before me and proud to be here with these esteemed members of our guild, Coma Divine.

Arthas fell. It took 15 minutes. In the sweltering Silver Star Internet Café our cheers and bodies erupted into the air. We returned to the ground, limbs entangled, a human tumbleweed, shouting and hopping around. Epoch's sweaty bicep waxing across my face reminded me it was a muggy 97 degrees in the café. The tumbleweed disbanded, but the fist-pumping and cheering continued. Cigarettes were lit; shoulders were relaxed; palms were wiped on trousers; Lakotas had tears in his eyes; compliments were shared; Crithappens was texting friends; no one even checked to see what marvellous loot Arthas may have dropped. Tigera and Bunnyhugs started towards the door to go recount the epic action by the fountain in the plaza, but Battlemouse, who is known as Lihong in this world, shouted: 'Picture! A Picture!' We located our hastily displaced chairs and cinched ourselves back up to our monitors, and in a few moments we had our frostbitten characters lined up in front of Arthas' lifeless body and the now-vacant Frozen Throne.

The scene described here occurred in the Icecrown Citadel, situated deep in the frozen wastelands of Northrend, the northernmost continent of Azeroth, which, together with the fragmented terrestrial remnants of Outland, constitute the eponymous 'world' of warcraft. This world defies an easy summary. It is massive. Its four continents are subdivided into 75 different regions, which take most players years to fully explore[5].

[5] Aarseth calculates that Azeroth's total size is about 50 square miles (2008, p. 119), which she argues is quite small. In contrast, many of my Chinese informants marveled at Azeroth's size (e.g. '*Open the map and look around and you will find that you are so small in the world*' T20). Their heightened estimations may be due in part to the restrictions, including geo-spatial restrictions, many of them faced as students in state-run education system (see Section 5.1).

This world is dangerous for player characters. Over 7,000 different types of antagonists (or 'mobs' – i.e., any monsters, beasts, humanoids, etc. that mean to harm the player), in possession of thick armours, fearsome weapons, and over 70,000 different abilities and spells, roam Azeroth and Outland (text will hereafter refer only to Azeroth, which constitutes the majority of the gameworld). This world is full of history and culture. Azeroth contains over 40,000 non-player characters (NPCs), each of whom is substantiated by and expressive of its own history, needs, and ambitions, and over 9,600 quests. Each of these quests contains a playable storyline that weaves the player into Azeroth's rich historical and cultural traditions.

This world is political. The Azerothian terrain is fought over by two bitterly opposed factions, the Horde and the Alliance (players belong to one of these factions and will attempt to dispatch members of the other faction), as well as dozens of cults, orders, cartels, crusades, brotherhoods, clans, circles, tribes, and leagues intertwined in complex webs of suspicion, exploitation, violence, and – sometimes – trust and goodwill. This world facilitates a wide variety of gameplay objectives. In addition to opportunities for conquest and violence, the game provides players with challenging means for developing their professions, maintaining their reputations, cooperating with peers, and exploring terrain. Players can spend a few hours each day absorbed in combat-irrelevant tasks such as constructing airplanes, excavating artefacts, or taming seahorses. It is possible to advance to the final level (85 at time of this writing) simply by gathering herbs.

This world is demanding. In order to be a competitive combatant, players must be willing to hone their skills in tactical planning and combat execution, to expend the time necessary to acquire 'epic' gear (sometimes a month or more of daily gameplay for a

single piece), to stay abreast of the latest changes in gameplay mechanics, and to continuously research new strategies that help one out-manoeuvre the competition.

This world is aesthetic. The Azerothian landscape, crafted over the past eight years by some of the MMOG industry's most gifted developers, is commonly viewed as an artistic masterpiece of the digital age (see Nardi, 2010 and Bainbridge, 2010 for two book-length monologues discussing *WoW* as art). Veteran players, even those who, like Lihong, have been in Azeroth since beta testing (2005), may still find themselves halted at the keyboard and mouse, staring in awe at the way a shaft of light falls on a blade of grass in some remote corner of the world.

This world is the brainchild of Activision-Blizzard, Inc. (Blizzard), based in Irvine, California. It is one of the most successful online games of all time by almost any measure. In terms of subscription base and revenues, the game in 2008 had over 12 million subscribers worldwide (Sinclair, 2008). As of 2010, this player base was generating more than USD$1 billion in revenues each year (Hamilton, 2010). In terms of time spent in-game, every day players log a collective 30 million hours playing *WoW* (approximately 25 hours per week per player); and players have logged 5.93 million years (roughly twice the duration of the Pliocene) since *WoW* began in 2004 (McGonigal, 2011, p. 61 & 69). In terms of player-generated content, countless databases, add-ons, and blogs are dedicated to the game. WoWWiki.com, one of many large wikis dedicated to *WoW*[6], contains over 250,000 entries and is the second largest wiki in the world (after Wikipedia; McGonigal, 2011, p.249). In terms of information processing, it takes 20,000

[6] See also WoWhead, Thottbot, Allakazam, and WoWpedia.

computers, including five of China's 10 biggest supercomputers (Whitcomb, 2008), to process *WoW* servers and the attendant 1.3 petabytes of information (Radd, 2009).

Finally, this world is often portrayed as the figurehead of a digital games industry that is projected to be worth USD$68 billion in 2012 (Androvich, 2008) and that, as 'gamification' theorists point out (Castronova, 2007; Wark, 2007 & 2008; McGonigal, 2011), is remaking the real world in the image of games. For example, games may be used to:

(1) Enhance even the most quotidian forms of leisure. Social media games such as *Four Square* (powered by smartphone GPS systems) turn simple episodes of 'hanging-out' into competitions between friends. By spending enough time in a certain location a participant can be said to 'own' or 'mayor' that location.

(2) Implement helpful findings from medical and psychological research. 'Happiness hacks' (i.e., games designed to implement lessons from positive psychology) such as *Tombstone Hold'Em Poker*, which participants play in graveyards using tombstones as 'cards,' give players an engaging platform for implementing the finding that thinking of death for at least five minutes a day can substantially increase one's happiness levels (Caplan, 2007).

(3) Increase pro-social interactions. Philanthropy games such as *Groundcrew* (also powered by smartphone GPS systems) make games out of granting small wishes (e.g., buying a coffee, walking a dog) to complete strangers who have uploaded wishes to the *Groundcrew* dashboard.

(4) Solve real-world dilemmas. Popular games exist that allow players to provide free rice for the world's poor (*Free Rice*), assist Stanford University with protein folding

simulations via one's Playstation 3 (*Folding@home*), overcome post-concussion syndrome (*SuperBetter*), get housemates to clean up after themselves (*Chore Wars*), map the locations of lifesaving devices, such as defibrillators (*The Extraordinaires*), devise strategies for getting on in a world without oil (*World Without Oil*), among others.

(5) Get an education. In 2009, Quest to Learn, a New York City public charter school, which contains a curriculum based entirely on the fundamentals of game psychology and which was developed with grants from the MacArthur and Bill and Melinda Gates foundations, opened for students in grades 6 through 12.

The pervasiveness of these gamification trends further highlights the general importance, discussed in further detail in the following subsections, of establishing causal perspectives on the question posed in Section 1.1: Why is the *WoW* artefact such a massive cross-cultural success?

(1.3) Two Worlds: Azeroth and Wuhan

The aforementioned scene also occurred in the real world, in the sweltering confines of the Silver Star Café, a spacious *wangba* (网吧; Internet café) surrounded by high-rise apartments and construction cranes in the south-eastern economic development zone of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in central China. Rising from the low-lying Jianghan Plain and straddling China's largest river, the Yangtze, Wuhan is the fifth largest city in China; its three boroughs, Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang, are home to over 10 million (Wuhan Bureau of Statistics, 2011) Mandarin-speaking, ethnic Han Chinese (99%; Wuhan Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Known in China as 'The Riverside

City' and 'The Nine Provinces' Leading Thoroughfare,' Wuhan is one of China's great river towns; it is an economically and intellectually vibrant yet rugged, conflict-hardened and climate-worn city.

Owing to its location at the confluence of the Yangtze and the Yangtze's largest tributary, the Han river, Wuhan grew as a busy port city during the Han Dynasty (206BCE–220CE) and functioned as the most important economic hub of central China well into late nineteenth century, when several developments elevated it to international prominence. Following the Second Opium War (1856-1860), parts of what is today Wuhan's Hankou borough were ceded as trading ports to western corporate interests via land concessions for England, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia. The corporations headquartered in these concessions helped to establish Hankou, at a time when China was producing two-thirds of the world's tea, as the 'world's most important tea export market' (Danielson, 2005, p. 19). During the tea seasons of the late nineteenth century, foreign merchant ships were overcrowding the Hankou riverfront. In 1889, Zhang Zhidong, the governor of the Hubei and Hunan provinces, sought to expand this traffic even further by establishing heavy industries, including textile factories, iron and coal mines, and steel plants, the latter of which began directly exporting steel to the United States (Danielson, 2005). Finally, railways were constructed through the city on a north-south grid, making the city an important transhipment point for rail and river traffic. By the turn of the twentieth century, the city was brimming with foreign and domestic commercial outputs, and westerners visiting the city described it as 'The Chicago of China' (Jacob, 2012) and 'the single greatest port for the collection and sale of commodities in all of the [Chinese] empire' (Danielson, 2005, p. 15).

In the middle and late twentieth century, Wuhan's prominence as an international port city diminished as Indian tea exports increased, as the foreign land concessions were abolished, and as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began developing what are today the boomtowns of China's south-eastern coast (Hessler, 2007) as the nation's industrial vanguard. Yet Wuhan today remains an important centre for trade. In 2004, Wuhan ranked third among Chinese cities in science and technology (Luo, 2004). The city boasts strong industries in optoelectronics, automobile and steel manufacturing, and biology engineering. These industries contributed to a per capita income of USD$8,405 in 2010 (Hubei Bureau of Statistics, 2011). While this figure ranks only 38th ('List of Chinese municipalities,' 2012) when compared with other Chinese municipalities and prefecture-level cities, many of the top spots belong to much smaller cities in north-eastern and north-western provinces that have become exceptionally wealthy following recent discoveries of mineral deposits and other natural resources. To better conceptualise the city's relative affluence within China, consider Wuhan's two officially recognised sister cities in America, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, which have roughly comparable per capita income rankings (22nd and 20th, respectively, compared with other American metropolitan areas; US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2011), as examples. Like Wuhan, Pittsburgh and St. Louis are inland, riverside factory towns that in the early twentieth century gleamed in the international spotlight as centrepieces of the national economy and that in the twenty-first century remain important, though perhaps less internationally prominent, industrial metropolises.

The Yangtze and Han rivers have also supplied Wuhan with a steady flow of beaux-esprits, as the city has long been a centre of the arts and intellectual exchange. Wuhan

was either home to or often frequented by several of China's most renowned poets and musicians, including the Tang Dynasty (618CE-907CE) poet Cui Hao and the Warring States Period (475BCE-221BCE) musician Yu Boya[7]. The city was also the birthplace of Han opera, one of China's oldest and most popular operas, which, during the Qing Dynasty, merged with Hui opera in the formation of the famous Peking opera.



Figure 1.1. Today opera remains a strong attraction in Wuhan's Cultural Arts Centre (two buildings)

Today, the arts are also pursued, alongside the sciences, in Wuhan's modern universities. The city has 35 institutes of higher education, including the prestigious Wuhan University, and claims the largest number of enrolled college students of any city in China (van Beynen, 2012).

To live in Wuhan, then, is to have access to considerable opportunities to gain an advanced education and/or enter the middle and upper echelons of what is now the world's second largest national economy. Yet the city is also well acquainted with hardships. The city's history is steeped in war. Perhaps inevitably owing to its strategic

[7] A recording of Yu Boya's 'Flowing Water' was included on NASA's Voyager 1, launched in 1977, as one of several audio files meant to serve as representations of humanity should the vessel ever be found by intelligent life forms from other planetary systems (Angrum, n.d.).

riverine location, the city and surrounding areas have served as backdrops to a tri-millennial succession of numerous inter- and intra-dynastic power struggles, rebellions, warlord campaigns, and international conflicts, as well as a major CCP power struggle. In the twentieth century alone Wuhan witnessed intense violence related to three separate conflicts. In 1911, Sun Yat-Sen's 'Wuchang Uprising,' which led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the formation of Asia's first republic, the Republic of China, was launched in what is today Wuhan's Wuchang borough (Spence, 1990, pp. 262-68). During the Second World War, the city was taken by Japan in 1938 and then largely destroyed by U.S. firebombing raids in 1944. And in July 1967, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, close to one thousand people perished in the 'Wuhan Incident,' which was a power struggle between groups supported by the People's Liberation Army, on one side, and groups supported by Mao Zedong's Red Guards on the other (Robinson, 1971, pp. 413-18).

Quality of life in Wuhan is also hindered by the punishing Hubei climate. The Yangtze's vulnerability to flooding complicates life in the city. Historically, the city has been subjected to numerous devastating floods, as the Yangtze has tended to rise 28 or more metres several times each century (Danielson, 2005).



Figure 1.2. A riverfront park is dedicated to Yu the Great (right)(*Dayu*; 大禹), the Xia Dynasty (2070BCE-1600BCE) ruler who introduced flood controls throughout central China.

On a more regular basis, Wuhan residents are discomforted by the weather. Many Wuhanese claim that the city only has two seasons: winter and summer. *Bu shi tai re, jiu shi tai leng* (If it's not too hot, then it's too cold) is a common Wuhan expression. While the winters are cold, the city is famous for its oppressively hot and humid summers. Known as the greatest of the 'Three Furnaces of China,' alongside Nanjing and Chongqing, the summer temperatures average above 90 degrees Fahrenheit with dewpoints that commonly reach 79F or more (Wuhan Climate, 2012). As indoor air

conditioning is scarce, or scarcely used due to high energy costs, in the evenings from mid-May to mid-September residents can often be seen sleeping on streets and balconies to escape the indoor heat.

Like *WoW,* then, Wuhan is massive, steeped in colourful history, and at times dangerous to inhabit. Like *WoW*, Wuhan is suffused with politics. The CCP is pervasive of everyday experiences and dictates the structure of the landscape, the outputs of the education and media systems, working conditions, and the boundaries of residency and travel. Like *WoW*, Wuhan is demanding. Students such as Lihong are often confined to classrooms or silent study halls for upwards of 14 hours a day, including weekends much of the time. Success in this system is crucial to obtaining a good job and avoiding the unpalatable working conditions endured by farmers, migrant workers, and other representatives of the peasantry.



Figure 1.3. Two of Wuhan's most famous landmarks: Yellow Crane Tower (left) and Guiyan Buddhist Temple (right).

Like *WoW*, Wuhan is situated in the heart of an economic powerhouse that is effecting great change in the world. The People's Republic of China (PRC), which just half a century ago watched tens of millions of its citizens die of starvation, is now the world's second largest economy, with 189 billionaires (Frank, 2011), three Fortune Global 500 top 10 companies, 850 million mobile phone users (Martin, 2011), and 457 million Internet users (Jun, 2011). It has reduced poverty by approximately 400 million people over the past 25 years (Thomas, 2011). It is a nation undergoing change at such a fast pace that many Chinese youth currently coming of age through the Chinese education system, an age cohort that some have referred to as 'China's little emperors' (Chandler, 2004; Jing, 2008; Dyer, 2010), can find in it nothing but a confusing mishmash of contradictory imperatives.

(1.4) My *WoW* – Bellicose, Gladiatorial Individualism

This section briefly outlines my pre-fieldwork expectations in order to contextualise the analyses presented in succeeding chapters. Based on pre-fieldwork research and my own experiences with the North American version of the game (NA*WoW*), I expected to find in C*WoW*[8] attitudes and behaviours characteristic of what anthropologist Bonnie Nardi has, in her Azeroth-based monologue *My Life as a Night Elf Priest* (2010)[9], termed the 'boy's tree house' interactive plane. According to Nardi, the aggressive language and behaviours characteristic of the 'boy's tree house' interactive plane saturated the gameworld. In the boy's tree house:

[8] Throughout the dissertation the term '*WoW*' is used whenever discussion refers to the game in general terms (e.g., discussion of game mechanics, quests). 'C*WoW*' is used only when discussion refers to 'Chinese *WoW*' in particular.

[9] Nardi's research was also conducted in NA*WoW* servers.

> Sexualised, homophobic language was normalised in text and voice chat (although stopping short of what would probably take place in a men's locker room). Male players casually mentioned things like blow jobs and buttsex. They spoke of raping, or being raped by, mobs or players in battlegrounds and arenas. They used words such as douche bag, pussy, cunt, and pimp. The term gay was a generically derisive (and liberally invoked) adjective. Males called players fag, faggot, or homo if displeased or as a joke. Male players sometimes taunted other males by referring to them as 'little girls.' (p. 153)[10]

By Nardi's reasoning, this hyper-masculine rhetoric served to create a locker-room atmosphere 'tailored to the desires of many male players' (2010, p. 158), a place where males could relax and consort without the stresses of interacting with or competing for females. According to Nardi, 'by flattening the interactive sexual landscape, males established the choice for themselves of focusing on performance, and kicking back to enjoy rough talk, without the need for the sometimes vexing activities of heterosexuality' (2010, p. 160).

Like Nardi, I have throughout my time in *WoW* also witnessed a mélange of profanity-laced, homophobic, bellicose, and hyper-masculine rhetoric and posturing that seems to permeate the gameworld at every communicative level. However, while for Nardi these antagonistic ripostes are usually collegial and promote locker-room camaraderie, my experiences ring truer to the 'hatred and bigotry' observed in *WoW* by Langer (2008) and Schwartz (2006). I have frequently observed these same or similar behaviours complicit in actions intended to wound, mock, threaten, subjugate, or dethrone other players. For example, I have daily observed players 'flaming' (i.e., calling players fags, retards, douche bags, screaming 'You Suck,' etc.) battleground teammates

[10] Nardi's observations are consistent with those of Golub (2007 via Nardi 2010, p. 153), who also studied raiding guilds and in-game sexualised dialogue. For example: 'At one point, one [raider's] microphone sent some noise across the channel. The [male] raid leader asked . . . 'John . . . is that a dick in your mouth?''

for committing small errors, harassing or ejecting raid teammates who did not score high enough on the DPS ('damage per second') meters (i.e., gauges), 'rage quitting' (i.e., shouting obscenities at group members and then immediately logging off before anyone can respond) when displeased with the raid master's actions, bickering over dungeon loot distributions, and boasting derisively over acquisition of certain 'epic' weapons, etc. I have had ample occasion to pose in my mind questions similar to the following question posted several years ago on a popular forum:

> Why does the game WoW (World of Warcraft) turn people into assholes? The minute you buy it and play it it turns you into a asshole. That or if you recruit one of your friends in real life and if you play it it turns them into an asshole as well. Why does this game bring so much drama? I have quit WoW because I was tired of all the drama and bitchy people on there. I was also tired of my friends being turned into rude cocky players who think they are better than everyone else, etc. Is this how an online MMORPG such as WoW that destroys your life and turns someone you know into an asshole? I'm about to go play Aion. I hope this game isn't worse than WoW. (Vito, 2009)

In my experience, these behaviours created a world that was less a jovial locker-room and more a gladiator's coliseum or, to invoke Wark's description of digital gameworlds in general, 'an environment of pure *agon*[11], of competitive striving after distinction' (2006, p. 4). In my experience, in *WoW* the predominant style of gameplay was such that one was interested in promoting one's status above and beyond all others, including one's confederates, through superior distinction in quantifiable aspects of gameplay (e.g., gear, damage meters) and by projecting prowess through constant displays of threat, mockery,

[11] From the Greek 'agon,' which can be interpreted as contest or struggle and here is also used to suggest its derivative, 'agony.'

slander, etc. I have termed this style of gameplay 'bellicose, gladiatorial individualism[12],' and I expected to find something similar in C*WoW*[13].

Prior to fieldwork, I had imagined that the most compelling of *WoW*'s cognitive affordances lie in the gameplay elements that facilitated this bellicose, gladiatorial individualism. In my probationary research student (PRS) transfer paper, I outlined what I thought some of these gameplay elements might be. To give a few examples: (1) I discussed *WoW* as an environment replete with contingencies that *can be controlled* (following Malaby, 2007, who refers to stochastic contingencies, social contingencies, semiotic contingencies, and performative contingencies in online games, all of which can, eventually and with enough practice, be subject to one's control) and the game's related opportunities for controlling behaviours and 'control-based emotions,' that is to say, emotions (e.g., anger) that are catalysed by, among other things, a cognitive appraisal that one is (or can become, if certain steps are taken) in control of a situation (Scherer, 1984). (2) I discussed the game's repertoire of social and functional roles and the documented tendency for NA*WoW* players to assume roles/relationships in the game that were

[12] Aside from supporting evidence in Langer (2008) and Schwartz (2006), this characterization is based on my own impressions of NA*WoW* (i.e., I have no systemised data to support these characterisations) and the impressions of friends and colleagues. Since returning from fieldwork I have given several talks that featured 'moral cognition' and '*World of Warcraft*' somewhere in the title or abstract. On several occasions at these talks I have been approached by attendees who either (1) claim great surprise that *WoW* could be appropriated for moral purposes and/or (2) have expressed their own impressions that the game is populated largely by disagreeable behaviours. One attendant, an ordained Christian minister, claimed to play the game to 'release his inner jerk.' Elsewhere, even William Bainbridge, a sociology professor, National Science Foundation Fellow, and septuagenarian has opined on the 'sweet, immoral pleasure' of 'ganking' (i.e., pummeling helpless passersby) (Bainbridge, 2010, p. 135).

[13] Please note that the data and analyses that follow, which illustrate Chinese players advocating in-game moral betterment and cooperative behaviours, are not intended to endorse 'Competitive West' vs. 'Harmonious East' narrative clichés (e.g., as might romanticise the latter as a communal utopia). As a concept, bellicose, gladiatorial individualism features in this dissertation to (1) disclose my initial design for the project and (2) illustrate that *WoW* facilitates in-game behaviours markedly different from those discussed in chapters 3 and 4 (hence the need, as Chapter 4 argues, to go beyond the game artefact to better understand in-game experiences).

antithetical to roles/relationships that characterised the players' offline lives (e.g., people who occupy managerial positions at work are more likely to pursue 'follower' jobs in-game; Yee, 2007; 2008). (3) I suggested that playing *WoW* may bias perceptions towards the 'Western' (or 'analytical') perceptual tendencies articulated by Richard Nisbett by arguing that the game's visuals and mechanics motivated perceptions of individual agency (as opposed to collective agency) and enthusiasm for debate and unilateral victory (as opposed to compromise) (2003; Nisbett et al., 2001) [14]. In sum, I discussed *WoW* as an environment, a sort of cognitive gymnasium, that privileged faith in individual agency, that exercised control behaviours, and that enabled players to temporarily put to one side the social roles that structured their real lives. In short, I imagined that these affordances were, in the fuller context of the gameworld, realised as bellicose, gladiatorial individualism.

Prior to fieldwork, I further imagined that Wuhan *WoW* players coming up through the Chinese education system might find this 'cognitive gymnasium' suitable to their lives as contemporary urban Chinese youth. Here I was first and foremost influenced by discussions common to Chinese anthropology in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium that emphasised how, after decades of isolation from the West, all things (commonly considered by Chinese as) Western, including civil society (Saich, 2000; Zhang & Baum, 2004; Huang, 1993), premarital sex (Yan, 2003), hedonistic

[14] Nisbett (2003) and colleagues (Nisbett et al., 2001) outline an extensive empirical record showing significant performative differences on perceptual tasks (e.g., describing an aquarium scene) demonstrated by 'Western' vs. 'Eastern' participants. Nisbett and colleagues hypothesise that these perceptual tendencies may influence 'individual' vs. 'group' dynamics articulated in prominent social science frameworks (e.g., Shweder's (1990) 'autonomy' vs. 'group' ethics; Douglas' (1996 [1970]) 'grid vs. group' framework; Durkheim's (1951 [1897]) 'altruistic' vs. 'egoistic' selves). Prior to fieldwork, I was interested in examining how *WoW* gameplay may influence players' perceptual tendencies in ways that favour 'individualist' dynamics.

consumption (Jing, 2000), expressions of individuality (Rofel, 2007), and free market capitalism (Gittings, 2006), were being enthusiastically appropriated by Chinese youth and rapidly transforming Chinese society.

I was further influenced by my limited exposure to Chinese popular culture, as it was shared with me by my Chinese colleagues at Oxford and as it was presented on China-watch blogs, such as ChinaGeeks.org and ChinaHush.com. These sources repeatedly testified to the runaway popularity among Chinese youth of the American National Basketball Association (NBA), 'get rich quick' market designs, and edgy American television shows such as *Gossip Girl*, a drama series about a fictional, ultra-competitive prep school for Manhattan elite. I read in these academic and popular reports a strong interest in artefacts of popular culture that championed individuality and competition. I imagined that *WoW*, with its affordances for bellicose, gladiatorial individualism, might be perceived as a colourful, playful training ground for ambitious youth suddenly eager to express individuality, rebel against social norms, hone entrepreneurial prowess, or simply emulate fashionable competitive behaviours. Accordingly, I went to China to capture what I anticipated would be descriptions of gameplay as contemporary exercises in social and financial competency.

(1.5) Their *WoW* – 'A Complete Morality'

Throughout the fieldwork some support for these preconceptions was found. During gameplay I was occasionally yelled at, spat upon, and corpse-camped[15]. Moreover,

[15] 'Corpse-camping' is an antagonistic practice that entails killing a player's character and then standing by – or 'camping out' next to – the character's corpse so that one can kill the character again immediately upon his resurrection (the latter occurs when the player has piloted his character's soul from the graveyard back to the corpse, where he/she can execute a resurrection command).

players, when asked to reflect on the value of *WoW* gameplay to their lives, sometimes conveyed that one could find lessons in Azeroth for obtaining greater self-sufficiency in a market-run society. Yet more frequent and, by virtue of the contrast with my experiences in NA*WoW*, more interesting were the instances of goodwill and camaraderie that were commonly observed amongst players – instances, for example, of gushing compliments, ready and explicit deference to guild leadership, and disregard for the game's material rewards (e.g., gear, gold). A significant subset of players pointed to the game's opportunities for moral actions in the following dimensions: care, justice, group loyalty, and leadership. According to informants, tanking and healing afforded players opportunities to care for vulnerable group members. The gameworld's bickering factions and ubiquitous extinction threats made salient the importance of displaying loyalty to, and making concessions for, the group. The need to exchange goods and services with one another in order to increase one's proficiency in the game's professions created opportunities to trade fairly with others. The intense demands of dungeon raids required leadership and deference to authority. In the words of one player: '*A world should have a morality. . . . Here there is a complete social system. A complete morality*' (T35).

Occasionally concomitant to these player emphases on *WoW*'s opportunities for caring, effecting justice, etc. were reports of spiritual (*jingshen;* 精神) or soul-related (*linghun;* 灵魂-related) experiences obtained in the gameworld. These were often portrayed by my informants as the gold standard, so to speak, of *WoW* gameplay and came in two forms. First, some reports reflected a general moral-spiritual association pervasive throughout the 'three teachings' (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) as well as many of China's religious and quasi- or crypto-religious traditions (e.g., *Falun*

Gong, syncretic movements like *Daoyuan,* redemptive societies like *Xiantiandao,* etc.) in that they discussed spirituality as the result of moral practices and/or as constitutive of moral sentiment.

> *WoW has given me a spiritual feast. I haven't had teamwork for a long time. It is so much more than the teamwork allowed in school on very limited circumstances. In WoW, it emphasises more about unconditional loyalty and friendship just like in the Chinese traditions. . . . WoW to me is a long spiritual odyssey. I have to keep walking and I should keep walking.* T64

Second, some reports of spiritual experiences suggested soul migrations or fusions into the gameworld that resulted in enhanced powers or knowledge:

> *I always think that playing a character in the game is playing the soul of a person. When you are playing the game with your heart the departing and reunion of your soul will have bound with the soul of the character and you will realise the nature and the character of human beings.* T79

These two forms of 'spiritual' experiences, though perhaps qualitatively different as experiences, were clearly related in that they both seemed to emanate from the performance of the aforementioned moral actions (e.g., caring, etc.).

There were other interesting concomitants to in-game moral and spiritual experiences. One was that players often claimed to pursue these as alternatives to, or even in defiance of, the materialism, nihilism, cronyism, and general moral atrophy that players believed had run amuck in China's market-driven urban centres. Informants often spoke with disdain about the 'rich kids', or *fuerdai* (富二代; wealthy second generation) – the children of CCP officials (i.e., the children constituting the so-called 'princeling party;' 'China's new rulers,' 2011) or corporate executives, who possess extraordinary wealth and the *guanxi* (关系; social connections) to live above-the-law, consequence-free

lifestyles. Informants often spoke disapprovingly of how conspicuous consumption and the imperative to make money had seemingly supplanted the traditional emphases on unity and fraternity expressed in the communist and Confucian traditions. Informants often spoke with regret of the loneliness they believed was endemic to the millions of single children[16] studying in classrooms upwards of 14 hours a day in order to become eligible for quality jobs that would allow them to provide not just for themselves, but also their parents, grandparents, and future children. The post-Maoist Chinese society that authorised these articles of social life was recognised as having its perks, but it was also frequently spoken of as 'sick' *(shengbing*; 生病) or as having 'lost something' (*diule*; 丢了). Azeroth, with its capacity for moral and spiritual experiences, was commonly referred to as a pure (*chunjing*; 纯净的) environment and as a sanctuary from society's ailments. And though elements of what has been termed bellicose, gladiatorial individualism were visible within C*WoW*, for most informants, these were identified as instances of the real world that had infiltrated Azeroth and that needed to be expunged.

Another interesting concomitant was that players rallied behind these in-game moral and spiritual experiences as a strategy for keeping friends bound together against heavy criticism extending from parents and government mouthpieces. Parents often levied tremendous pressure on children to succeed in school and discouraged gameplay. Parents cited games such as *WoW* as injurious to their children's minds, bodies, financial prospects, and, by extension, their capacity to support their aging parents. In more public environs, CCP propaganda often portrayed players as violent thugs who had internalised the violence they oversaw in the gameworld, as addicts to 'electronic opium' that needed

[16] Due to the nation's 'One Child Policy,' discussed in detail in Section 4.5.

rehabilitation, as traitors who had surrendered their parents' hard-earned money to a foreign institution (Blizzard), or as freakish specimens who had suffered physical abnormalities through excessive gameplay. These pressures motivated defections from the game, which were costly for remaining players. By privileging the production of moral sentiment as a salient aspect of gameplay, players were in effect generating bonds that bound players together with the motivation to continue playing in spite of these pressures.

These findings indicated that this project could be profitably adjusted to focus on the (1) gameworld's cognitive affordances for moral cognition and related spiritual experiences and (2) the offline agencies that motivated an interest in these in-game cognitive affordances in lieu of, or as superordinate to, other in-game cognitive affordances (e.g., those undergirding bellicose, gladiatorial individualism). The chapter summaries in the next section outline how these analyses will proceed in the following chapters.

(1.6) Chapter Summaries

This section outlines how analyses will proceed in the following chapters.

1.6.1. Chapter 2 – Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations

Chapter 2 provides an overview of psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph's 'five moral foundations' (2004; 2007). Exegeses focus on the moral foundations' ontological properties, evolutionarily salient functions, and activating stimuli. These moral foundations feature prominently in the following chapters, informing analyses

about the gameworld's appeal. The conceptual backdrop provided here will facilitate a clear understanding of the mind-game interactions hypothesised throughout the dissertation.

1.6.2. Chapter 3 – Why Would Anyone Play in a Virtual World?

The title of Chapter 3 is an analogue of Justin Barrett's (2004) *Why Would Anyone Believe in a God?* Barrett's title echoes the scepticism non-religious onlookers sometimes have for those who believe in things that are (according to said onlookers) imaginary. In response to the titular question, Barrett, a scholar in the 'cognitive science of religion' (CSR), outlines the conceptual properties of religious phenomena that entice human minds to invest time and resources with concepts (e.g., god concepts, spirit concepts) that cannot be seen or reliably proven to exist in the world. In Chapter 3, this dissertation follows Barrett's lead by using CSR concepts to convey a partial explanation for the success of virtual world concepts.

To this end, it is proposed that one way to attest for *WoW*'s global popularity is to recognise the gameworld as rich in moral 'inferential potential' (following Boyer, 2002) and 'relevance' (following Sperber & Wilson, 1986). These two concepts are introduced and their importance is illustrated with respect to CSR attempts to explain the pan-cultural prevalence of religious and supernatural concepts. The ethnographic data that reveal *WoW* as an environment superior to real life for (positively valenced[17]) moral cognition are then discussed. Throughout the chapter, ethnographic data and cognitive analyses proceed hand in hand – quotes gathered from player testimonials (see Section

[17] 'Positively valenced' refers here to those feelings or brain states that are generally deemed pleasant or appetitive. See Scherer (1984) for discussion of 'valence' in emotions.

1.7.2) highlight aspects of gameplay that informants deemed morally significant, and this chapter illustrates how these aspects of gameplay may interact with Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations. Specifically, the ethnographic data will be used to split the *WoW* universe into two analytically separate categories, narratives and actions, and it will be argued that *WoW* is rich in moral inferential potential and relevance because it contains an abundance of clear-cut, morally relevant narratives and opportunities for moral actions. Finally, it will be argued that testimonial statements that discuss the game's 'purity' can be read as affirmations of the game's superior (positively valenced) moral relevance vis-à-vis real life.

1.6.3. Chapter 4 – In-game Spiritual Experiences and *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion

Chapter 4 builds on the analyses presented in Chapter 3 by examining (1) how the game's moral cognitive affordances were used in the production of in-game spiritual experiences and (2) the centrality of these spiritual experiences to a *WoW* guild's capacity to remain an intact, coherent unit in the face of extinction threats levied from the Chinese government and from players' parents. This chapter is broken into two parts. The first part introduces the terms used by the testimonials to discuss spiritual experiences ('spiritual,' *jinghsen*; 精神 and 'soul,' *linghun*; 灵魂) and illustrates that it is common for Chinese traditions to associate moral accomplishment with spiritual significance. Hence, in-game experiences of moral cognition may be identified as having spiritual significance. While there is little evidence that any particular framework is motivating the identification of moral actions with spiritual significance, it will be pointed out that there

are two noticeably Confucian undertones to several of the testimonial reports of spiritual experiences. The remainder of Part I surveys the relevant testimonial reports.

The second part of the chapter examines the 'mangle' (following Steinkuehler, 2006) of agencies that reinforced players' interests in the game's moral cognitive affordances. The main argument pursued here is that intense pressure to quit playing *WoW* applied by various government institutions and concerned parents motivated players to justify gameplay and keep guild memberships intact by promoting the game as a gateway to moral achievement and spiritual experiences that could not be obtained in real life[18]. To this end, the first three sections of Part II illustrate that C*WoW* players are under considerable pressure from government institutions and parents to quit playing the game. Section 4.6 describes hardships guilds face due to player defections. The penultimate section then illustrates that in response to these extinction threats, C*WoW* players rallied around the game in a manner similar to that in which besieged groups often use religion as a tool for group cohesion (following Sosis & Alcorta, 2008).

1.6.4. Chapter 5 – *WoW* as a Platform for Collective Effervescence as Moral Flow

Chapter 5 examines in closer detail the 'soul merger' experiences (see T79 quoted above for an example) discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter argues that these soul merger reports are symptomatic of what Durkheim termed 'collective effervescence.' To this end, it will be shown that soul merger reports resemble collective effervescence in both form and function. This chapter also argues that the testimonial authors reveal, by

[18] Please note that these extinction pressures, not an inerasable 'Harmonious East' ethic (see footnote 13, above), are hypothesised to motivate the production of in-game moral and spiritual experiences.

Durkheim's logic, circumstances that should stoke players' natural appetites for collective effervescence.

Then, collective effervescence is investigated from a cognitive perspective and one prominent cognitive explanation for collective effervescence, Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' concept (1990), is reviewed. It will be argued that flow contributes to but cannot be considered comprehensive of collective effervescence. The chapter then argues that what is occurring in *WoW* soul mergers, and perhaps in collective effervescence generally, is what has been termed here 'moral flow' – that is, a flow state infused with positive affective outputs from the moral foundations identified by Haidt and Joseph. Accordingly, tasks that catalyse a flow state and that also contain phenomena that intersect with the moral foundations in a way that generates positive moral sentiment – tasks, for example, such as tanking in *WoW* – may result in moral flow, a.k.a. collective effervescence. The penultimate section of this chapter presents the preliminary findings of a survey that supports the hypotheses that moral flow experiences are prevalent within C*WoW* and are identified as 'spiritual' experiences.

1.6.5. Chapter 6 – Conclusion: *WoW*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Ritual

This brief, final chapter summarises the key points made in the preceding chapters and concludes that in the contexts sampled here the high-contingency aspects of C*WoW* gameplay may be viewed as Durkheimian religious rituals. The preliminary implications of this assessment for those academic disciplines listed in Section 1.8 below are discussed.

(1.7) Data Collection Methods

To gather the data for this dissertation, I: (1) engaged in participant observation, (2) collected written testimonials, (3) conducted semi-structured interviews, (4) administered two online surveys, and (5) ran a Coding and Quantifying Emotional Experiences (CQEE) longitudinal study[19]. This section outlines the execution of these data-gathering measures and includes discussion of difficulties encountered and some associated concerns with the data acquired. It will also be discussed how the data obtained from each of these measures will be used in the succeeding chapters. In these data collection efforts, I received translation and survey-distribution help from several native-Mandarin-speaking research assistants (listed in the acknowledgments section).

1.7.1. Participant Observation

Because this dissertation was to focus on experiences and social processes in both a (more or less typical) Chinese university setting and in C*WoW*, I needed to secure roles in both environments that afforded participation in and observation of these processes. To secure the former, I took a teaching position at Jianghan University, a four-year school catering to approximately 17,000 students in Wuhan. I was tenured at Jianghan for three semesters and one summer[20] for a total duration of 15 months. I was hired to teach oral English classes, but after the first semester I was given a weekly, two-hour lecture course titled 'Introduction to the History and Culture of English Speaking Countries: USA, Canada, and New Zealand.' Following the first semester I was also asked to supervise 11 seniors (six English majors and five English minors) as they worked on their senior

[19] CQEE data will not feature in this dissertation. Consequently, CQEE collection methods are not outlined here.

[20] I did not teach classes during this summer but still lived on campus and had regular interactions with students.

theses (all Jianghan seniors are required to write a 4,500-word senior thesis). The lecture rooms and theses afforded discursive spaces wherein students voiced their observations and opinions on how their peers were responding to the new ideas and technologies shaping China's urban centres. For example, one of the nine thesis papers I supervised that addressed contemporary Western influences on Chinese culture described the growing influence of Christmas on Spring Festival. From these classroom and written discourses (which also led to many casual, out-of-classroom interactions) I discerned what I took to be indices of 'anomie' (following Durkheim; 1951 [1897]); and these are discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, as university instructor I was able to witness daily one of the extinction threats to *WoW* guilds, the arduous demands of the hyper-competitive, state-run education system, that are discussed in Chapter 4.

Positioning myself in C*WoW* was difficult and can best be described in phases. First, I created a C*WoW* account and started two new characters – a warlock (named Polkadot) and a druid (Snowtree), as I had extensive experience[21] with these classes in NA*WoW* – on separate servers and began to level them. However, it is time consuming to level a character to 'end game,' that is, to the point at which the player can access the game objectives available only to those who have obtained the final level (level 70 at time of fieldwork[22]) for their character. Because the vast majority of in-game socialisation is attached to pursuits of endgame objectives, I was eager to get to level 70 as soon as possible. After a few weeks of levelling I decided to purchase the account of an existing player who was leaving the game. This account included four level-70 characters. From

[21] At the time I thought it essential to be fully proficient in my class, as I anticipated a (bellicose, gladiatorial) environment that would not kindly receive ineffective players.

[22] See Appendix A for details on level caps in *WoW*.

these, I selected a mage to be the 'main' character, as I had also logged extensive experience with the mage class in NA*WoW*, and joined a guild called Coma Divine, which had many members in Wuhan and was recommended by one of my students (who was also a member but who rarely participated). Following the acquisition of the mage (Autumnal), I abandoned Snowtree at level 54. I levelled Polkadot to level 39 and then enrolled her in a 39s 'player vs. player,' or PvP[23], guild called Fat Guys. However, I spent the majority of my time in C*WoW* using Autumnal, and the processes I observed in Coma Divine inform analyses in Chapter 4. Snowtree makes empirical cameos in sections 3.4.1 and 4.7.3.

There were, however, several complications to in-game participant observation that are worth mentioning here in the interests of transparency and because two of these complications affected how data were prioritised for analyses. First, the thousands of quests, locations, abilities, artefacts, etc. in Azeroth were difficult to understand in Chinese. Though I would characterise my Chinese language skills as intermediate to advanced-intermediate (at the time of fieldwork), many of the game's terms were beyond my comprehension (e.g., an axe called 'Bloodied Arcanite Reaper'). After some initial difficulties, this problem was addressed by replacing the language files in a C*WoW* client (which I had copied to an external hard drive that could be taken to Internet cafés) with the language files from an NA*WoW* client, which allowed me to view everything in the gameworld (minus player dialogue) in English. As NA*WoW* and C*WoW* are near

[23] See Appendix A for explanation of PvP vs. PvE distinctions.

verbatim equivalents,[24] the language files for one client fit seamlessly into the other client.

Second, I experienced difficulties understanding the Internet slang, or 'gamespeak,' that permeated player dialogue. C*WoW* is, like any game, replete with acronyms, fast-evolving Internet memes, and the barely intelligible word soup of players typing on the fly[25]. Though I gradually became familiar with the C*WoW* gamespeak lexicon, throughout fieldwork I had to rely enormously on human translators – usually in-game teammates or Chinese colleagues who accompanied me to the Internet café – for translation assistance and fact checking. Though using human translators is not a foreign practice to social anthropology, the third complication rendered reliance on translators problematic.

Third, translation and note taking were often difficult because the demands of gameplay were usually intense. Translators, who were usually engaged in the same intense in-game activities as I was, were often translating off-the-cuff, so to speak, while simultaneously focusing on game objectives. For my part, it was often difficult to question informants, record responses, pause for reflection, and so on. Sometimes both translation and note taking could only be done after-the-fact, with me attempting to

[24] See Appendix A for a discussion of minor differences.

[25] With respect to acronyms, for example, in NA*WoW* one might see the following message in trade chat: 'FL, lfm, 2 dps, 1 heals, then gtg, whisp ilvl, no pvp.' The player who writes this message means to communicate that he/she has already formed a group that will attempt the Firelands ('FL') raid dungeon and is looking for more ('lfm') players – specifically, two 'damage per second' ('DPS') players and one healer ('heals'). Once these are added to the group, the group will be 'good to go' ('gtg'). Anyone who wishes to apply for a spot with this group should send a message (i.e., should whisper, or 'whisp,' the player) that contains the applicant's average item level ('ilvl' – i.e., an indication of how good/poor the applicant's gear is). However, players in player vs. player gear ('pvp' gear, as opposed to 'player vs. environment,' or 'pve,' gear) will not be considered.

prompt the translator's memory of events that had happened, phrases that had been uttered, and so forth.

After the first few months of research and as a result of these second and third complications, I decided to supplement participant observation data with testimonial data by asking players to write testimonials on why they play *WoW* and how they feel it is contextualised within their offline lives. By my reasoning, this would give the players a chance to reflect on their feelings about the game and the anthropologist a chance to translate in more focused circumstances.

1.7.2. Testimonials

With the help of assistants[26], I distributed flyers in Internet cafés that invited C*WoW* players (identified by perusing the monitors in the cafés) to write testimonials about why they play the game and how they feel the game is contextualised within their offline lives. Flyer recipients were told that by participating they would receive a C*WoW* game card[27] (value = RMB¥30, or approximately GBP£3 at time of fieldwork). Each game card contained a serial number and a password (covered by a scratch-off substance) that must be used to activate the card towards a player's account, and I was able to dispense these cards remotely by sending participants these serial numbers via email upon receiving their testimonials. The flyer contained the following prompt in Chinese:

> Please take a few minutes to think about the roles *WoW* plays in your life. Perhaps *WoW* is a source of great relaxation from the stressors of work/school,

[26] These assistants also posted the prompt in their own C*WoW* guild media platforms (e.g., a guild website).

[27] In C*WoW*, unlike in other *WoW* versions, there is no option to purchase monthly subscriptions. Rather, players must purchase minutes of game time via game cards.

> or perhaps it adds adrenaline and fire to an otherwise slow-paced life. Perhaps you derive terrific feelings of achievement and companionship from your conquests in-world, or perhaps you feel that these conquests alienate you from important responsibilities in 'real' life. There are no right or wrong answers, of course, so please just let your pen follow your thoughts and tell me how *WoW* is significant to your life. Please write at least half a page in Chinese. Thanks! Please indicate your sex and age and email responses to rghornbeck123@gmail.com.

I received 93 testimonials with lengths ranging from the half-page minimum to over 1500 words. All testimonials were co-translated by myself and by research assistants who were fluent in English and had C*WoW* experience. Following fieldwork, I double-checked the original translations with two new, Oxford-based assistants. Translations of testimonial clippings that appear in the following analyses have been agreed upon by at least two, and in some cases three, external translators. Because literally translating Chinese grammatical structures into English often results in some highly confusing sentences, the translators and I occasionally re-positioned key phrases within sentences and/or added articles and determiners that were believed to increase intelligibility while maintaining the meanings/intentions of the testimonial authors.

All but a few of the testimonials were highly informative with respect to the testimonial prompt and demonstrated significant thought and effort on the part of the authors. Given the difficulty I experienced procuring in-game data from participant observation, I relied heavily on these testimonials as I structured my perceptions of what was occurring in-game. Following the translation and coding of these testimonials (see Section 1.7.3), subsequent data gathered from surveys, interviews, and participant observation were largely sought and attended to insofar as these data substantiated,

expounded on, or drew into question the recurrent themes I was coding in the testimonials.

There are, however, at least two reasons to be cautious about these testimonial data and the claims they have structured. First, because participants were rewarded with a RMB¥30 game card for writing a testimonial it is possible that some participants may have submitted multiple testimonials in pursuit of multiple game cards. To combat this possibility, I monitored email addresses to ensure that multiple testimonials were not coming from the same address[28]. However, there is of course nothing to stop a person from registering an unlimited number of email addresses. As an additional measure, the translators and I were aware of any testimonials that bore strong resemblance to other testimonials. Accordingly, two testimonials were omitted from the analyses, as they were almost verbatim copies of two other testimonials. Although it cannot be ascertained for certain that the 91 testimonials that remained for analyses originated from 91 separate authors, the different email addresses, writing styles (some wrote essays, others wrote poems or presented pictures, etc.), personal recollections, and thematic content (see Section 1.7.3) that characterised the testimonials, as well as the considerable effort that obviously went into their composition, lead to a reasonable conclusion that the data are sound.

Second, though the testimonials commented on a wide variety of topics, throughout the testimonials there were, as I have mentioned, recurrent emphases on *WoW*'s opportunities for positive moral development. But are these reports representative of the Wuhan-based C*WoW* population? Or even the testimonial authors' own feelings? It is

[28] On one occasion, two separate emails did come from the same address but they seemed to be instalments of the same testimonial. These were counted as one testimonial.

easy to imagine self-selection biases that motivate the production of testimonials that champion the author and/or justify gameplay under the banner of moral propriety. Perhaps only those who are proud of their in-game behaviour will choose to participate. Perhaps participants will only report on the most self-complimenting aspects of their behaviour – on rare moments when, in between bellicose, gladiatorial displays, a player acts in a way he/she thinks society would find morally praiseworthy.

Survey data presented in Chapter 5 suggest that such biases might indeed be operant in the testimonial data. However, as is shown in Chapter 4, it was possible to confirm many of the ideas espoused in the testimonials with events I personally witnessed in-game in the course of normal gameplay. Moreover, and as Chapter 3 will illustrate, there are reasons to believe that gameworld stimuli and mechanics are competent facilitators of moral actions and sentiment. I am therefore confident that the testimonials are sufficiently representative of how many, if not most, Wuhan players value *WoW* vis-à-vis their real lives.

It should be pointed out that I have no good demographic data on the testimonial writers[29]. When recruiting participants, my assistants and I handed out flyers to persons who were playing *WoW* and who seemed to be in their twenties or late teens. No detailed demographic information was requested. Given the profusion of Internet scams in China and the reputation of Internet cafés as purlieus of disreputable characters (see Appendix A.3), it is common for café patrons to take all available measures to protect their identity. Some players declined to participate and cited a suspicion that the researcher and/or his assistants must be scamming something. Consequently, the goal was to minimise anxiety

[29] Nor do I have any demographic data on the NA*WoW* players referred to in Section 1.4.

for those who might have wanted to participate by presenting a flyer that did not ask for detailed information.

The flyers did ask players to provide age and sex, but few players provided this information and as some of the testimonials contained anti-government sentiments, the matter was not pursued. This lack of demographic information potentially occludes some interesting discoveries; however, it should not have a negative impact on the arguments made in succeeding chapters, which rarely depend on any information external to the given testimonial examples themselves.

Finally, many of the testimonials were collected in the months immediately before and after the August 31, 2010 Chinese release of the second *WoW* expansion, *Wrath of the Lich King* (*WotLK*). As Chapter 4 illustrates, the events preceding this release resulted in some trying circumstances for C*WoW* players. Briefly, prior to release the Chinese Ministry of Culture had for nearly two years refused to authorise regular updates to the game. Bereft of maintenance and a steady infusion of new content, the game became boring and was slowly overrun with hacks (i.e., cheating devices) and bugs. Many players became frustrated and left; and many of those who stayed were saddened by these departures. These circumstances largely explain why some of the testimonial passages quoted in succeeding chapters feature 'memory-centric' (see Table 1.2 below) and often quite morose passages.

1.7.3. Analysing the Testimonial Data

This dissertation's main arguments are inspired by and built on a systematic review of the testimonials. Once the testimonials had been translated, I coded them for regularities.

I began by coding sentences or paragraphs into makeshift categories, such as '*WoW* is art,' '*WoW* personified and feminised,' and so on. Especially interesting were descriptions of *WoW* as an environment in which social cooperation could be experienced in 'pure' forms. With respect to these forms, in the first coding attempts, I catalogued what were perceived to be instances of *WoW* being championed as a place for 'togetherness,' 'justice,' 'leadership,' 'benevolence,' and 'spirituality.' I was drawn to these instances because they were so many and also because they were so different from what was expected.

After the first coding, I recalled that I had previously seen similar categories of social cooperation articulated in a cognitive framework. During an Institute of Cultural and Evolutionary Anthropology (ICEA) journal club meeting held in Spring 2008, a fellow doctoral student had circulated an article by Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph in which the authors outlined their theory that human minds contain cognitive modules dedicated to five different domains of moral reasoning: care, fairness, in-group loyalty, authority, and purity. Somewhat late in fieldwork, I recalled Haidt and Joseph's theory and reviewed their key works. The categories of social interaction articulated in Haidt and Joseph's framework seemed to capture well the aspects of gameplay described by informants. Furthermore and upon reading Haidt and Joseph's hypotheses about the 'proper domains' of these foundations – that is, the evolutionarily salient situations and stimuli for which these foundations evolved (see Section 2.4) – Azeroth suddenly seemed replete with opportunities for moral cognition.

It now seemed appropriate to focus on *WoW* as an environment for moral cognition. The testimonials were re-coded. This time the original cooperation categories were

abandoned for Haidt and Joseph's moral foundation categories (e.g., 'benevolence' was changed to 'care,' 'justice' was changed to 'fairness,' etc.; see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2). Using the diagnostic criteria implied in Haidt and Joseph's scheme, I began coding what seemed to be instances of 'care,' 'fairness,' etc. occurring or being perceived in the gameworld, as reported in the testimonials.

Moral Domain	#[30]
Caring	33
Fairness	29
In-group	62
Authority	28
Purity	46
Table 1.1. Testimonials and the moral foundations.	

The testimonials frequently contained statements that were code-able with little interpretive effort. For example, the testimonial that stated '*Personally, I think WoW is fair*' (T1) received a mark in the 'fairness' category. At other times, it was necessary to interpret statements about game mechanics that seemed to have been motivated by moral cognition. For example, according to many testimonials one of *WoW*'s greatest virtues is the balance that exists across its 10 different class types (e.g., warrior, priest, mage, etc.). No one class type can be developed or specialised in such a way that it can dominate all other classes. A skilled player using a well-developed mage will always have a sporting chance against a skilled player using a well-developed warrior. With respect to this balance, *WoW* was seen as contrary to Chinese- and Korean-produced games where, as a

[30] # = Number of testimonials in which relevant statements appeared.

result of imprecise game design, one or two class types can usually be developed in such a way that renders them nearly invincible to the other class types. These games were 'unfair,' as players who selected certain class types would, through no personal merit, gain insurmountable advantages over players who selected other class types.

WoW's balance, on the other hand, rendered it fair; a player's in-game competence was proportional to the amount of effort and skill the player invested in that character. Therefore, unlike other games and/or real life, *WoW* was perceived as a place in which a person could reap what was sowed with algorithmic precision. Accordingly, the statements that championed *WoW*'s 'balance' were coded in the 'fairness' category (for a summary listing of the interpretive measures that went into the coding process, see Appendix C).

Once the re-coding of these testimonials was complete, the numbers seemed sufficient to focus on Azeroth as an environment rich in opportunities for *moral cognition* (78 of the 91 testimonials touched on at least one of the five moral categories); and the recurrent instances of in-game moral cognition that would form the qualitative chassis over which the main arguments would be constructed had now been highlighted. Other regularities were also coded in the testimonial data (see Table 1.2). Some of these recurrent topics regularly intersected with descriptions of *WoW*'s moral affordances in interesting ways and are therefore featured in the analyses. These are marked with an asterisk (*) in Table 1.2. Also, testimonial passages were often coded in multiple categories. For example, a passage that qualified as 'memory-centric' and that contained morally relevant statements (e.g., one player recalls being cared for by another player) would be coded in both the 'memory-centric' and 'care' categories. I was occasionally

somewhat liberal in the coding of the categories listed below, as I was keen to mark for easy future reference any information that seemed to bear on the relevant categories. Subsequent coders may differ in their opinions of what qualifies as an instance of a given category and tables 1.1 and 1.2 are not intended to establish hard empirical facts but, rather, to provide a rough overview of general trends discernible in the testimonial data. To this effect it should be noted that the arguments in the following chapters, minus those in Chapter 5, do not appeal to precise quantitative measures; whether there are 30 or 25 instances of a given category is less the point than that beneath the players' idioms, acronyms, gamespeak, and sometimes barely articulate sentences the broad strokes of an interesting trend seem apparent.

Finally, while this work demonstrates the relevance of Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations to certain trends observable in the testimonial data, the analyses presented here should not be misconstrued as providing unequivocal support for Haidt and Joseph's specific formulations. One reason for pause is that the five moral foundations cannot easily accommodate all aspects of gameplay that players treated with great, perhaps moral, gravity. For example, which of the five foundations can account for the fact that instances of 'courage' and the landscape's 'beauty' were, in testimonials and casual discourse, sometimes extolled in moralistic tones? For example:

> *But now you come back again after 3 months you are in front of me, beautifully. I still worship you.* T28

One could argue that the moral foundations framework is incomplete and that separate foundations are needed to account for beauty and courage[31]. Or, one could attempt the potentially circular route of trying to fit courage and beauty into the moral foundations.

However, while the five moral foundations are, like any theory, in want of on-going revision as new evidence comes to light, any attempt to revise them for the purpose of accommodating testimonial data that do not readily, obviously fit within the framework outlined by Haidt and Joseph would be beyond the scope of this dissertation. The moral foundation framework *as it stands* as reported in Chapter 2 can, in conjunction with the 'relevance' and 'inferential potential' concepts, seemingly account for a portion of *WoW*'s appeal to human minds.

Topic Name	**#**[32]	**Description**
Allegiance	5	Players make a statement of allegiance to *WoW* – for example, '*WoW*, I will always support you.'
Art	11	Players either discuss *WoW as art* or include in their testimonials poems and/or artistic images.
Contingency*	21	Players discuss the game's challenges and whether or not the game affords suitable levels of difficulty.
Costly sacrifices*	7	Players mention inspiring sacrifices made by other players (e.g., a random stranger giving a large amount of gold to another player).
Creator agency*	14	Players discuss Blizzard's efforts in designing the gameworld and/or

[31] Since the first submission of this dissertation, Haidt has revised the moral foundations theory to include a sixth foundation: 'liberty/oppression' (Haidt, 2012). However, because this sixth foundation has just recently been posited there is as yet little relevant supporting evidence and commentary. Consequently, this dissertation, like other new works utilising the moral foundations theory (e.g., Koleva et al., 2012), will observe the original five.

[32] # = Number of testimonials in which relevant statements appeared.

		Blizzard's 'intentions.'
Education system*	25	Players comment on their experiences in high school or college.
Existential*	8	Some players say that playing *WoW* is analogous to living – for example, 'In this world we are not playing a game, we are living.'
Fame*	12	Players discuss their desire to be famous in-game.
Identity	7	Players reference a character or the gameworld as to some degree constituent of who the player 'is' – for example, 'This character is who I am.'
Incompatibility	6	Players say that real life and *WoW* are simply incompatible; one can't have/do both.
Just interesting	22	Interesting comments that didn't align with the other categories or one another to the extent that a new category could be formed.
Love stories	2	Two players described romantic relationships they pursued in-game with other players[33].
Material vs. moral/spiritual*	25	Players make statements that assess the game's material rewards (e.g., gold, gear) vs. its moral or spiritual rewards. Statements generally (1) laud the moral/spiritual experiences and (2) argue that the material rewards are deleterious to the pursuit of moral/spiritual experiences.
Memory-centric*	18	Some testimonials consist mostly or only of recollections of the players' favourite in-game memories.
More than a game*	12	Players say that *WoW* is not a game, it is more than a game.
Negative*	7	The tone of these testimonials regarding *WoW* is consistently negative. *WoW* may be described as a waste of money and youth; playing the game may be described as treason against one's country and/or parents.
Peak experiences*	17	Players discuss a moment in *WoW* that dulls all subsequent experiences by comparison.
Shout-outs*	10	Players address other players – for example, 'Player X, if you're out there

[33] It seems obvious from the descriptions that these two testimonials do not refer to one another.

		please know that I wish you all the best.'
Transformations*	15	Players discuss *WoW* as a place for personal transformation (especially transformations effecting moral betterment).
Unity under pressure*	13	Players discuss the difficulty of keeping a group unified.
Work	4	Players feel the game has become too much 'like work.'
WoW is or is like real life/society	21	Players say that *WoW* is or is like real life or Chinese society.
WoW personified and feminised*	7	*WoW* is referred to as a 'she' – for example, 'This world, she watches over me.'

Table 1.2. Other regularities in testimonial data.

1.7.4. Additional Information on the Testimonials

All testimonial quotes presented in succeeding chapters are italicised in order to give the reader an immediate indication that these are player voices (as opposed to academic materials). At the end of each testimonial quote is the number of the testimonial from which the quote was lifted – for example, 'T35' refers to 'Testimonial 35.' The full, coded versions of the testimonials that appear in this dissertation are filed, in both English and Chinese, in numerical order in Appendix D[34]. Please note that minor translation differences between in-text and appendix translations may occasionally obtain. As mentioned in Section 1.7.2, testimonial quotes that appear in the dissertation body received attention from additional translators, and this occasionally resulted in some modifications, usually for greater readability. Please also note that in order to protect the

[34] Prior to reading the full testimonials, readers should consult the Appendix D introductory notes on page 329.

testimonial authors' identities the relevant Chinese passages have been removed from testimonials that featured character names or reports of highly unique events.

1.7.5. Interviews

Data gathered from all the aforementioned methods were near unanimous in revealing players' strong dislike for the Chinese high school education system, and many C*WoW* players cited this dislike in various causal terms as a factor in their decision to play *WoW*. In an effort to better understand the relationships between the high school education system (which, as a university instructor, I did not have direct access to) and the perceived value of in-game experiences, I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews (nine with college students, one with a college instructor) that focused on the interviewees' perceptions of and experiences in high school. These interviews inform the discussion of C*WoW* guild extinction threats in Chapter 4 and the discussion of 'fatalistic suicide' (following Durkheim; 1951 [1897]) pressures in Chapter 5.

1.7.6. Surveys

Following return from the field, I conducted two surveys via websites (SurveyMonkey.com and SurveyGizmo.com) in an attempt to answer questions I had about the formulations I was deriving from the other data sources. For the first survey, I ran a Chinese translation of Haidt's 'moral foundations questionnaire' (MFQ30 form) and received 198 completed responses. However, I elected not to use these data in subsequent chapters because, since running this survey, I have decided to pursue different claims to which these data are irrelevant. For the second survey, I created a questionnaire

to test the Chapter 5 hypotheses on 'moral flow.' It was more difficult to recruit participants for this survey; at time of writing only 37 people have completed it. However, these limited data are highly interesting and are discussed in Chapter 5.

1.7.7. Data about Religious Affiliation

After reading chapters 4 and 5, readers may wonder whether or not informants were affiliated with any specific religious traditions that may have shaped their discourse on spiritual experiences. As I point out in Section 4.1, the testimonials are not clear on which, if any, specific cultural frameworks might be motivating the connection of moral sentiment with spiritual significance. The topic of religion was not broached in the gameworld, and I did not question informants about religious affiliation. Here, as participant observer, I was concerned about the potentially intrusive nature of such a question and did not want to introduce politically charged primes that were extrinsic to gameworld activities and that may make players uncomfortable.

However, there is reason to doubt that many of these testimonial writers and/or my in-game colleagues would have been actively involved in a religious tradition. Here, a survey question I included in the 'moral foundations' survey (participants were recruited by my student associates, who recruited others via their social media networks) may be instructive. Of the 258 participants who answered the question 'Do you have religious beliefs?', 215 (83.3%) said no, 27 (10.5%) said Buddhism[35], nine (3.5%) said Christian

[35] Readers should be aware that being 'Buddhist' in China does not necessary entail significant knowledge of Buddhism or active participation in Buddhist rituals/activities. It often means only that one goes to the temple once or twice a year to make a request (e.g., for money, good exam scores). A second question asked participants who selected a religion to indicate how many times per year they participated in religious activities. Of the 27 participants who checked Buddhism, six said 'never,' 11 said 'once a year or less,' nine said 'several times a year,' and one participant said 'once or twice a month.' No participants claimed to participate in Buddhist activities on a weekly basis.

(eight Protestants and one Catholic), four (1.6%) said Taoism, and three (1.2%) selected 'other' (one Islam, one 'energy,' and one claimed that his beliefs were too difficult to explain). These data reaffirm my general impression that most players were not affiliated with a religious tradition.

(1.8) Contributions

The research presented in this dissertation aims to make contributions to the following areas of academic research.

1.8.1. CSR and the Naturalness Theory of Religious Cognition

This project is first and foremost a cognitive science of religion (CSR) project in that it uses the mind sciences to effect partial explanations for the emergence of religion-like phenomena (e.g., collective effervescence, pursuit of spiritual fulfilment, actions taken to purify space, etc.) from a secular object (e.g., the *WoW* artefact). Within CSR, this dissertation is guided by the paradigms of the 'naturalness theory of religious cognition' (Boyer, 1994), which assert that religious/supernatural concepts are ubiquitous in part because (1) the mind has an innate predisposition to attend to the evolutionarily salient phenomena (e.g., predators, 'strategic information[36],' etc.) so often concomitant with those religious/supernatural concepts, and/or because (2) in some circumstances, religious beliefs may confer fitness advantages.

This work contributes to CSR generally, and the naturalness theory of religious cognition specifically, in two ways. First, if religious/spiritual susceptibilities are part of

[36] Following Boyer, 2002.

human nature, it would be expected that even in the absence of religious traditions (or, as in China, in the face of systematic indoctrination towards naturalism/materialism) such drives will still find expression, albeit sometimes in novel, unorthodox ways. The ethnographic data on in-game spiritual experiences presented here supports the naturalness theory's predictions that human minds will find a way, even where religious traditions are not widely practiced, to generate and partake in phenomena that have in Western academies traditionally fallen within the cultural jurisdiction of 'religion.'

Second, this dissertation speaks to the CSR interest in understanding how religious/supernatural traditions 'got off the ground' in our ancestral past by illustrating factors that, I will argue, resulted in the emergence of religion-like phenomena from a secular artefact in a largely secular Chinese urban environment. In other words, examining how cross-culturally recurrent components of religiosity come into being in unlikely contexts (e.g., a videogame with no overt religious affiliation) may yield insights into how those components of religiosity emerged in our ancestral past. To this end, Chapter 6 provides a summary overview of factors that this dissertation argues motivated the emergence cross-culturally recurrent religious phenomena from the *WoW* artefact.

1.8.2. Media Studies and the Mediatisation of Religion

Over the past few decades, media studies research projects focusing on the varied and evolving intersections between 'religion' and computer-mediated 'virtual reality' (VR) have generated considerable theoretical and empirical attention (Wertheim, 1999; Brasher, 2001; Dawson & Cowan, 2004; Campbell, 2005a, 2005b; Hojsgaard & Warburg, 2005; Hjarvard, 2008). Such research often focuses on the structural or

functional impacts new media platforms are having on church operations. Such works illustrate, for example, how established religions such as Christianity and Islam use virtual worlds as a place to congregate and evangelise (Dawson & Cowan, 2004) or how functions that previously fell within the domains of these established religions, such as mourning rituals, have been taken up by digital media (Pantti & Sumiala, 2009).

Within this vein, media theorists have been increasingly interested in the fact that VR platforms are sometimes perceived as gateways to different, sometimes 'spiritual,' realities (Wertheim, 1999; Gibson, 1984; Grossman, 2007). A recent edited volume (Hjarvard, 2008), which took the 'mediatisation of religion' as its theme and to which Barrett and I contributed an article (Hornbeck & Barrett, 2008), addressed some of these reports of transcendence and spirituality from a variety of academic perspectives. This volume contained bold hypotheses about innate human desires for 'enchantment' and the value of VR as a source of enchantment in a world thoroughly disenchanted by modern and postmodern forces. Yet in this volume and elsewhere, work on spiritual experiences in virtual worlds is highly speculative, exploratory, and sometimes amounts to little more than brief reconnaissance or surprised finger pointing at various phenomena that strike many as bizarre ('spiritual experiences in a game!?'). To date, there has been little investigation into what properties of virtual worlds may motivate human minds to seek in them sacredness and spirituality.

On the other hand, there has been an abundance of research examining videogames as motivating aggressive thoughts and behaviours (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson et al., 2003; Anderson et al., 2004) and/or desensitising players to real-life violence (Carnagey, Anderson & Bushman, 2007). But is the opposite also true? Is it possible that

videogames can be a gateway to positive moral transformations and enhanced spiritual awareness? This project contributes to these discourses by illustrating (1) how, at the cognitive level, it is possible for certain media to catalyse experiences that are identified by a Chinese sample as 'spiritual' and (2) social factors that motivate Chinese players to select and cultivate these experiences in lieu of cognitive affordances that motivate other, more bellicose styles of gameplay.

1.8.3. Game Studies and the Appeal of *WoW*

Though this project did not anticipate making contributions to game studies, at various points in the succeeding chapters social dynamics are showcased that could be brought to bear on prominent game studies themes. Here I will briefly outline three such themes that find expression in the game studies publication to which this project is most likely to be compared: anthropologist Bonnie Nardi's *My Life as a Night Elf Priest* (2010), a *WoW*-based ethnography that includes a chapter on *WoW* in China.

Like this dissertation, *My Life* also attempts to explain the game's runaway, cross-cultural popularity: 'An obvious question about *World of Warcraft* is: Why do people like it so much? What is the nature of this human activity that captivates so many people? Why is *WoW* addictive, compelling, absorbing, pleasurable?' (Nardi, 2010, p. 39). Nardi examines a number of in-game behaviours and aspects of gameplay that may contribute to compelling experiences, including 'theorycrafting' (i.e., collaborative player efforts to deduce algorithms that structure aspects of gameplay) and the construction and habitation of gendered space (e.g., the 'boy's tree house' interactive plane discussed in Section 1.4).

Her main response, however, to the question of *WoW*'s popularity is to connect player experiences to what the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1934) has called 'aesthetic experience.' As Nardi (2010) illustrates, a Deweyan aesthetic experience may arise from any activity constitutive of the following: (1) a desirable goal and desirable means to that goal, (2) an internal structure of phases that emphasise the 'varied colours' (p. 45) of experience, and (3) an 'experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity' (p. 47). No task can be intrinsically aesthetic. Aesthetic experiences also depend on a subjective disposition toward the activity and can never be realised solely through the structural or formal qualities of the artefact. Nevertheless, Azeroth is depicted as replete with conditions conducive to the production of these aesthetic experiences. Interleaved with her discussion of aesthetic experiences are the following themes that resonate with data and analyses featured in this dissertation.

Rules that nurture. Nardi (2010) points out that a surprising amount of game studies scholarship focuses on strategies players employ to hack, bend, subvert, manipulate, or work around game rules (e.g., Steinkuehler, 2006; Consalvo 2007; Jordan, 2007) [37]. For example, in the MMOG *Lineage* game rules do not forbid high-level players from travelling to areas with new, low-level players and killing them repeatedly. Steinkuehler (2006) pointed out that in response to rampant predation of low-level characters, some *Lineage* guilds have organised raiding parties to routinely sweep through low-level areas and dispatch high-level predators.

These observations are given as support for Steinkuehler's claim that gameplay experience is not dictated entirely by software rules, but emanates from a 'mangle' of

[37] 'Rules' here usually refer to the algorithmic permittances of gameplay, or 'structures in a software program' (Nardi, 2010, p. 68), rather than to the rules outlined in end user license agreements.

agencies constitutive of software rules, on the one hand, and a mélange of user practices, socioeconomic conditions, and technologies on the other. Nardi notes that in Steinkuehler and other works focused on player agencies celebratory undertones can be discerned: 'The story of the rescuing clans presumes that we cheer them on as they scour the countryside meting out justice to errant players' (2010, p. 71), while Taylor suggests: 'the common language of emergence and productive engagement with game systems . . . often carries with it an implied notion of positive and "freeing" interaction' (Taylor, 2008, p. 195).

But why do these hacks, subversions, and workarounds generate so much research attention that publications focused on these now 'represent a somewhat disproportionate share of social science contributions to game studies' (Corliss, 2011, p. 6)? Nardi (2010) and Corliss (2011) each touch on several possibilities. One reason may be that, as mentioned in Section 1.8.2 above, public and academic discourse on videogames has long focused on the question of whether or not videogames effect violent or anti-social behaviours in players. Consequently, by illustrating how players resist or work around the intended design of gameplay such studies may be designed to relieve the perception that players are bereft of a capacity to play games critically.

Another reason may extend from the fact that games are at times imagined as Althusserian-like ideological apparatuses consciously designed to interpolate subjects into a certain '*forme*.' For example, Poole (2008) and Rettberg (2008) have characterised the mindless, repetitive drudgery (e.g., killing an easily dispatched mob hundreds of times) many games, including *WoW*, require of players as strategies intended to indoctrinate working class capitalists. In a talk titled 'Working for the Man: Against the

Employment Paradigm in Videogames,' Poole argued that these repetitive activities function as 'a malignly perfect style of capitalist brainwashing' (Poole, 2008, para. 4). Elsewhere, Taylor follows de Castell and Bryson (1998) in expressing her concern that 'pink games' (i.e., games that cater to stereotypically feminine tastes; e.g., *Barbie Fashion Show*) may be 'as Althusser (1984) would put it, "interpellating" [sic] the desire to become the girl' (Taylor, 2008, pp. 101-102). And in a related vein, as Corliss has noted, the appearance of government-produced games such as *America's Army* (see Allen, 2011), released by the United States Army as a recruitment tool, render it 'essential to investigate the ways in which the distinct forms of interactivity generated by the videogame genre might enable new forms of domination and hegemony' (2011, p. 8; on the topic of in-game hegemony, see also Hayles, 2004[38]).

Yet by Nardi's reasoning, the overemphasis on game code as malign hegemony on the one hand and on hacks, subversions, and workarounds on the other is deaf to the generally positive role game rules play in players' lived experiences. She argues that the value of these projects should be rethought for two reasons. The first is that gameplay is dominated (while not entirely determined) by the rules (2010, p. 69, following Kallinikos, 2004) and second is that these rules can be 'nurturing, protective, caring' (Nardi, p. 76). Regarding the latter, game rules can be *nurturing, protective,* and *caring* because they define a space wherein players can create and experiment with new social forms and subjectivities that cannot easily be obtained in other domains of life. Consider, for example, the role-reversals articulated by Yee (2007; 2008) and mentioned in Section

[38] Hayles: 'Players not only play the game but are also played by the game, disciplined by the game's logic into an identification made more intense by the kinesthetic and embodied aspects of gameplay' (2004, p. 315).

1.4. It is perhaps only in a gameworld, with the aid of roles inscribed by game code (e.g., the tank protects, the healer restores) that a young child can function as a guardian of a group of adults. By these lights, game code nurtures the creation of new social forms and subjectivities; and by Nardi's reasoning, this characterisation of rules is more representative of players' lived experiences. Consequently and on the topic of game rules, a more representative orientation to the superordinate aim of game studies to 'help explain the role of games in our lives' (Consalvo, 2009, p. 409) is being overlooked.

The data presented in this dissertation largely support Nardi's characterisation of rules as creative and nurturing. In succeeding chapters, players champion Azeroth as a space for the cultivation of affirming, pro-social relationships and experiences that could seldom be had in contemporary Chinese society and as a space that is, compared to Chinese society, consistent, safe, fair, and stable.

In defense of the 'magic circle'. Nardi (2010) also brings her observations on the nurturing quality of rules to bear on ongoing debates about the 'magic circle.' The magic circle concept was coined by Dutch sociologist Johan Huizinga, who uses the term as an aid to understanding 'play' experiences*:*

> All play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. . . . The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart (Huizinga, 2003 [1949], p. 10).

According to Huizinga, 'play' is a defining feature of games and is characterised by a sense of freedom, pleasurable experience, and a separation from everyday life marked by

inconsequentiality, arcane meanings, and demarcated space. In contemporary game studies the term magic circle is often used as shorthand for all these aspects of separation and is commonly invoked as an analytical tool to illuminate the otherworld role games often seem to play in people's lives.

As Nardi points out, a spate of recent studies (Atkins, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2006; Consalvo, 2009) attacks the concept by illustrating how games are permeated by ordinary world considerations. Obvious examples include professional sports and 'gold farming' (i.e., accruing and selling game currency for real-world currency), wherein games and play may be permeated by a concern for financial gain in the ordinary world. Or, games may be experienced as metaphors for the ordinary world. In Greece, Malaby (2007) has shown that gambling is experienced as a metaphor for existential anxieties; it is impossible to gamble without reflecting on one's extra-magic circle circumstances. In a similar vein, Sutton-Smith (1975) has shown that games provide 'adaptive potentiations' in the form of vocabulary, practices, and attitudes that people take into other domains of life. For example, game structures such as *WoW*'s talent trees have been appropriated as organisational strategies by businesses (Schramm, 2007); like Malaby's gamblers, a corporate executive looking for organisational implements may inform his play with concerns and meanings that are alien to the internal logic inscribed within the circle. Likewise, the 'mangle' and workaround scholarship cited above also foregrounds scenarios wherein external logics infiltrate the circle. Finally, there are such mundane, everyday acts as bathroom breaks and 'spouse aggro' (i.e., while playing *WoW* one's wife/husband may come in the room and demand help with a household task), whereupon social or biological agencies penetrate the circle and remove, at least temporarily, one of

its players. By these lights, the magic circle concept may seem untenable. Consalvo (2008) has, in an article titled 'There is no Magic Circle,' argued that the magic circle concept should be dropped entirely and replaced with Erving Goffman's 'frame' concept (1974). With frame analyses, future research could articulate how players 'frame' the gameworld in ways that recognise continuities with the players' extra-circle lives.

Yet by Nardi's reasoning game studies scholarship is here, once again, fixated on partial truths at the expense of a more holistic and representative orientation towards players' lived experiences. Magic circles may indeed be porous, as it is impossible to set aside the entirety of one's cognitive, social, and biological makeup at the point of entry into the circle. Yet Nardi argues that players' desire for a world apart is evident and that we cannot ignore the many efforts players take to keep the circle closed. For example, the magic circle is maintained as space apart from the outside world through the careful preservation of gameworld space (2010, p. 118) and through the cultivation of specialised, arcane discourse (e.g., 'drood buff ftw!,' 2010, p. 118) that speaks to knowledge and activities that occur within the circle's borders. Through such activities, 'the magic circle, rightfully, keeps out as well as keeps in' (Nardi, 2010, p. 120).

Data presented here support the magic circle concept's credibility as an analytical tool that can help us understand the roles games play in players' lives. Specifically, readers will find in chapters 3 and 4 informants expressing appreciation for the unique social experiences that occur in Azeroth and strong support for a *WoW* that is sufficiently *separate from* contemporary Chinese society to 'preserve the social order manifest in the magic circle' (Nardi, 2010, p. 117). As sections 4.7.2 and 4.7.3 illustrate, players felt that the materialistic aspects of contemporary Chinese society must be kept out of Azeroth if

gameplay was to yield the social and spiritual experiences players desired. The following chapters will link these observations to a Durkheimian framework that talks not of magic circles but of rituals and sacredness; however, these data could be equally well used to fortify Nardi's position.

***WoW*'s cross-cultural appeal: Skinner boxes and aesthetic experience.** *My Life* and this dissertation frequently focus on similar ethnographic details in analyses of *WoW* generally and C*WoW* in particular. The two sets of ethnographic data are mutually confirming through their concurrence on a number of details and themes, and *My Life* articulates these in lucid, eloquent exposition. Further, Nardi's project and the present one share a common central research question: 'An obvious question about *World of Warcraft* is: Why do people like it so much? What is the nature of this human activity that captivates so many people? Why is *WoW* addictive, compelling, absorbing, pleasurable?' (Nardi, 2010, p. 39). One may wonder then why a re-treatment of *WoW* is needed.

By my reasoning, two limitations of Nardi's analyses loom. First, the superordinate theoretical means Nardi uses to bring her data and themes to bear on her (our) central research question, Dewey's 'aesthetic experience,' is not sufficiently developed (as presented in *My Life*) to shed much light on the mystery of *WoW*'s cross-cultural appeal. Second, the antithesis or supplementary framework, Skinnerian behaviourism, is misinterpreted to the effect that *My Life* articulates an inaccurate distinction between Skinnerian and non-Skinnerian motivators, creating confusion as to how, exactly, Nardi's work moves discourse, as it intends to do, beyond the Skinnerian paradigm. Here I outline these concerns and argue that the cognitive and evolutionary framework presented

in this dissertation has a greater capacity to give an explanation for some of the trends that Nardi's (2010) work accurately describes and that I also found to figure prominently in the ethnographic data.

To start, Nardi frames the question of *WoW*'s far-reaching appeal by invoking the 'Skinner box' (or 'operant conditioning chamber') – a glass box outfitted with levers, food pellets, and drinking tubes and named for psychologist B.F. Skinner's animal laboratory experiments – as a metaphor for explaining *WoW*'s appeal. The term 'virtual Skinner box' was coined as early as 2001 by Nick Yee, who argued that the central tenets of Skinnerian behaviourism could help to explain the success of the then-popular *Everquest* MMOG (Yee, 2001, pp. 70-72). Yee points out the rewards cycle in *Everquest* begins with instant gratifications; the low-level enemies die with a single swing of the weapon, while trade skills and levels are gained quickly. After a time, however, the 'one click rewards' disappear and players must perform increasingly elaborate tasks to gain these skill points and levels. Like a laboratory mouse 'shaped' into performing unlikely circus routines, the *Everquest* player is slowly conditioned to spend more and more time in the gameworld performing clicking tasks that may seem absurd to onlookers (Yee: 'People who don't play EQ don't see the appeal in clicking 'COMBINE' in front of a forge for hours,' 2001, p. 71). The Skinner box metaphor has also been applied to *WoW*, with Ducheneaut, Yee and colleagues illustrating that the players 'player harder' (as measured by the time it takes players to level) as they near the acquisition of fixed-ratio rewards (e.g., a riding mount obtainable at level 40; Ducheneaut et al., 2006, p. 409).

Yee and colleagues make a compelling case that Skinnerian dynamics can indeed explain some aspects of player behaviours. However, in their work the Skinner box

metaphor, which does not flatter players by likening them to laboratory mice tapping levers, may obscure the Skinnerian paradigm by giving the false impression to onlookers that only those things that can be tangibly acquired or quantified – food pellets and sugar water or, in the case of *WoW*, experience points and gear – may count as positive reinforcers in the Skinnerian paradigm. Nardi's analyses suggest as much. In *My Life* 'Skinnerian rewards' refer exclusively to virtual goods and quantified aspects of gameplay[39]. She argues that the 'Skinner box' metaphor is to some degree valid but ultimately insufficient to account for *WoW*'s mass appeal. She goes on to state her intention to 'complexify' scholarly understanding of the game as something 'more than' a Skinner box: 'But there was more than Skinnerian dynamics at play in *World of Warcraft*. The gaming experience was woven of sociality, the visual beauty of the game world, and a sense of performative mastery' (2010, p. 40).

While I empathise with Nardi's intentions, statements like the above create confusion throughout the middle sections of *My Life* by articulating incorrect distinctions between Skinnerian motivators and motivators that are billed as non-Skinnerian. In the Skinnerian corpus rewards may include such intangibles as beauty, social praise, indices of improvement or progress towards a goal (especially prominent in Skinner's *The Technology of Teaching*; 1968), and even 'the opportunity to move forward after completing one stage of an activity' (Skinner, 1961, p. 380). Rewards include any external stimuli that could be associated with some evolutionarily defined reward and that can, in practice, motivate an organism to persist in a behaviour. Consequently, the

[39] I.e., the types of rewards that have strong appeal for 'achievers' in Bartle's 'killers, achievers, socializers, explorers' classification of player types (1996; see also Yee's 'achievement-advancement' players; 2006) articulated in Section 4.7.2.

distinctions Nardi wishes to make between 'Skinnerian rewards' and things like 'beauty' or 'sociality,' especially when the latter coincides with praise, simply do not work. For example:

> The acquisition of the reward [a piece of gear] – certainly a moment of limited perfection – was also a moment of social consequence. Other players offered congratulations, remarking on the attainment of the new gear in a spirit of shared celebration. (2010, p. 113)

And, in the same paragraph:

> I once emailed assiduously farmed mats to a player who could craft them for me. He returned the crafted gear in mail with a message saying, "Way to be on top of the raid's needs Innikka!" I was pleased about this, though farming the mats had been irksomely repetitive. The player acknowledged my contribution to the social group in which we shared an activity; the message embodied a small moment of amiable connection expressive of our common performative goals. (2010, pp.113-115)

While passages like these may presume to showcase gameplay as driven by something more than Skinnerian dynamics (i.e., 'sociality' in this example), they in fact only throw more Skinnerian rewards into the mix. In this example, praise and congratulations have reinforced Nardi's willingness to perform 'irksomely repetitive' tasks (or, if they haven't, then some justification that would excise praise and congratulations from their Skinnerian trappings here would be instructive).

Throughout *My Life* these behaviour-reward associations loom large and overshadow the claim that paradigmatically new motivations for play are being showcased. Even Nardi's concept of 'performative mastery' (i.e., players are motivated by a desire to improve their in-game performances) can be understood in terms of operant conditioning. Consider the following passage:

> When I first started giving talks about *WoW*, I emphasised community and collaboration. An audience member who played the game said, "Well, that's interesting, but you've left out the most important thing—mastery of the game." The comment indicated the need to attend to the development of skilled performance as critical to player experience. The emphasis in the interviews on leveling, constant player chat about attaining better equipment, and the seriousness of the collective organisation undertaken to support raiding argued for mastery as crucial to game experience. A notion of mastery complexifies an account of *WoW* as primarily a series of Skinnerian rewards. Yes, players wanted the loot and the experience points. But mere acquisition was not the sole source of satisfaction; the loot and points accumulated, over time, toward the player's object of becoming a better player – of "improving yourself," as Mark said. Focus on the object of activity proscribes reductive accounts such as Skinner's as the end point of analysis. Attention to higher levels of activity moves analysis beyond the moment of reward to the larger historical trajectory of the activity, recalibrating the time horizon in which human activity is intelligible and for which analytical logics must be devised. (2010, p. 55).

The passage is confusing for suggesting that experience points and loot are rewards in the Skinnerian sense when they figure as objects of 'mere acquisition' but not – or that their Skinnerian authority is somehow reduced – when they figure as indices of or facilitators towards game mastery or self-improvement. However, in these latter mobilisations, too, the gear and points are serving a motivational role by sustaining, or positively reinforcing, player behaviour by either enabling or reaffirming progress towards the goal of performative mastery or self-improvement. Nardi is quite clear on this:

> A new piece of gear or an enchantment emerged as the product of the tedium, advancing a player in the game and enabling measurably better performance. (And it might be sparkly, too!) The reward directly addressed a player's object of performative excellence and continual striving to "improve yourself," as Mark put it (2010, p. 113).

Consequently, the Skinnerian trail of better gear, points and enchantments remains in the foreground of discourse, and it should be questioned whether recalibrating that trail

towards a superordinate goal (performative mastery) or respectable ethos (improve thyself) is enough to qualify gameplay as something more than 'primarily a series of Skinnerian rewards.' To the contrary, the scales could be tipped to the other side, with the ethos/goal serving as the circus act conditioned by the Skinnerian trail. For these reasons, large tracts of *My Life* seem to complexify *WoW as* a Skinner box rather than as more than one.

My Life's attempts to establish a new causal perspective are also hindered by an underdeveloped treatment of the book's superordinate theoretical framework: Dewey's 'aesthetic experience.' To illustrate, in the chapter that lays the framework Nardi informs that an aesthetic experience is 'a subjective disposition towards an activity' (p. 43) that is 'composed of means-ends relations, phases, and collective expression' (p. 44). The chapter is short, and much of it is spent illustrating how *WoW* gameplay can satisfy these criteria rather than elaborating on the significance of the criteria themselves or on their gestalt in aesthetic experience. Consider the opening paragraph of the subsection titled 'Phases':

> Dewey, however, wanted us to understand aesthetic experience as something more complex. He pointed to the "successive phases that are emphases of [the] varied colours" of aesthetic experience. In other words, aesthetic experience requires an internal structure of differentiated phases. A simple repetitive behaviour such as pulling the handle on a slot machine would not, for Dewey, count as aesthetic experience. Leveling a character in *World of Warcraft* (so long as the player enjoys the necessary actions) can be considered aesthetic because the completion of a series of quests, each unique, eventually leads to a new level. The successive phases of aesthetic activity in *World of Warcraft* recurse [sic]; the goal of reaching a new level is internally differentiated into a series of quests. Each quest itself is structured as a goal and a "description" which entails fulfilling the goal, with the description, or backstory, adding further "colour" (2010, p. 45; Nardi's bracket)

There is little elaboration on these indefinite 'differentiated phases' and 'varied colours' of experience, nor is there any discussion of why an activity that features differentiated phases might be compelling. On this latter point, Nardi does briefly cite Dewey's belief that the allure of aesthetic experience may have something to do with our 'animal past' (2010, p. 48); it may reside in the satisfying discharge of 'animal energies' (2010, p. 49) spent in 'rhythmic and developing activities' and 'productive interaction with the environment' (p. 49). However and like the basic components of aesthetic experience, this appeal to evolutionary heritage is phrased in mysterious, undefined terms (e.g., 'animal energies') and generally underdeveloped. In consequence, gameplay qualifies as aesthetic experience, but it is unclear how aesthetic experience tells us something about the game's appeal.

In the absence of a strong causal framework in which to ground its observations, *My Life* frequently passes the explanatory buck on to such terminal concepts (as deployed in *My Life*) as 'immersive visual experience' (p. 52), 'passion,' (p. 85), and the aforementioned performative mastery. Returning to the latter, *My Life* convincingly illustrates that the players are concerned with their in-game performances and that the drive to achieve peformative mastery motivates continued gameplay. However, *My Life* doesn't enlighten as to why this should be the case. If the Skinnerian paradigm is out of bounds, then from what social or cognitive force(s) does something like performative mastery gain its motivational thrust (there is no Maslow citation; Csikszentmilhalyi is mentioned only briefly on page 47 to stress a theoretical difference with Dewey)? *My Life* isn't clear on this matter. In the section titled 'Performance' (p. 55) the following could

be gleaned as possible motivational engines: desire to escape criticism for poor performance (p. 56), 'a sense of empowerment,' (p. 57; citing Kennedy, 2005), and 'positive emotion' (p. 59). These reasons, however, would require some sort of grounding framework before they can convince as causal factors. *My Life*'s 'moments of performative ecstasy' (p. 59) remain, like aesthetic experience, an ontological mystery and do little to enlighten as to why in-game performative accomplishments matter.

That the causal force of these concepts remains largely inscrutable throughout analyses is problematic given that one of Nardi's goals is to explain the nature of *WoW*'s appeal not only in North America but in China, as well. Her assertion that 'Chinese people played *World of Warcraft* for the same reasons as North Americans or Europeans or Koreans' (p. 176) prefaces her conclusion that:

> The popularity of a game designed in Southern California in a country like China, with its radically different history and culture, foregrounds the question of the power of a software artefact to organise human activity. In fundamental ways, *WoW* is *WoW* wherever it is. Were it not for language barriers, any *WoW* player could sit down and play on any server anywhere in the world. There appears to be a common core of participatory aesthetic experience that transcends national and cultural borders. The broad themes of performance, competition, visual immersion, and sociability that emerged in North America were also evident in China (2010, p. 194)

While Chinese players may value *WoW* for these reasons, *My Life* again does not inform as to why. If China indeed has a 'radically different history and culture,' then the fact of these (presumably surprising) similarities, or the question of how something like 'competition' can figure into a compelling gameplay experience in such distant cultural milieus, want exegeses.

In summary, *My Life* is a descriptive success, but I believe the observations therein do not amount to sufficient causal accounts. The book is not clear on what social or cognitive forces motivate players' interests in aesthetic experience, performative mastery, visual immersion, and so on. There is room, then, for a project that uses cognitive and evolutionary frameworks to illuminate *WoW*'s capacity for cross-cultural appeal. Such frameworks can offer strengths in the areas where *My Life* is perhaps weak. They can offer, for example, more detailed schematics on the sources, ontologies, and motivational dynamics of moral experiences and a more developed appeal to our 'animal past' for explanations as to why given categories of phenomena seem to generate interest from people in 'radically different' cultural milieus. Accordingly, this project seeks to give a detailed, evolutionarily informed account of the cognitive mechanisms (Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations), emotional experiences (the 'intuitive' and 'inferential' nature thereof), and motivational engines ('relevance' and 'inferential potential') to which this project attempts to connect player experiences.

This dissertation, then, can be read as a complement to Nardi's lucid analyses by providing a more detailed yet still partial *explanatory* account for some of the trends that we both agree feature prominently in the ethnographic data. The focus now shifts to an overview of the aforementioned concepts that will facilitate this explanatory advantage.

Chapter 2 - Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations

This chapter introduces the moral cognition framework – psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph's 'moral foundations theory[40]' (2004; 2007) – and the relevant supporting paradigms that will be used in succeeding chapters to examine C*WoW* gameplay. Section 2.1 frames the moral foundations theory by outlining the concerns (Haidt and Joseph's) that motivated its development. Section 2.2 further prefaces the moral foundations theory by giving an introduction to the ontological basics of 'intuitive cognition' that inform the theory. Section 2.3 then outlines the five moral foundations that Haidt and Joseph posit are present in all naturally developing human minds. The final two sections further outline activation considerations that will be relevant to succeeding chapters. Section 2.4 introduces two important terms – 'proper domain' and 'actual domain' – that will be important in chapters 3 and 5. This section also illustrates why stimuli that played no role in our evolutionary past may nonetheless activate the foundations by illustrating how cross-cultural differences may arise from the foundations. Finally, Section 2.5 illustrates the importance of actions and cultural narratives, which feature prominently Chapter 3's ethnographic data, to effecting in persons a sense of moral clarity and purpose. By grasping the points outlined here, the reader will be well

[40] Other psychologists have also participated in the development of moral foundations theory, including Peter Ditto, Jesse Graham, Ravi Iyer, Spassena Koleva, Matt Motyl, Gary Sherman, and Sean Wojcik. The theory is most strongly associated with Jonathan Haidt, who formulated the theory's guiding paradigms in his 'Social Intuitionist Model' (2001) article and who remains the theory's most prolific author. Craig Joseph features as co-author in the first two publications that outline the moral foundations theory (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; 2007). Consequently, this dissertation will discuss 'Haidt and Joseph's' moral foundations theory.

positioned to understand the mind-game relationships hypothesised throughout the dissertation.

(2.1) Widening the Moral Domain

Haidt and Joseph developed the five moral foundations theory in response to what they considered to be an overly restricted view of the moral domain in contemporary, Western psychology. According to Haidt and Joseph (2007), throughout the twentieth century the Western psychological literatures on moral cognition overemphasised: (1) the role of *formal* or *reflective logic* in moral reasoning; (2) *justice* and *care* principles; and (3) an assumption that 'moral' issues are confined to those involving the treatment of other *individuals.* For example, according to Lawrence Kohlberg, one of the twentieth century's most prominent developmental psychologists, children develop moral capacities by learning how to consciously *reason* about moral issues. Through trial and experiment with others, children pass through several stages of moral reasoning until they arrive at a categorical imperative (in the Kantian sense) of *justice* concerning treatment of *individuals.* Kohlberg reasoned that this justice imperative is the most advanced form of moral reasoning, inclusive of and superior to all previous stages (for more on Kohlberg, Gilligan, the role of formal reasoning in moral cognition, and twentieth-century 'quandary ethics,' see Appendix B.1).

These operating assumptions, however, cannot accommodate the broader spectrum of what counts as 'moral' beyond the confines of Western academies. In the Hebrew Old Testament, for example, the prohibition in Leviticus against eating anything that 'goes on its belly' or 'creeps upon the earth' carried great moral consequence. To eat such a

creature was an 'abomination,' a horrific moral sin. In rural north China, a child's failure to refer to a close, adult male family friend as *shushu* ('father's younger brother') might spark moral outrage at the disrespect implied (Kipnis, 1997, p. 32). In many Islamic cultures, morally upstanding men do not wear silk or un-tanned animal skins, or let their garments hang below their ankles, as these modes of dress are *haram* (i.e., forbidden in the Qur'an). In America, too, social protocols such as 'hold your hand over your heart during the Pledge of Allegiance' and 'take off your baseball cap before entering a home' are widely recognised as having moral significance, even though they may not affect other individuals or intersect with justice or care imperatives. As Haidt and Joseph point out (2007), when 'morality' is defined by social actors, the moral reasoning studied by Western psychologists excludes much of what may appropriately be termed 'moral cognition.'

Haidt and Joseph (2007) argue that psychologists interested in moral cognition must come to terms with an expanded moral domain. To approximate the parameters of this domain, cross-cultural similarities in morality concepts must be ascertained. They point out that Shweder (1990) and colleagues (Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987; Shweder, Munch, Mahapatra & Park, 1997) have argued that within the anthropological record there is considerable consistency in how moral domains are conceptualised across cultures. Shweder and colleagues argue that the vast majority of what counts as 'moral' across cultures can be categorised into three moral 'ethics,' or sets of interrelated moral claims, designed to protect different social units. These are the autonomy, community, and divinity ethics.

The first of these, the 'ethic of autonomy,' functions to protect individuals from harm and suffering and to promote individual rights, justice, and day-to-day freedoms from assailing forces. This ethic most closely corresponds to Kohlberg's domain of justice. Confucius' exhortation to 'never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself' is an example of an autonomy maxim. The second ethic, the 'ethic of community,' functions to protect groups, institutions, and other collective entities with concepts that emphasise ideals of tradition, duty, honour, loyalty, and respect. The American Revolutionary War soldier Nathan Hale's purported last words, 'I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,' fit within the purview of the community ethic. Lastly, the 'ethic of divinity' functions to protect and glorify deities through a network of concepts such as chastity, purity, piety, and mechanisms of self-restraint. Accordingly, the many verses of Leviticus that forbid the Levites from doing anything 'unclean' when in the presence of God (or holy items) aim to appease God. According to Shweder, cultural representations that extend from these three ethics are generally cognised by social actors everywhere as having *moral* importance.

Shweder argues that these ethics are present in all societies, though some groups will emphasise, or 'hypercognise' (Hollan, 2000), some over others. At the group level, for example, Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) have shown that American political liberals largely limit their moral discourse to the ethic of autonomy and tend to reject community or divinity norms that result in suffering or unjust consequences for some individuals. By contrast, fifteenth-century Spanish Inquisition prosecutors were generally more prepared to trade individual autonomies in order to satisfy divine and community imperatives to safeguard group prosperity by weeding out spiritually defiled constituents. And at the

individual level, individuals will hypercognise different ethics in different instances of daily life. An American lawyer may argue for justice in a courtroom, emphasise the importance of self-sacrifice to intramural basketball teammates, avoid non-kosher foods during mealtimes, and consider all of these endeavours to have great moral significance.

(2.2) Introducing Four Aspects of *Intuitive Cognition*: Non-Reflective Beliefs, Modularity, Emotions, and Feelings

If these pan-cultural trends in moral domains do obtain, how can they be accounted for? Social scientists have traditionally used one of two broad paradigms to account for cross-cultural similarities in human behaviour. On the one hand, empiricists would argue these moral ethics are *learned* in childhood. In traditional empiricism, the mind is believed to be a 'blank slate' (following John Locke) that is equipped with general learning mechanisms which calibrate to the surrounding social environment. Kohlberg's children, for example, are empiricists insofar as they actively perceive, reason, experiment, and experience their way into increasingly sophisticated moral frameworks.[41] Empiricists reject the idea that human minds can have innate ideas or that knowledge can be obtained without reference to direct experience. According to empiricists, insofar as similarities do exist across cultures it is only because all cultures face similar problems – for example, procuring food or caring for children – and have, through cycles of experimentation, developed similar solutions to satisfy these problems.

Nativists, on the other hand, hold that normally developing human minds come *innately equipped* with moral cognitive mechanisms, and that these mechanisms develop

[41] It should be noted, however, that the Kohlbergian framework contains a nativist element in its insistence on a set moral developmental pattern.

naturally (to a degree) even in the absence of societal instruction. The nativist approach is buoyed by work in developmental psychology that suggests that children do, in fact, seem to acquire certain concepts in the absence of relevant direct experience. For example, young children can produce inferences about animals they have never heard of, let alone interacted with (Boyer, 2002, pp. 41-47). Children who have never before heard of a tapir can nonetheless arrive at the correct conclusion that tapirs must have been born from other tapirs, need nourishment in order to survive, will die some day, etc. Indeed, the human mind seems to be innately prepared to reason about animals – a capacity sometimes referred to as 'folk biology' (Medin & Atran, 1999) – and about many other fixtures of natural and social environments. As Tooby, Cosmides, and Barrett point out:

> The proprietary content introduced by the [cognitive] architecture constitutes a form of knowledge: the architecture must know (in some sense) that living children are better than dead children, social approval is better than disapproval, salt and sweet are better than acrid or putrefying, sex with your mother or father is to be avoided, helping siblings is (within certain tradeoffs) better than helping fungi, your mate copulating with your sexual rival is worse than his or her fidelity, spiders on your cheek are worse than in the garden, understanding is better than confusion, skill mastery is better than inept performance, and so on. (2005, p. 317)

According to the nativist, then, a social actor need not learn from socialisation that it is undesirable to have your mate sleep with a sexual rival. Rather, nativists would argue that this knowledge is innate or organised in the mind's cognitive architecture *in advance of experience*.

With respect to moral cognition, Haidt and Joseph believe that both empiricists and nativists are partially correct and endorse what they call a 'modified nativist view' (2004). This section outlines the nativist commitments to this view (the empiricist

commitments are outlined in Section 2.4). As nativists, Haidt and Joseph argue that *intuitive* moral dispositions are built-in to – or 'specified in advance of experience' (2004, p. 385) in – all normally developing human minds. To clarify what is meant by 'intuitive' and to better illumine the hypothesised ontologies of in-game moral experiences reported in Chapter 3, this section outlines four interrelated characteristics of intuitive cognition: non-reflective beliefs, modularity, emotions, and feelings.

First, intuitions correspond to what have been termed *non-reflective* beliefs (Barrett, 2004; see also Sperber's 'intuitive beliefs,' 1996) that are held in the mind. In contrast to reflective beliefs, which are arrived at through conscious, deliberate contemplation (e.g., the careful, explicit reasoning demonstrated by Kantian formalists), 'non-reflective beliefs are those that come automatically, require no careful rumination, and seem to arise instantaneously and sometimes even against better judgement' (Barrett, 2004, p. 2). Such beliefs, which include the following examples provided by Barrett, are essential to a human organism's day-to-day functioning in the world:

- When I am hungry, I should eat.
- I can't walk directly through a solid wall.
- If I throw a rock in the air, it will come down.

People do not hold these beliefs as propositions in the conscious mind. Rather, they are non-reflective; one quite simply *just knows* that they are true and uses them to guide basic behaviours.

The following scenario provided by Barrett helps to illustrate how non-reflective beliefs contribute a rich and effortless backdrop to everyday situations:

> Suppose you were in a park flanked by a forest and saw a dull-brown, furry thing about the size of a loaf of bread moving along the tree line. Having never seen the thing before, you already have a number of beliefs about it without any careful contemplation. Relying only on intuitions, you believe it is an animal, don't you? (It could have been a machine covered with faux fur.) Do you think it was born? If it had babies, would they be the same type of animal? Does it eat? Breathe? If a dog ran toward it, what would it do? If you threw it in the air, would it fall? If you threw it against a wall, would it pass through? (2004, p. 2)

Barrett intends the reader to realise that he/she can, in fact, easily answer these questions, even though the 'dull-brown, furry thing' is unspecified. The readily accessible answers here are likely outputs from cognitive mechanisms dedicated to 'folk physics' (Spelke & Kinzler, 2007), 'folk biology' (Medin & Atran, 1999), and 'agency-detection' (Barrett, 2004; Guthrie, 1995), to name a few. These cognitive mechanisms operate below the level of consciousness – that is, non-reflectively – and inform one's expectations about the items in the scenario.

Second, intuitions, or non-reflective beliefs, are outputs from dedicated cognitive mechanisms, often referred to as *cognitive modules*. The concept of modularity in cognitive science refers to the idea that the mind may, at least in part, be composed of separate (but perhaps non-localised) innate structures that have pre-established, evolutionarily significant functional purposes.[42] According to the strict criteria[43] advanced by Fodor (1983), who revived the idea of modularity in the 1980s, any given cognitive module is characterised by:

[42] A classic heuristic for conceptualising cognitive modularity is the Swiss army knife. Packed in the knife's casing are many individual, functionally specialised tools.

[43] However, very few of the mind's information processing units appear to meet all these criteria. Most psychologists, including Haidt and Joseph, opt for a slightly less rigid approach to modularity. For an overview, see Appendix B.2.

(1) Domain specificity – modules are specialised and operate only on certain kinds of inputs.

(2) Informational encapsulation – modules need not refer to other psychological systems in order to operate. Information external to the module cannot influence the processes that go on inside the module.

(3) Obligatory firing – when input conditions are met, cognitive processing is mandatory.

(4) Fast speed – because modules are encapsulated (thereby needing to consult only a restricted database) and mandatory (no time is wasted in determining whether or not incoming inputs should be processed).

(5) Shallow outputs – the information outputs are quite simple.

(6) Limited accessibility – our capacity to introspect a module's internal mechanisms is limited.

(7) Characteristic ontogeny – modules follow a predictable developmental process in all normally functioning minds.

(8) Fixed neural architecture – computations are performed on dedicated mental hardware.

Here it will be helpful to elaborate on characteristic #2, encapsulation, as it figures prominently in Haidt and Joseph's conceptualisation of the moral foundations. Consider the Müller-Lyer Illusion presented in Figure 2.1.

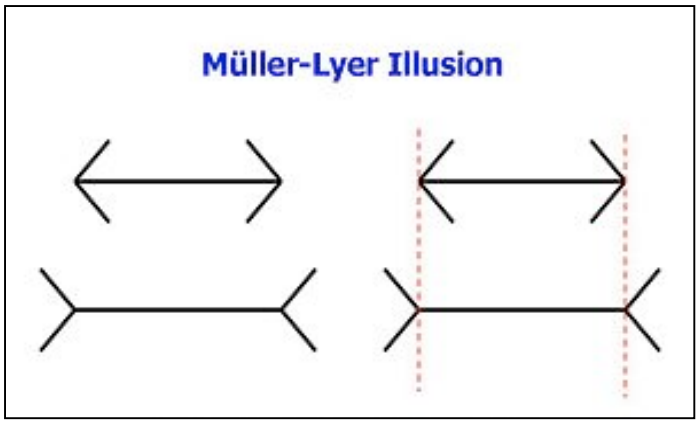


Figure 2.1. Müller-Lyer Illusion.
Adapted from 'Kurt Koffka' (2011).

In this picture, although the top line may appear to be shorter than the bottom line, they are in fact of the same length. Theories abound as to the exact visual mechanics that produce the illusion, but the fact remains that the visual systems that process this image produce an output that is unalterable by our reflective knowledge (gained, perhaps, by measuring the lines with a ruler) that the lines are in fact of the same length.[44] The visual outputs are *encapsulated* from external information. In other words, no matter how much we *consciously know* the lines are the same length, we cannot see them as such.[45]

Third, intuitions may be attended by *emotion* processing. A cognitive module often takes an emotion neuromodulator as a catalyst for firing and producing outputs. To illustrate, emotions are underwritten by packages of neuromodulators that are released to

[44] It has been shown that participants living in environments bereft of the rectilinearity that characterises Western city and townscapes may be less susceptible to this illusion (Ahluwalia, 1978). However, it remains true that those who are susceptible to the illusion cannot alter their perception of the line lengths by consulting their reflective knowledge.

[45] This encapsulated quality means that C*WoW* players can register strong moral responses to the *WoW* gameworld even though players may in some cases *consciously know* that the phenomena therein do not indicate actual instances of harm, injustice, treason, etc.

effect fitness-enhancing behaviours in response to evolutionarily salient situations. For example, consider the 'fear' response, which is actualised by 'glutamate (+), DBI, CRF, CCK, alpha-MSH, NPY' (Panksepp, 2000, p.144) and designed by natural selection to help humans deal with predators and human aggressors. These neuromodulators act as superordinate processes in the mind, switching cognitive modules on and off in response to relevant stimuli. Thus one can imagine being alone in a woods and acquiring cues that suggest the presence of a stalking predator. In this situation, the mind may initiate a fear response, which would operationalise the following cognitive and bodily changes (list taken from Tooby & Cosmides, 2008, p. 118-119[46]):

(1) There are shifts in perception and attention. You may suddenly hear with far greater clarity sounds, such as creaks or rustling, that bear on the hypothesis that you are being stalked but that ordinarily you would not perceive or attend to. Are the creaks footsteps? Is the rustling caused by something moving stealthily through the bushes? Signal-detection thresholds shift: less evidence is required before you respond as if there were a threat, and more true positives will be perceived at the cost of a higher rate of false alarms.

(2) Goals and motivational weightings change. Safety becomes a far higher priority. Other goals and the computational systems that subserve them are deactivated, so that you are no longer hungry, you cease to think about how to charm a potential mate, and practising a new skill no longer seems rewarding.

[46] This list is taken from a larger list provided by Cosmides & Tooby, 2008, pp. 91-115, which is reproduced in full in Appendix B.3.

(3) Information-gathering programs are redirected: Where is my baby? Where are others who can protect me? Is there somewhere I can go where I can better see and hear what is going on?

(4) Specialised inference systems are activated. Information about a lion's trajectory or eye direction may be fed into systems for inferring whether the lion saw you. If the inference is 'yes,' then a program automatically infers that the lion knows where you are; if 'no,' then the lion does not know where you are (the 'seeing-is-knowing' circuit identified by Baron-Cohen (1995) and inactive in individuals with autism). This variable may automatically govern whether you freeze in terror or bolt. Are there cues in the lion's behaviour that indicate whether it has eaten recently and is therefore unlikely to be predatory in the near future? Savannah-dwelling ungulates, such as zebras and wildebeests, commonly make this kind of judgement (Marks, 1987).

(5) Physiology changes: gastric mucosa turn white as blood leaves the digestive tract (another concomitant of motivational priorities changing from feeding to safety); adrenalin spikes; the heart rate may go up or down (depending on whether the situation calls for flight or immobility); blood rushes to the periphery, and so on (Cannon 1929; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kibler & Ernst, 1997); instructions are sent to the musculature (the face and elsewhere) (Ekman, 1982).

According to Cosmides and Tooby, then, 'fear' activates cognitive modules and coordinates their outputs with bodily changes that help the organism respond to the stimulus.

Fourth and finally, intuitions are usually experienced as *feelings*. For present purposes, only two instances of intuitions *qua* feelings will be discussed: emotional feelings and background, or 'gut,' feelings. According to Damasio (2003), emotional feelings extend from the mind's registration of the physiological changes in the mind and body brought about by emotional processes. For example, consider the changes catalysed by the fear response outlined above. As the mind intuits that a predator is lurking, the heart rate quickens, the musculature becomes taut, blood leaves the digestive tract, etc. These changes occur within bodily systems (e.g., the circulatory system, the muscular system) that report to the brain on their activity levels and their proximity to homeostasis. The brain gathers these reports in several different somatosensing regions, and these regions compile and output a 'map' into consciousness that summarises the body's state of welfare. Damasio states that we experience these maps – these intuitions or non-reflective beliefs about the body's proximity to homeostasis – as feelings. When we are asked how we feel or whether or not we like/dislike something, we consult this map and respond accordingly.

Regarding background, or 'gut,' feelings, phenomenologists have postulated that extremely slight shades of feeling effect in human minds an ongoing, non-reflective 'way of finding oneself in' or 'belonging to' the world (Ratcliffe, 2008). This 'sense of belonging' refers to feelings that reveal possibilities for interactions within one's environment. For example, phenomenologists write about the feelings attendant to perceiving the scissors as *graspable* or *not graspable,* or the garden wall as *scalable* or *not scalable*[47] (see 'experience of reason' in Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Accordingly,

[47] Additional evidence for the roles of feelings in perception can be found in clinical psychiatry (Ratcliffe, 2008), wherein exceptional cases of schizophrenia reveal that subjects who lose capacities to experience

phenomenologists suggest it is rarely or never the case that we consciously propose to ourselves a relation to an object, for example: 'I think those stairs are scalable.' Rather, our possibilities for interacting with the world are revealed to us through subtle intuitions *qua* feelings that encourage interaction or disengagement (for more on the relationship between feelings and perceptions of action potentials, see Appendix B.4).[48]

(2.3) Introducing Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations

Section 2.2 outlined four hallmarks of intuitive cognition, and Haidt and Joseph propose that moral reasoning tends to be symptomatic of these hallmarks. In other words, moral judgements tend to be non-reflective, modular to an interesting degree, and characterised by emotions and feelings of conviction. To illustrate this, Haidt (2001) conducted studies wherein people were asked questions about stories that contained characters who violated taboos that did not result in any observed harm or injustice. For example:

> Julie and Mark are brother and sister. They are traveling together in France on a summer vacation from college. One night they are staying alone in a cabin near the beach. They decide it would be interesting and fun if they tried making love. At the very least it would be a new experience for each of them. Julie is already taking birth control pills, but Mark uses a condom too, just to be safe. They both enjoy making love, but they decide not to do it again. They keep that night as a special secret, which makes them feel even closer to each other. What do you think about that, was it okay for them to make love? (2001, p. 814)

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feelings simultaneously lose capacities for interacting with natural objects and artefacts (e.g., a hammer might appear completely devoid of any practical purpose).

[48] As will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, Chinese informants discuss *moral feelings* as essential to spiritual experiences, to acquiring wisdom, and to feeling integrated with a wider social body.

According to Haidt, most participants immediately condemn Mark and Julie's actions and *then* begin looking for reasons to justify the claim. After condemning Mark and Julie's actions, participants point out the dangers of inbreeding, only to remember that Julie and Mark used two forms of birth control. Participants argue that Julie and Mark will be hurt, perhaps emotionally, even though the story makes it clear that the incident only strengthened their relationship. Eventually, Haidt reports, most participants admit they cannot justify their convictions but nonetheless remain convicted. A common response is: 'I don't know, I can't explain it, I just know it's wrong' (Haidt, 2001, p. 814). Haidt received similar responses for similarly constructed stories about cleaning one's toilet with a national flag, reneging on a promise made to a dead relative, having sexual relations with a dead chicken, and eating a dead dog. With the exception of one demographic – American college students at elite universities – participants insisted that these were *immoral* acts even when they could not articulate why. Haidt calls this phenomenon 'moral dumbfounding.'

Moral dumbfounding seems to exhibit the four hallmarks of intuitive reasoning. Consider that:

(1) Judgements were arrived at non-reflectively. Most participants could not articulate a reasonable argument against incestuous relations as they pertain to Mark and Julie's circumstances and had difficulty justifying their condemnation.

(2) Cognitive processing on this task seems to be 'modular to an interesting degree' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 379). For example, consider criteria #4 above: speed. Despite the complexity of the situation Mark and Julie have created, participant condemnations were usually instantaneous. Consider also criteria #2: encapsulation.

Participant judgements were impermeable to information that should have alleviated some of their stated concerns; no one was harmed and there was no chance of producing an unwanted pregnancy.

(3) Judgements were not arrived at dispassionately. Rather, participants had strong feelings about Mark and Julie's actions. Participants' affective responses were recorded by asking: 'If you actually saw this happening, would it bother you or would you not care?' In fact, feelings measured in this way predicted participants' moral judgements better than participants' statements about the harm or consequences of Mark and Julie's actions.

As for the role of formal logic in moral cognition (e.g., the careful reasoning displayed by Kohlberg's participants), Haidt explains:

> Intuitionalism in philosophy refers to the view that there are moral truths and that when people grasp these truths they do so not by a process of ratiocination and reflection but rather by a process more akin to perception, in which one 'just sees without argument that they are and must be true' (Harrison, 1967, p. 72). . . . [explicit or conscious] moral reasoning is usually an ex post facto process used to influence the intuitions (and hence judgments) of other people. In the social intuitionist model, one feels a quick flash of revulsion at the thought of incest and one knows intuitively that something is wrong. Then, when faced with a social demand for a verbal justification, one becomes a lawyer trying to build a case rather than searching for truth. One puts forth argument after argument, never wavering in the conviction that Julie and Mark were wrong, even after one's last argument has been shot down. In the social intuitionist model it becomes plausible to say, 'I don't know, I can't explain it, I just know it's wrong.' (2001, p. 814)

An obvious question, then, is where did these intuitions come from if they are not byproducts of experience and/or if one cannot even summon reasons to justify them? Haidt and Joseph hypothesise that our moral intuitions extend from five cognitive modules designed to satisfy five different evolutionarily recurrent challenges. These five

modules, or *moral foundations* (MFs), are presented in Table 2.1 (adapted from Haidt & Joseph, 2007) and outlined below.

	Harm/Care	**Fairness/ Reciprocity**	**In-group/ Loyalty**	**Authority/ Respect**	**Purity/ Sanctity**
Adaptive challenge	Protect and care for young, vulnerable or injured kin	Reap benefits of dyadic cooperation with non-kin	Reap benefits of group cooperation	Negotiate hierarchy, defer selectively	Avoid microbes and parasites
Proper domain (adaptive triggers)	Suffering, distress, or threat to one's kin	Cheating, cooperation, deception	Threat or challenge to group	Signs of dominance and submission	Waste products, diseased people
Actual domain (the set of all triggers)	Baby seals, cartoon characters	Marital fidelity, broken vending machines	Sports teams one roots for	Bosses, respected professionals	Taboo ideas (communism, racism)
Characteristic emotions	Compassion	Anger, gratitude, guilt	Group pride, belongingness, rage at traitors	Respect, fear	Disgust
Relevant virtues [and vices]	Caring, kindness [cruelty]	Fairness, justice, honesty, trustworthiness [dishonesty]	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice [treason, cowardice]	Obedience, deference [disobedience, uppitiness]	Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness [lust, intemperance]

Table 2.1. Haidt and Joseph's Five Moral Foundations (from Haidt & Joseph, 2007).

2.3.1. Harm/Care

Mammals need to provide extensive care to vulnerable offspring in order to ensure the parents' genes are expressed into succeeding generations. Given the importance of this task, it is crucial that mammalian parents be equipped a mechanism that motivates the parents into strong, protective bonds with the offspring and that allows them to quickly recognise vulnerability or distress signals and respond effectively. When the harm/care MF is activated, one output is usually a feeling of compassion underlined by a motivation to act so as to relieve the suffering or otherwise protect the child. Moral

judgements that figure as analogues to *it is good to give care to the vulnerable* or *harming someone is wrong* are hypothesised to extend from the harm/care MF.

Recent research suggests that oxytocin, a nonapeptide produced in the hypothalamus of the human brain (but found in all mammals), is a major coordinator within this MF. Catalysed by childbirth (for women) and tactile caresses (either administered or received, for men and women), oxytocin results in a large number of feel-good effects: it diminishes pain, depression, anxiety, aggression, and stress-hormone release, lowers blood pressure, modulates appetite and digestive processes, motivates feelings of warmth, and promotes wound healing (Uvnas-Moburg, 1998; 2003). Concomitant to (or perhaps because of) these effects, it also promotes a *caring* disposition towards those nearby. In effect, a human mind under the influence of oxytocin is highly conducive to the formation of strong, protection-oriented bonds with an otherwise demanding, boisterous, and unruly newcomer: the human infant.

2.3.2. Fairness/Reciprocity

Humans have leveraged enormous evolutionary success by engaging in reciprocal altruism with non-kin or distant kin. However, altruism is a delicate social arrangement. Altruists can be easy prey for freeloaders, cheaters, and non-reciprocators, who can make quick gains at the altruists' expense while reducing their own risks and expenditures (e.g., in food procurement, group defence, etc.). It follows that in ancestral societies full of altruists and cheaters, the cheaters should have had greater survivability and hence greater success in passing their genes on to succeeding generations, thereby weeding out altruistic instincts. Accordingly, in order for humans to reap the benefits of reciprocal

altruism there arose a need for 'cheat-detection' mechanisms[49] that detected instances of unfair reciprocity. In humans, as in many animals, 'fair' reciprocity is generally measured on a 'tit-for-tat' heuristic (Trivers, 1971; Boyer, 2002) – that is to say, favours are expected to fetch a return of similar value at some point in the future. Instances of balanced, or tit-for-tat, reciprocity[50] are usually considered to be *fair* or *just*, while imbalances are *unfair* or *unjust*.

Associated with cheat-detection systems are emotions that encourage collaboration with valued reciprocators and punitive measures against cheaters. When receiving benefits from an altruist or a fair deal from a trading partner, a social actor may experience a positively valenced emotion, such as gratitude or joy, that motivates future collaborations. Alternatively, if one receives a bad deal, anger outputs may motivate the victim to punish the perpetrator and thereby reduce the danger of being taken advantage of again in the future.

2.3.3. In-group/Loyalty

Humans derive many fitness advantages from living in groups, and the anthropological record makes it clear that humans tend to aggregate into tribes, gangs, and teams that compete for resources with other tribes, gangs and teams.[51] In our evolutionary past, competition from outside groups would have increased the need for in-

[49] Examples may include systems that detect disproportions in contributions, monitor emotional displays for signs of dishonesty, and/or that tabulate reputational standings of potential collaborators.

[50] Naturally, reciprocity here does not refer just to the exchange of material goods. For example, the 'tit for tat' heuristic would presumably underlie a sense of satisfaction in seeing a bully punished.

[51] Research has shown that people will form groups even on the basis of trivial similarities – for example, whether or not they prefer Kandinsky or Klee paintings (Tajfel et al., 1971). Group dynamics that are centred on more potent binding agents, such as religion or kinship, are, naturally, much more powerful.

group cohesion and amplified the threats posed by traitors, profiteers, and slackers. Accordingly, there evolved emotions, such as group pride or sense of belonging on the one hand, and hatred for traitors (and perhaps fear of being labelled one) on the other, that served to bind an individual to a group to such an extent that he/she was willing to make sacrifices or forgo lucrative defection opportunities for the sake of group welfare.[52] Moral judgements that figure as analogues to *[person] has contributed to our group's welfare* or *[person] has subtracted from our group's welfare*, as well as xenophobic judgements about 'other' groups, are hypothesised to extend from the in-group/loyalty MF.

2.3.4. Authority/Ranking

Dominance hierarchies are common to many primate species, and the frequency with which similar displays of dominance and submission can be observed in human groups suggests that human minds have inherited cognitive mechanisms dedicated to dealing with authority and power issues in social life. The existence of dominance hierarchies implies a need for human minds to be able to reason about one's own status relative to one's peers. On the one hand, subordinates need to be able to detect superiors and respond with appropriate displays of inferiority or respect.[53] To this end, primate minds seem to be (1) highly sensitive to size and marked colouration (e.g., an alpha gorilla's

[52] Relevant here and discussed in Chapter 4 are 'credibility enhancing behaviours' (Henrich, 2009), such as costly signalling in rituals (Sosis & Alcorta, 2008), which communicate that one is committed to the group above and beyond considerations for one's own comfort. These are discussed as they figure into the group-strengthening dynamics outlined in Section 4.7.

[53] The benefits of submission often go beyond simply avoiding aggression from a superior. As Fiske (1990) points out, an oft-overlooked aspect of hierarchical social organisation is that superiors are expected to protect subordinates from external threats and maintain order within the group.

silver back) or other ornamentation (e.g., a king's sceptre) accepted as indicators of rank, and (2) well-equipped with emotions, such as fear, respect, and admiration, that help subordinates 'fall into line,' as it were, as their lesser rank requires. Moral judgements that figure as analogues to *[person] is respectful/obedient to [person's] superior* or *[person] is disrespectful/disobedient to [person's] superior* are hypothesised to extend from this aspect of the authority/ranking MF.

On the other hand, because there are often considerable rewards concomitant to being a high-ranking member of one's social group, human minds should also be motivated to pursue activities that promote or maintain status by indicating superiority in some domain (e.g., perhaps through bullying, through acquisition of material resources, or through demonstration of leadership skills). Emotions such as pride may serve as intrinsic rewards to high status and may help steel one against submission to other competitors. Similarly, indignation at upstarts and indecorous constituents may help preserve social standing by providing the motivation to punish challengers. Moral judgements that figure as analogues to *[person] is strong/capable/wise or somehow deserving of high rank* or *[person] is weak/incapable/unwise or somehow undeserving of high rank* are hypothesised to extend from this aspect of the authority/ranking MF.

2.3.5. Purity/Sanctity

Finally, purity/sanctity is the only MF that did not evolve directly from social evolutionary demands. Rather, this MF evolved to deal with the dangers posed by the omnivorous diet niche early humans exploited as savannah scavengers. Sampling from a diverse range of food types, dietary generalists face increased exposure to deadly

parasites and bacteria. Therefore, a 'contamination avoidance system' (Rozin, Haidt & McCauley, 1993) evolved that helps to detect and deal accordingly with contaminants. To illustrate, if the system detects a contaminant it will likely catalyse a 'disgust' reaction, which includes the following: (1) distancing oneself from the object; (2) the mouth will open while the mouth corners drop, nostrils will scrunch up – intuitive movements meant to discourage entry into the body or encourage discharge; (3) a feeling of nausea or revulsion may set in to reinforce distance from the object; (4) certain intuitive assumptions will follow: the source of danger is not necessarily visible, even limited contact can transmit the whole of the risk, and so on (Rozin, Haidt & McCauley, 2008, pp. 759-761).

Yet dangerous bacteria and parasites are not contracted solely through the consumption of tainted foods; they can also be spread by physical contact with other humans. Therefore it makes good evolutionary sense to pay attention to the hygiene and general cleanliness of group members. Accordingly, people who are observed forgoing standard hygiene protocols may also be considered 'disgusting.'

As Haidt and Joseph (2007) point out, societies often convert the vocabulary and logic of physical disgust into moral judgements about social issues removed from any real sources of contagion. For example, in social discourse it sometimes happens that an idea or an entire group of people may be rejected as 'disgusting.' Indeed, a common strategy used by antagonists to motivate group conflicts is to link the concepts and behaviours exhibited by members of the opposing group as closely as possible to the disgust module's proper triggers – foul smells or other sensorial indicators of decay. According to Bloom, who in turn quotes Nussbaum (2004, p. 108):

> The clearest example of how this works comes from Nazi propaganda, which described the Jews as dirty, filthy, disease-ridden; they were portrayed as rats, garbage, and bacillus, agents of infection. As Nussbaum put it, 'The stock image of the Jew, in anti-Semitic propaganda, was that of a being disgustingly soft and porous, receptive of fluid and sticky, womanlike in its oozy sliminess, a foul parasite inside the clean body of the German male self.' Accordingly, oppressors during acts of genocide often arrange the world so as to make their victims act and appear disgusting. (Bloom, 2005, p. 177)

By defining a group and linking it wholesale to the disgust mechanism, the assailants imply that their captives are categorically, intuitively suspect. Regardless of whether an individual observes hygienic protocols or not, if he/she can be linked to a group that has been linked to the disgust mechanism, onlookers may feel the 'quick flash of revulsion' which reveals that 'something is wrong' (Haidt, 2001, p. 814) and pass moral judgement accordingly.

The anthropological record shows that the ability to track contagion and value purity also contributes to ideas about sacredness – about 'keeping religious objects set apart from pollutants and profane objects' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 384; e.g., Douglas, 1966). The related work most relevant to this dissertation is Durkheim's classic *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995 [1912]), wherein Durkheim argued that the world's religious traditions all observe concerns about keeping 'sacred' items separate from 'profane' items. Durkheim went so far as to define *religion* as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community all those who adhere to them' (1995 [1912], p. 47).

Especially relevant to subsequent chapters of this dissertation is Durkheim's work on religious artefacts as sacred objects. Durkheim famously argued that a sacred object

gained its 'sacredness' by serving as a representation of the entirety of a group's collective values and beliefs. To illustrate, Durkheim believed that a society's religious traditions encode the sum total of the common values that order social life in that society. From time to time and in order to preserve social order, it is necessary for societal members to convene and reaffirm these values by participating in religious rituals that enable social actors to *act out* those values. In the process of performing these ritual actions in a common space, participants feel strong emotions and sentiments. They then objectify these emotions, and by extension the progenitors of these emotions – societal values – by projecting them onto a focal object of the ritual (e.g., a statue[54]).

Though ritual actors perceive the focal object being as imbued with societal values, they are not, of course, hypothesised to have knowledge of their agency in this projection. On the contrary, in ritual experience it may seem as though the powerful sentiments of the ritual are extending from the focal object itself. Accordingly, ritual objects may seem to have something special in them – some *force* or some inherent *purity* related to societal values – that sets them apart from other objects. This 'force' or 'purity' is what is commonly interpreted as sacredness. But the real source of sacredness, according to Durkheim, is societal values (*qua* ritual actions and associated emotions). Therefore, when social actors venerate ritual objects, they are actually venerating society itself. The ritual object's sacredness extends from its role as a symbol imbued with the totality of a society's beliefs and values.

[54] Durkheim of course discussed 'totems' as focal objects of rituals. However, the term 'totem' may call to mind 'totemism' and Durkheim's discourse on the origins of religion, which have been extensively critiqued and discredited (Levi-Strauss, 1971) and which could serve as a distraction to the current analyses. Consequently, the term 'totems' will be avoided.

Finally, Durkheim argued that these sacred objects must be kept pure from any 'contaminants' that may hinder the sacred object's capacity to generate the moral sentiment that orders society, lest the society disintegrate (this relationship between 'purity' and emotional potential is especially important to analyses in Chapter 3). In sum, statements that figure as analogues to *[person] is clean/pure/sacred* or *[person] is unclean/impure/defiled* are hypothesised to extend from the purity/sanctity MF, which may be working in tandem with other MFs. Additionally, the imperative to keep symbols concentrated with a group's common beliefs and values – for example, national flags, religious statues or, as will be shown in Chapter 4, the C*WoW* gameworld – pure of any contaminants is also hypothesised to extend from this MF.

These five foundations, then, were designed to deal with recurrent evolutionary dilemmas and are hypothesised to underlie much of the diversity of moral concepts observable in the anthropological record (for additional evidence in support of why these foundations provide the best candidates for conceptualising a system of intuitive ethics, see Appendix B.5). It should also be pointed out that Haidt and Joseph follow Shweder (1990; above) in hypothesising that different societies will differentially emphasise or combine the MFs (within certain combinatory boundaries, e.g. Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009).

(2.4) What about Cultural Differences? Introducing Proper and Actual Domains

This section illustrates how it is possible for the enormous diversity of *culture-specific* moral concepts evident in the anthropological record to have emanated from the same cognitive mechanisms. It does so by articulating the empiricist components of Haidt

and Joseph's 'modified nativist' outlook mentioned in Section 2.2. Here are introduced two important terms – 'proper domain' and 'actual domain' – that will be important in subsequent chapters. This section also illustrates how stimuli that played no role in our evolutionary past (e.g., videogames) may nonetheless activate the foundations.

First, it is necessary to dispense with any notion of the MFs as simple stimulus-response mechanisms narrowly hardwired to respond only to specific, pre-determined environmental stimuli. Rather, there is evidence to suggest that some modules permit flexibility in what 'counts as' an input and that they can *learn* through experience and cultural transmission which specific inputs count as unfair, disgusting, etc. Sperber has argued that cognitive modules often contain smaller sets of 'learning modules' or 'learning instincts' (Sperber, 2005, p. 57) that contain built-in perceptual content and direct the acquisition of relevant stimuli. For example, a fruit-learning module will 'know' that fruit is 'sweet' and will only generate subsequent fruit-recognition sub-modules (e.g., one for apples, one for bananas) for objects in the environment that meet its pre-specified criteria. Other learning modules may be more purely conceptual. For example, the fairness/reciprocity MF's 'tit-for-tat' template may generate a host of culture-specific unfairness-detection modules, such as a 'cutting-in-line detector' in cultures where people queue up, but not in cultures where they don't; or an 'unequal division of food' detector in cultures where children expect to get exactly equal portions as their siblings, but not in cultures where portions are given out by age. Here, the module has provided a 'tit-for-tat' template for fairness that a social actor will fill out with specific concepts en route to becoming a morally competent member of society. In this way, domain-general modular processes acquire specific triggers.

The following two points illustrate how this concept acquisition process is hypothesised to work. First the 'learning modules' allow the cognitive modules a degree of interpretive error, as exhibited by the discrepancies between a cognitive module's *proper* and *actual* domains of stimuli. Sperber and Hirschfeld explain:

> An evolved cognitive module – for instance a snake detector, a face-recognition device, a language acquisition device – is an adaptation to a range of phenomena that presented problems or opportunities in the ancestral environment of the species. Its function is to process a given type of stimuli or inputs – for instance snakes, human faces, or linguistic utterances. These inputs constitute the *proper domain* of the module. To recognise items belonging to its proper domain, a module uses formal conditions that an input has to meet to be accepted and processed. All inputs meeting the input conditions of a module constitute its *actual domain.* These input conditions can never be perfectly adequate. Some items belonging to the proper domain of the module might fail to satisfy them – a snake can look like a piece of wood. Some items not belonging to the proper domain of the module might nevertheless satisfy its input conditions – a piece of wood can look like a snake. If only because cognition is a probabilistic activity, the actual and the proper domain of a module are unlikely ever to be strictly co-extensive. There will be false negatives – that is, items belonging to the proper domain but not to the actual domain; and false positives – items belonging to the actual but not to the proper domain. (2004, p. 41)

Second, this capacity for interpretive error can become an interpretive space that other organisms can manipulate. Consider Sperber and Hirschfeld's hover fly example (2004). Insectivorous birds usually avoid wasps, as they are dangerous to eat. Many species of insectivorous birds have developed wasp detectors that screen potential prey for the black and yellow stripes that characterise a wasp abdomen. For these wasp detectors, wasp abdomens would constitute the proper domain. However, hover flies, which are good food for these birds, have evolved black and yellow stripes on their abdomen so that they too appear as wasps to insectivorous birds. Accordingly, the hover

flies increase their evolutionary fitness by manipulating the wasp detector's actual domain and dissuading birds from eating them.

Humans, to be sure, possess even greater capacities for manipulation than do hover flies. Sperber and Hirschfeld illustrate how the actual domains of human cognitive mechanisms are manipulated in cultural environments:

> Humans seek to influence one another in many ways, and hence need to both attract and direct the attention of others. A reliable way to attract attention is to produce information that falls within the actual domain of modules, whether or not it also falls within their proper domain. ….A great variety of cultural artefacts are aimed at specific modules. For instance, face recognition modules found in primates accept as input simple visual patterns that in a natural environment are almost exclusively produced by actual faces. In the human cultural environment, a great many artefacts are aimed at the face recognition module. They include portraits, caricatures, masks, and made up faces. The effectiveness of these cultural artefacts is in part explained by the fact that they rely on and exploit a natural disposition. Often, they exaggerate crucial features, as in caricature or in makeup, and constitute what ethnologists call 'superstimuli.' The effectiveness of these artefacts in turn helps explain their cultural recurrence. More generally, the actual domain of human mental modules is invaded and inflated by culturally produced information. (2004, p. 42)

This 'mask at face recognition module' manipulative strategy can be replicated in social processes that generate ideas about morality. Social actors can influence one another by producing information – or by editing, bending, and polishing it via logic or rhetorical acrobatics – so that it falls within the actual domains of the MFs. Returning to the queue example, in some cultures children will be encouraged to perceive queuing in terms intelligible to the fairness MF – that is, to perceive queuing in terms of contributions vs. withdrawals. For example, if Bob contributed 15 minutes to the queue, then he should be able to withdraw a more immediate opportunity to checkout than Amy, who has contributed only three minutes. Bob has given more time in the queue so he should

receive a more timely release from the queue. According to the tit-for-tat template, that's fair. But because the commodity in question (time) is intangible, young social actors may need to have it impressed upon them that an exchange relevant to the fairness MF is in fact taking place.[55]

These editing processes occur in the empirical, or cultural, environment. Herein, MFs must learn to recognise these candidates for care, instances of injustice, etc. The next and final section examines two modes of experience found in all societies that commonly guide the MFs in acquiring culture-specific concepts.

(2.5) Becoming a Morally Competent Social Actor – The Importance of Narratives and Actions

Haidt and Joseph's 'modified nativist' position on moral cognition, then, maintains that cognitive mechanisms designed to deal with general concerns about care, fairness, etc., exist in all human minds as a normal course of ontological development, and social actors learn, within boundaries set by those mechanisms, what counts as care, fairness, etc. Accordingly, Haidt and Joseph suggest that MFs coming online in developing young minds may be viewed as 'first drafts' (2007, p. 374) of the moral mind that will be 'edited' and re-edited by experience and cultural processes into subsequent drafts. This final section illustrates how this editing is hypothesised to occur and is included here as a preface to Chapter 3, wherein player quotes reveal that *WoW* 'taught' moral clarity.

On the matter of 'editing,' Haidt and Joseph advocate *virtue theory,* which maintains that individuals become morally competent social actors by calibrating to local *virtues*, or

[55] These examples also illustrate how it is possible for the MFs to 'misfire' on inputs – for example, masks at a carnival or blood elves in Azeroth – that were absent from social cooperation in our evolutionary past.

'dynamic patternings of perception, emotion, judgement, and action' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 386) that have positive moral implications. To acquire a 'virtue' thus conceptualised is no simple task. As Haidt and Joseph point out:

> To possess a virtue is to have extended and refined one's abilities to perceive morally-relevant information so that one is fully responsive to the local sociomoral context. To be kind, for example, is to have a perceptual sensitivity to certain features of situations, including those having to do with the wellbeing of others, and for one's motivations to be appropriately shaped and affected. To be courageous is to have a different kind of sensitivity, to be patient, still another. . . . One of the crucial tenets of virtue theory is that the virtues are acquired inductively, through exposure to – and sometimes with efforts to copy – many examples of the virtue in practice. Each of these examples contains information about a number of aspects of the situation, including the motivation of the protagonists, their state of being (suffering, disabled, hostile, rich, etc.), the categorisation of the situation, and the evaluation of the outcome offered by more experienced others. Only over time will the moral learner recognise what information is important to notice and retain, and what can safely be disregarded. (2007, p. 386)

In other words, becoming a morally competent social actor entails (1) acquiring an artist's eye for the morally relevant subtleties of social situations and (2) (mentioned as 'efforts to copy' but not elaborated upon in this passage) learning from the social feedback, emotional feelings, and embodied concomitants attendant to practising moral actions.

Regarding (1), Haidt and Joseph (2007) point out that people acquire large tracts of knowledge about moral propriety through narratives and the *narrative mode of cognition.* They quote Bruner (1986), who distinguishes between narrative and logico-scientific modes of thought:

> There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality …a good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be

> used as a means for convincing another. Yet what they convince *of* is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude. (p. 11) [author's italics]

Each of these modes relies upon its own 'prostheses' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 389) or aids to thinking provided by a culture. For the logico-scientific mode, prostheses might include logic, mathematics, and the sciences. For the narrative mode, the most common prostheses are narratives, or *texts*. 'Texts, among their many other functions, serve to store up cultural meanings, and, through both their content and their structure, they help to guide the thinking of individuals' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 389). Haidt and Joseph suggest that outside of Western philosophy departments, the intricacies of virtues are acquired much more commonly through texts and the narrative mode of cognition than through formal arguments and the logico-scientific mode of reasoning. Narratives tend to be more easily conceptualised, more memorable, more contextually rich, more obvious in their relevance to practical moral issues and, to anticipate a term introduced in the next chapter, more 'inferentially potent' (following Boyer, 2002) than formal logic.

Narratives come in varying levels of complexity and shape moral development at varying levels of organisation. At the simplest level, narratives, such as the parables found in the Gospels or the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, help coordinate MF actual domains. Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan, for example, instructs followers on the moral propriety of providing care to strangers, thereby highlighting an extra domain of opportunities for the care MF. At the simplest level, then, morally relevant narratives provide easily memorable and transmittable prostheses that identify and emphasise analogues of proper domain stimuli (e.g., the injured body of a stranger) that

can fit easily within MF actual domains (e.g., the parable of the Good Samaritan edits the stranger into a neighbour/close kin).

At a more complex level, social actors may, over time, subconsciously weave elements of their experiences into meta-narratives that enable a type of 'mythopraxis' (following Sahlins, 1983). To illustrate, the sociologist Christian Smith (2003), who maintains that we are 'animals who make stories but also animals who are *made* by our stories' (p. 64) [Smith's italics], has shown how a variety of high-order, often unconscious narratives organise identity and moral judgement at both the individual and the group level. He provides a number of narratives that he believes essentialise, in a recipe-like fashion, the broad moral contours characteristic of specific social identities. Consider, for example, Smith's 'Liberal Progress' narrative:

> Once upon a time, the vast majority of human persons suffered in societies and social institutions that were unjust, unhealthy, repressive, and oppressive. These traditional societies were reprehensible because of their deep-rooted inequality, exploitation, and irrational traditionalism. . . . But the noble human aspiration for autonomy, equality, and prosperity struggled mightily against the forces of misery and oppression, and eventually succeeded in establishing modern, liberal, democratic, capitalist societies. [However] there is much work to be done to dismantle the powerful vestiges of inequality, exploitation, and repression. This struggle . . . is the one mission truly worth dedicating one's life to achieving. (2003, p. 82)

By Smith's estimation, social liberals may intuitively acquire something approximating this 'Liberal Progress' composite after repeated exposure to the relevant virtues as they are showcased in cultural narratives found in books, television programs, general discourse, and so on. Consequently, such liberals may gain a sense of moral purpose and conviction by distilling lived experience into the MF-relevant categories made salient in the narrative and by viewing themselves as characters in an on-going saga featuring evil

oppressors, irrational traditions, noble liberals, etc. Living within such narrative frames, even actions that bear no resemblance to MF proper domain imperatives (e.g. voting) may be edited to connect with MF actual domains (e.g., voting is intelligible as supporting an in-group, caring for disadvantaged citzenss, etc.), thus allowing a steady flow of moral cognition to pervade daily routines.

Regarding (2), performing *actions* also helps to calibrate actual domains. First, 'action loops' (Clark, 1998, p. 36) enhance the mind's ability to acquire complex moral concepts by changing or simplifying the problems confronting 'pure thought.' Consider, for example, the value of hands in embodied cognition. We *think* with our hands when we try to fit jigsaw puzzle pieces together. We do not generally possess the spatial reasoning abilities to know whether a piece will fit in advance of physical manipulation – without hands we could not, for example, put together a complex puzzle by dictating to a friend (one with hands) which pieces ought to go where (Clark, 1998, p. 36).[56] With respect to becoming a morally competent social actor, action loops may inform the gradual development of a morally relevant skill (e.g., learning the correct amount of pressure to apply during a handshake) or help one to prune misunderstandings regarding moral action protocols (e.g., a child may learn through feedback that saying 'thank you' three times is excessive). By acting out his/her understanding of how a moral concept may apply to a given context, the social actor creates a lived instance of that concept that can be self-reviewed, commented upon by others, and so on. Consequently, these lived

[56] This seemingly trivial example can actually be applied to many cognitive activities. Even the most 'cerebral' forms of thought in the West, as in philosophy and social anthropology, are attended by much note-taking and outlining. These activities, which excise thoughts from our short-term memory systems and freeze them on paper, where we may structure them and make them the focus of subsequent thoughts, require human hands (animal paws do not possess the necessary manual dexterity).

instances of moral concepts help social actors hone the construction of MF actual domains and, hence, definite opportunities for moral cognition.

Second, actions may generate emotion processing that highlights opportunities for moral actions. Consider again the importance of hands, which can be crucial for activating the care MF and *thinking caringly* about other people. Gently touching other people can release oxytocin, which, as was shown above, effects in one a caring disposition towards nearby people. Consequently, by touching others and releasing oxytocin one is predisposed to perceiving candidates for care. This is forcefully illustrated in research that examines mothers' touching behaviours shortly after giving birth. Kennell et al. (1974) and Klaus et al. (1972) have shown that the amount of physical contact between mother and infant immediately after birth can have long-term effects on the strength of the bond that is developed. These researchers divided mothers into two groups: mothers in the control group spent lots of time touching their newborn infants in the three days immediately following birth, while mothers in the experimental group were only allowed to see their newborn infants during feeding time for the three days immediately following birth. When the infants had reached three months, mothers in the control group reported stronger bonds with their infants. They spent more time holding and soothing their crying infants, reported greater distress when away from their infants, and attended to their infants more during a physical exam. When the infants were one year of age, these control group mothers reported missing their infants more when they went to work and spent more time attending to and soothing their infants at home. It follows that touching and the emotional processes generated by touching seem to be

important to generating motivation to discern care candidates and act *caringly* – that is, in ways that intend to relieve the immediate suffering of vulnerable confederates.

In conclusion, an environment that affords clear-cut, morally relevant narratives and a multitude of opportunities for actions that engage narrative prescriptions should create optimal circumstances for the development of strong connections between the MF actual domains and available opportunities for moral cognition.

Chapter 3 - Why Would Anyone Play in a Virtual World?

Let us play the game [*WoW*]. . . . *Let us have more love, purity, trust, sincerity, and happiness.* T94

This chapter argues that a partial explanation for the mystery of *WoW*'s cross-cultural appeal can found in recognising the gameworld as an environment rich in moral *inferential potential* and *relevance.* Section 3.1 introduces these two concepts and explains their importance to cognitive science of religion (CSR) attempts to explain the pan-cultural prevalence of religious and supernatural concepts. The remaining sections turn to the ethnographic data that reveal *WoW* as an environment superior to real life for moral cognition. Throughout the chapter, ethnographic data and cognitive analyses proceed hand in hand – quotes gathered from player testimonials highlight aspects of gameplay that informants deemed morally significant, and this chapter illustrates how these aspects of gameplay may interact with Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations. Specifically, the ethnographic data will be used to split the *WoW* universe into two analytically separate categories, narratives and actions, and it will be argued that *WoW* is rich in moral inferential potential and relevance because it contains an abundance of clear-cut, morally relevant narratives and opportunities for moral actions. Finally, it will be argued that testimonial statements that discuss the game's 'purity' can be read as affirmations of the game's superior (positively valenced) moral inferential potential vis-à-vis real life.

(3.1) Inferential Potential, Relevance, and the Success of Cultural Concepts

In his 2007 book *Exodus to the Virtual Worlds,* economist Edward Castronova provides an economic forecast illustrating how, over the coming decades, online games will remake the world in their image. He points out that migration rates to virtual worlds, in terms of accounts registered and the average number of hours that individuals spend in-game, are rapidly growing. According to Castronova, this makes perfect sense. Quality of life is higher in virtual worlds than it is in real life (e.g., virtual worlds are more interesting, exciting, fun), and in basic economic theory it would be 'irrational' (2007, p. 68) for someone to choose a lower over a higher quality of life.

As these virtual worlds acquire large populations, they also acquire large economies. Some virtual worlds, for example *Second Life*, have in-world currencies that are exchangeable with real-world currencies and GDPs that are bigger than those of some small countries. And as technology and virtual-world design continue to improve, virtual world populations and hence GDPs should continue to grow. This trend potentially threatens national GDPs in the real world. To illustrate, if Bill, an American, makes (the equivalent of) USD$ 1,200 a month producing and selling virtual goods in *Second Life* and USD$ 1,800 a month at his day job in Chicago, then his worth to the U.S. GDP is $3,000. But is *Second Life* actually part of the U.S. economy? At present there is no clear answer, but if it is not, then America's GDP loses all of Bill's in-world productivity. The future, Castronova maintains, is full of people like Bill and full of the potential for staggering losses to national GDPs. Castronova hypothesises that the real world will respond by trying to reverse the flow of this migration. Specifically, real-life jobs will

implement gameplay-like mechanisms that make real-life work more like a game. This is already happening, he claims (see also McGonigal, 2011), and the trend will only continue to grow.

For some, the 'exodus' described in Castronova's work may seem bizarre and without precedent. Yet this exodus from and subsequent reconfiguration of real life bears resemblance to another that presumably happened between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago, in the middle Palaeolithic. Around this time, the human mind evolved the necessary capacities to start hypothesising virtual worlds that were filled with gods and spirits, fantastic predators and magical forces. Thereafter, many *Homo sapiens sapiens* began to invest significant amounts of time and resources in establishing a communion with these worlds, for example via ritual or prayer, and began using concepts (believed to be) originating in these virtual worlds to order social processes in the real world. The referent here is of course the evolutionary dawn of religious and supernatural traditions. Computer-generated virtual worlds resemble these traditions insofar as both permit interactions with mind-grabbing, ontologically pliable (or 'counterintuitive' Boyer, 2002) entities and realms that motivate social organisation in the real world.

Yet in both cases of 'virtual' – that is, with respect to the supernatural entities and realms that populate religious traditions and MMOGs – baffled sceptics and academics often ask why human minds are so drawn to things that are imaginary, fake, simulated versions of the 'real,' not pertaining to the tangible furniture of the world, not subject to empirical investigation – in short, to things that are popularly held to be 'not true.' Why is it that people all over the world surrender valuable resources to please deities that can neither be seen nor reliably proven to exist, by either scientific or indigenous standards?

Why is it that millions of *WoW* players prefer to catch fish in Azeroth when many of those players have ready access to well-stocked ponds in their real communities? The very presence of virtual worlds, to say nothing of their rampant success, continues to compel academic interest.

Researchers in CSR have sought to give a partial account for the ubiquity of religious/supernatural concepts by illustrating how those concepts interact with the mind's architecture in such a way that they out-compete other concepts for attention, memory, and cultural transmission. To illustrate, consider that in order for a concept to become 'cultural' – that is, well distributed throughout a group of people – it must somehow be represented in individual minds and passed on or transmitted to other minds in similar form. Yet any given environment will contain far more information at a given moment in time than a human mind can attend to. Of those concepts or events that a human mind does bring into perceptual awareness, only a few will be remembered and transmitted to other human minds. For example, whilst Betty is walking down the street, she will not notice a vast number of events within range of her perceptual faculties: clouds may shift overhead, ants may carry pebbles on their backs, and 'No Parking' signs may hang from lampposts, all without registering in Betty's awareness. Betty will notice some things – perhaps a man sitting on a bench waiting for a bus, a discarded pencil in her path, or a tiger, recently escaped from the city zoo, crossing the street.

If over the next few days Betty runs into her friends, which one of these event-concepts is most likely to become well distributed within Betty's social circle? Most likely Betty will remember and report on the tiger, but not on the shifting clouds, hardworking ants, legible signs, patient commuters, or street-side detritus. The tiger, in

this example, has out-competed other candidates for attention, memory, and cultural transmission. But why? Dan Sperber, a central figure in CSR, has argued that by adopting an 'epidemiological approach to cultural representations' (1996) we can begin to understand why some concepts and not others proliferate through a group. This approach entails examining how successful concepts exploit the ecology of human minds and become 'contagious' (i.e., easily transmitted) to other human minds.

Within CSR, Boyer (2002) has argued that one reason why religious/supernatural concepts are especially contagious is because they are often richer in *inferential potential* than competing concepts. To illustrate what is meant by 'inference,' recall from Chapter 2 that human minds are posited to have cognitive modules dedicated to performing specific tasks – for example, detecting and avoiding contaminants (Rozin, Haidt & McCauley, 2000) and predators (Barrett, 2004; Cosmides & Tooby, 2000), theorising what types of thoughts or strategic information might be held in the minds of peers (the 'theory of mind' system, Barrett, 2004), etc. Recall also that these systems evolved in response to ancestrally recurrent situations and, upon being activated, supply the perceiver with helpful subroutines, or inferences about 'what to do next' (Boyer, 2002, p. 173) that motivate adaptive responses to the triggering stimulus. Consider again the 'fear' example provided in Section 2.2. If one hears a twig snap nearby in the forest, the fear system outputs a wealth of inferences that help the organism deal with the potential presence of a stalking predator. For example, fear subroutines shift attention away from non-essential thoughts ('*What should I buy my friend for his birthday?*') and towards detecting cues that bear on the hypothesis that one is being stalked. This shift in attention constitutes a fitness-enhancing *inference* output from the fear module.

Consequently, concepts that yield inferences (not just from the fear system, but from any of the mind's evolved cognitive mechanisms dedicated to survival and social interaction) may literally commandeer attention. It follows that such concepts are more likely to be attended to and transmitted than concepts that cannot readily produce inferences. It likewise follows that a close encounter with a tiger is more likely to capture one's attention and motivate subsequent discussion than is a close encounter with a pencil. With respect to the ecology of the human mind – specifically, in this example, with respect to the fear module – the tiger is the more 'infectious' and contagious concept because it generates more inferential potential.

Related to inferential potential is Sperber and Wilson's concept of cognitive *relevance* (1986). Relevance refers to a concept's efficiency in generating inferential potential. According to Sperber and Wilson, the most relevant and therefore transmission-worthy concept is that which allows a mind to generate the greatest number of inferences with the least amount of effort. To illustrate, consider again how the tiger and the pencil line up with the fear module. The fear module is served by sub-modules dedicated to identifying predators. The tiger can easily match the detector's input conditions by virtue of its size, goal-directed movement, etc. and hence catalyse fear processing. Theoretically, however, a pencil can also be edited to match predator input conditions. Betty could, for example imagine a vivid scenario wherein all the pencils in her desk become animated and crawl out of drawers to attack her. Anticipating that such an event would make for a great movie, Betty may open her laptop and begin work on a screenplay about killer pencils. As she becomes more attached to the idea of a *pencil as a*

predator, pencils could conceivably, for Betty, become as rich in fear-based inferential potential as real predators.

Yet even in these circumstances, the tiger is likely to be more relevant to the appropriate cognitive mechanisms. A tiger is more efficient at producing inferential potential because it falls more readily into the proper domain (see Section 2.4) of the modules that are designed to detect and deal with predators (i.e., the tiger is large, displays goal-directed movement, etc.), and can therefore be processed intuitively (i.e., quickly and effortlessly, as outlined in Section 2.2). A pencil could conceivably fit within the actual domain of the relevant modules, but this fitting process requires effort. Betty has to expend significant cognitive resources imagining counterfactual scenarios wherein predator qualities are grafted onto the pencil concept. Furthermore, sustaining the pencil's tenure in those actual domains may become a Sisyphean task. Betty would need to invent reminders or prompts that recast the pencil in the predator mould, because a pencil that displays no symptoms of being a predator will eventually escape the interests of the relevant cognitive mechanisms. In terms of allocating cognitive resources, then, it is more costly for the mind to make a predator out of a pencil than to make a predator out of a tiger. In CSR terms, this can be expressed by saying that with respect to the fear module the pencil is the less cognitively relevant of the two concepts.[57]

Of significance to the analyses below is the fact that to date there exists no satisfactory method for measuring the inferential potential attendant to a given concept

[57] This hypothetical estimate is based only on 'fear' considerations and does not take into consideration any gains in inferential potential that may extend from a pencil predator's 'counterintuitive status' (e.g., Boyer, 2002).

for a given perceiver.[58] However, relevance can be used as a helpful, if crude, heuristic for assessing inferential potential by asking people how *easy* it is to generate inferences (usually operationalised as 'thoughts' or 'images' – see Gregory & Barrett, 2009) from a target concept.[59] Concepts that yield inferences with little effort in effect have greater inferential potential and hence greater transmissibility. In practice, when CSR researchers discuss a concept's 'inferential potential' they generally refer to that concept's ability to generate inferences *easily* in a group of people *anywhere* (because the most inferentially potent concepts should line up with proper and actual domains attendant to cognitive modules found in all human minds), regardless of cultural context. This dissertation observes this standard usage of inferential potential.

To return to the worldwide prevalence of religious/supernatural concepts, CSR researchers point out that these concepts tend to be especially rich in inferential potential. Many gods and spirits, for example, are depicted as deadly predators. Yet perhaps the most consistent characteristic of gods and spirits discernible in the anthropological record is their enhanced knowledge about matters important to human social interaction. Gods and spirits always seem to know more than people do, particularly concerning moral affairs rather than information about average human intestinal length or how many frogs live in Cambodia. What constitutes 'moral affairs' can be clarified by recalling to mind the moral cognitive mechanisms outlined in Section 2.3 and recognising that gods and

[58] This is not least because there currently exists no agreement regarding what constitutes a standard unit of inferential potential.

[59] For a practical example that illustrates the importance of effortlessness to inferential potential and a concept's prospects for cultural distribution, consider television advertisements. In order to reach the broadest possible audience, advertisers strive to create commercials that capture attention and create an abundance of the appropriate inferences (e.g., often related to fear or sexual arousal) while requiring little, if any, conscious thought by the viewer.

spirits tend to be interested in matters concerning care and cruelty, justice and injustice. Gods and spirits tend to be concerned with group boundaries and the observation of hierarchical protocols. Moreover, they have information about these matters. Gods and spirits tend to know the rules of moral propriety and, by virtue of their ontologically pliable, or 'counterintuitive' (Boyer, 2001, 2002), features – for example, invisibility or super perception – tend to have ready access to all the most desirable, morally relevant information (gods know, for example, who bewitched the cows). By imagining what they know or sometimes asking them (e.g., by using a poison oracle; Evans-Pritchard, 1976), gods and spirits supply human minds with an abundance of morally relevant inputs. These inputs generate inferences and, accordingly, motivate continued attention to, as well as retention and cultural transmission of, the input concept. In this way, a supernatural concept may become widely distributed in the minds of a group of people.

Returning to *WoW*, virtual worlds may be seen as analogues of religious traditions when they provide ontologically pliable universes similarly rich in inferential potential. *WoW*'s pliability allows game designers to build in inputs that are easily recognised by the proper and actual domains of cognitive mechanisms dedicated to human survival and social interaction. Though *WoW* may be rich in many domains of inferential potential (including those domains that inform behaviours here termed bellicose, gladiatorial individualism), the researcher's Chinese informants revealed a gameworld especially rich in *moral* inferential potential.

(3.2) Introducing *WoW*'s Moral Inferential Potential

Throughout fieldwork, Chinese informants reported that *WoW* was rich in moral lessons and action potentials (i.e., opportunities to perform moral actions) and should be used for self-betterment and moral development. Accordingly, over three-fourths of the testimonials commented on activities, experiences, or virtues indicative of at least one of the MFs outlined in Chapter 2:

> *WoW has brought us more than just a game. It made me experience friendship and caring and develop a sense of responsibility. . . . WoW is a spirit. Without WoW there is no brotherhood. WoW is a kind of friendship. WoW taught me the details of being a good person.* T46

> *WoW taught us: (1) How to communicate and make more friends. . . . (2) How to be honest. . . . . If you are not honest in the game and are cheating and committing fraud, then you will be repelled. . . . (3) That we must develop skills. . . . (4) How to command, coordinate, and maintain order within the guild. . . . (5) That you must develop a sense of justice. Helping the weak. Helping low-level players. . . . A lot of* [in-game] *quests are aimed at killing people who disorder the world. We want to maintain the world peace. And the state's Bureau of Broadcasting and Television wants to harmonise* [i.e., interfere in or perhaps shut down] *WoW. Putting souls and skeletons in boxes makes us feel ridiculous.*[60] *Is this the real harmony??? Will the world become better? . . . Harmony inside your soul is the real harmony.* T67

> *Because of WoW, I made some new friends, got to know lots of moving stories, learned the importance of time, and realised the value of cooperation. Because of playing WoW as MT* [main tank], *I experienced pride at receiving the trust of my teammates.* T21

> *Responsibility and patience, this is what I have gained after fighting* [the enemies in *WoW*] *with my friends. We held each other's hands; we encouraged each other, and experienced all kinds of feelings. This game brought us together.* T34

> *WoW gave us more than a game, a lot more. We have teams. We have guilds. We*

[60] The player is referring to an infamous instance of political intervention in Chinese *WoW* game design that occurred in 2007 (see Section 4.3.1).

> *have friends. Unity, courage, toil, management, wisdom, leadership, are all brought to us by this game.* T78

In addition, many of the testimonials claimed that *WoW* provided moral lessons and experiences that either could not be obtained in contemporary Chinese society or that could be used to achieve greater moral harmony within Chinese society.

> *We all want to be unified. But* [in real life] *when someone shows up and wants to ask everybody to be unified, the result is always very upsetting. Many people think that 'it is not my business'* [i.e., 'this might result in trouble for me']. *But it is completely the opposite in the game societies. Many people, a group of people, can come together to be unified for just one aim – to push down the boss. . . . Our parents' generation thinks playing games is bad, awful, a waste of time or even the Devil's work. But the foreigners – the Americans, Japanese, and Koreans – regard the games as a way to improve their society. We Chinese were mistaken in thinking the games were bad. I cannot agree more* [with the foreigners]. T1

> *We are coming here not just to kill monsters and be 'ultimate'* [i.e., effect destruction, exercise machismo]*; rather, we only want to be with our friends. We can fish together, till the fields, see the sunset, have adventures, explore an unknown world. . . . Here it is a complete social system. A complete morality. This* [*WoW*] *is what the real world should become.* T35

> *You can get a lot of spiritual encouragement* [in *WoW*] *that you can never get in reality. This might be the essence of the game. . . .* [*WoW* players have] *the spirit of teamwork, modesty, and harmonious communication that only exists in novels and movies and cannot be found in real society. I remember a* time [early in the author's *WoW* career] *when a piece of equipment dropped which costs about 400 RMB*[61] [~GBP£40]. *I thought it was going to be a very fierce, fierce fight* [to see who gets the equipment]. *But my brothers and soldiers all knew and understood one another very well, and no one wanted it. They were so modest. I had not seen anything like that before. . . . Maybe the reason why so many people are addicted to this game is because of some deeper moral and spiritual issues in the real society. At this age, which is impetuous, the digital world might help people to become clearer about friendship and brotherhood.* T11

[61] Though the practice is strictly forbidden by Blizzard and violators risk having their accounts banished, players can buy *WoW* gold (G) on the Internet and use it to purchase desirable in-game goods. For example, Player A may wish to purchase Item X, which costs 3,000G, from the in-game Auction House. Player B may possess 3,000G and offer to sell it to Player A for a sum in pounds sterling. At current prices, high-end gear would cost between GBP£20 and 60 for each piece. Players have slots for 19 pieces, including a slot for headgear, shoulder gear, a chest piece, etc. One could easily spend hundreds of pounds outfitting an 'epic' character in this way.

These data suggested that informants considered moral experiences and betterment[62] to be defining features of gameplay. But what did *WoW* offer that motivated such testimonials? The following sections illustrate the gameworld's opportunities for moral cognition as revealed in the testimonials and as these can be shown to intersect clearly with the MF proper and actual domains outlined in Chapter 2.[63] By illustrating how aspects of gameplay may activate moral cognitive mechanisms and hence produce attention-commandeering inferences, the following sections intend to suggest a partial answer for *WoW*'s global success and also to set the stage for analyses in subsequent chapters that illustrate how these morally relevant aspects of gameplay are used in the production of in-game spiritual experiences.

It should be stressed that on offer here is a *partial* answer for the mystery of *WoW*'s cross-cultural appeal. The following provisos should be taken into account: First, for any given player *WoW* will surely appeal to a number of reflective (as opposed to intuitive) or idiosyncratic interests. For example, the 'theorycrafting' activities described by Nardi

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[62] Do these reports really indicate moral development? To avoid confusion about the claims being made here, some boundaries between 'moral development/achievement' and moral cognition should be established. Please consider the following: (1) As is obvious in these testimonials, some players believed *WoW* gameplay effected moral betterment. (2) However, Haidt and Joseph do not mean to imply that exercising moral cognition is tantamount to moral 'betterment' or 'development.' Rather, as Chapter 2 points out, they would argue that 'moral development' refers to a specific operationalisation (e.g., Confucian, American liberal, etc.) of the five moral foundations (e.g., a Confucian arrangement of care, justice, etc.). (3) This chapter is focused only on illustrating that what Haidt and Joseph identify as moral cognition is occurring in and probably motivated by (aspects of) the gameworld. Whether or not players are engaging that moral cognition in a way that satisfies some model of development is not commented on here. (4) Finally, this entails that participant behaviours were not followed or measured in offline spaces to test for any development gained from in-game moral cognition. In the analyses that follow, player reports of 'moral development' are of relevance only insofar as they betoken moral cognition generally.

[63] In effect and as discussed in Section 1.7.3, there may be experiences that players registered as having moral significance (e.g., experiences of beauty) that Haidt and Joseph's MFs cannot accommodate. Consequently, this dissertation makes no claim that the moral categories discussed below are fully comprehensive of the moral significance players associate with *WoW* gameplay.

(2010, pp. 137-151) require players perform complicated mathematics. As McCauley has noted in *Why Religion is Natural and Science is Not (*2011*),* complicated mathematics are not well supported by intuitive capacities. The paradigms outlined above cannot account for 'theorycraft' appeal or the appeal of other reflective or idiosyncratic player activities that make heavy use of mathematical or other 'non-intuitive' information.

Second, and with respect to the intuitive cognition paradigms outlined in Chapter 2, the gameworld hosts a wide range of evolutionarily salient phenomena that should appeal to a variety of intuitive cognitive mechanisms. For example and in addition to Haidt and Joseph's MFs, aspects of gameplay may be especially relevant (i.e., compared to real world counterparts people encounter on a day-to-day basis) to mechanisms dedicated to mate selection, sight and hearing (e.g., saturated colours, pure vowel sounds), detecting and avoiding predators, exercising control over other agents (e.g., Scherer, 1984), concentration (e.g., 'flow' experiences, following Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and so on. Experiential effects from these mechanisms may combine in interesting ways (e.g., the 'moral flow' experiences outlined in Chapter 5). Or, some mechanisms may be inhibitive of others. For example, the intuitive mechanisms that underlie 'bellicose, gladiatorial individualism[64]' may in some cases be inhibitive of Haidt's and Joseph's MFs (see Section 4.7.2 for examples). Any of these basic or combined capacities may be developed to a greater or lesser extent by players who frame gameplay based on their own needs and social circumstances. Regardless, the current analyses cannot account for all of the in-game evolutionarily salient stimuli for which the mind has dedicated intuitive cognitive mechanisms. Outlined here are aspects of gameplay that intersect with the proper and

[64] Aside from the suggestions given in Section 1.4, this dissertation does not elaborate on which specific mechanisms might underlie bellicose, gladiatorial individualism.

actual domains of Haidt and Joseph's MFs. Consequently, what is offered here is an overview of one particular capacity for cross-cultural appeal and, hence, a partial answer for that cross-cultural appeal.

In what follows, testimonial passages are divided into two analytical categories introduced in Section 2.5: morally relevant narratives and moral action potentials. Though treated as separate analytic categories, these are of course dialectically interrelated components of *WoW*'s dynamic moral universe, wherein narratives provide guidelines for actions, and actions provide the material for narratives.

(3.3) Morally Relevant Narratives in *WoW*

The testimonials reveal a strong level of interest in the moral significance of the narratives, myths, and lore that constitute Azeroth's rich and colourful history. Some of the authors dedicated significant space to pondering over the true meanings and moral lessons to be derived from specific narratives and quotes.

> [player uses English to quote Arthas, a paladin hero turned arch-villain] *'Is it truly righteousness that drives you? I wonder. Is it hatred* [as opposed to righteousness] *that has driven you to the frozen throne?'* [Chinese:] *Uther taught Arthas that we are paladins and we should not let the emotion of revenge fill our brains. After witnessing how Arthas' rage against the Scourge turned him into a villain himself, I feel I should have no more hatred towards the Burning Legion. I just hope I haven't misinterpreted Arthas' last words; I hope I came here not out of hatred. I hope this was just Arthas trying to shock us. I love these stories and I want to know their true meanings.* T58

Other testimonials read like laundry lists of the quests players found most 'moving' (感动; *gandong*) or most packed with 'feelings' (感情; *ganqing*) and included descriptions of players' emotional reactions to the quests.

> *Each NPC* [non-player character] *has its own story, its own feelings. They move me. . . . I do the quests one after the other, with all my heart, again and again, using different accounts. Alliance or Horde, using different classes and characters with different levels, I visit unknown corners of the world to learn their stories. . . . I remember that when we were doing the quest 'Of Love and Family' and in the end we saw the father kneel in front of his son and say 'What have you done to my boy?,' I cried all over my face. Do you remember the scream from that paladin hostage in Stratholme?* [quoting the hostage:] *'I die with no regrets, I wish only that the holy light would brighten the earth forevermore.' At that moment I was so moved by the spirit of the holy light that I joined the Alliance just so I could create a paladin and feel the tenderness of the holy light. Do you remember the Onyxia quests? The Alliance players were so moved and cried for the old general. The Horde players searched all over Desolace for Rexxar. . . . Do you remember the Deadmines quests? Those pitiful, poor people were so oppressed by the nobles of Stormwind. I felt complicated emotions for them. It was more than just sympathy.* T89

> *Only WoW has the stories that can move you deeply in your heart and soul. . . . The classic quest 'Of Love and Family' is maybe the best. It vividly describes the chivalry and love of a father. The best line* [in *WoW*] *is 'I've seen the best monsters and the worst humans'. . . . Another classic mission, 'An Eternal Love,' describes eternal love. A man's beloved wife dies in the war, but she still lives in her husband's heart. It always makes me cry. The moving dialogue when he and the spirit of his wife meet always makes me cry.* [referring to another quest] *When you hear about Pamela's crying, does it not touch your heart? We didn't know when she asked us to find her daughter that she was already dead.* [referring to another quest] *And when Cole at the Crossroads got back the dead body of his wife killed by the wild pig man, after he cried he said he would start his battle anew. Do you not have admiration for him? And when the heroes at the entrance of the Blasted Lands tell you, 'We have been fighting against the wrong enemy. We need to throw our biases away and focus instead on fighting the Burning Legion,' do you not feel a little shame for killing all those lowbie characters?* [i.e., low level members of the opposing faction. The player implies that it is shameful for Alliance players to spend their time killing low-level Horde players, and vice versa]. *Every NPC with a name in this game, they all have their own story. If you want understand them more, you must be willing to spend more time with them and be willing to become deeply moved.* T17

Testimonials occasionally featured these 'Do you not feel X when seeing Y?' interrogatives, often with the tagline: 'If not, then there is something wrong with you.' Being 'moved' or having the correct feelings was often given as evidence of having

grasped the moral lessons imbued in a particular quest[65] and of having purchased a better grasp on 'humanity'[66] (人情世故; *renqing shigu*) and the ways of society (社会; *shehui*). In casual discourse players occasionally claimed, for example, that feeling compassion helped them to be more compassionate.

What did in-game narratives offer that motivated these moral responses? This section maps the sources of these experiences by examining some of the most prominent quest narratives for the moral foundation inputs outlined in Section 2.3. Because *WoW*'s narrative terrain is vast – at the time of this writing, there exist over 9,600 separate playable quests, each with its own storyline – I have elected to examine only a select number of narratives that should be recognisable by a high percentage of players. All but one of the narratives examined below occur in the very beginning of the game as a necessary part of gameplay for the given races. The remaining narrative is stretched across a famous quest series that surfaced repeatedly in testimonials and interactions with guildmates. These narratives are divided into and analysed according to the following categories: (1) entry narratives; (2) 'lowbie' quest narratives (i.e., 'low level,' or, in this instance, pertaining to levels 1 through 5); and (3) an 'epic' quest narrative. Analyses of the first two narrative categories illustrate how narratives guide moral acclimatisation to the game world, while analyses of the epic quest and (in the next sub-section) in-game moral actions reveal moral cognitive affordances as they appear in the flow of normal gameplay.

[65] Players sometimes expounded upon what they perceived be a conscious moral design in the game (see Section 4.7.1).

[66] This term is difficult to translate. In popular use it is also taken to mean 'ways of the world' and 'the virtues and vices of others'.

Finally, it should be stressed that these analyses do not subscribe to any narrativist or ludological assumptions that a narrative will unequivocally dictate a perceiver's experience. Narrative stimuli that fit within the care MF proper domain, for example, will not necessarily always or even usually activate the care MF. A player may well encounter narratives about crying, orphaned puppies and injured comrades without registering sympathy. In human cognition, the relationship between stimulus and response is probabilistic (Sperber & Hirschfeld, 2004, p. 41) and subject to many variables. Orphaned puppies, injured comrades, and other stimuli falling within the care MF's proper and actual domains have only some greater-than-random chance of activating the care MF. Nevertheless, this chance will always be larger than the chances attendant to domain-irrelevant stimuli, such as dirt clods or sheetrock composition.

3.3.1. Entry Narratives and Moral Acclimatisation

The entry narratives prepare the player for easy recognition and contextualisation of the morally relevant stimuli that players will soon encounter in the gameworld. To illustrate, when starting *WoW*, players must create a character by selecting a faction, race, and class. At the time of this writing, players can choose from one of twelve different races belonging to two different factions. Alliance faction races include: humans, dranei, dwarves, gnomes, night elves, and worgen. Horde faction races include: orcs, trolls, tauren, undead, blood elves, and goblins. Having chosen faction and race, players must choose a class. Class-types include: warrior, paladin, mage, priest, druid, shaman, death knight, hunter, rogue, and warlock.



Figure 3.1. Players must choose between one of two factions:
Alliance (left) or Horde (right).

For the current focus on morally relevant narratives, race-type is the most consequential choice a player will make at this early point in the game. By choosing a race, players commit themselves to a 'starter zone' situated in an area of the map controlled by that race and will be encouraged to acclimatise to the cultural representations and shared concerns that characterise that race.

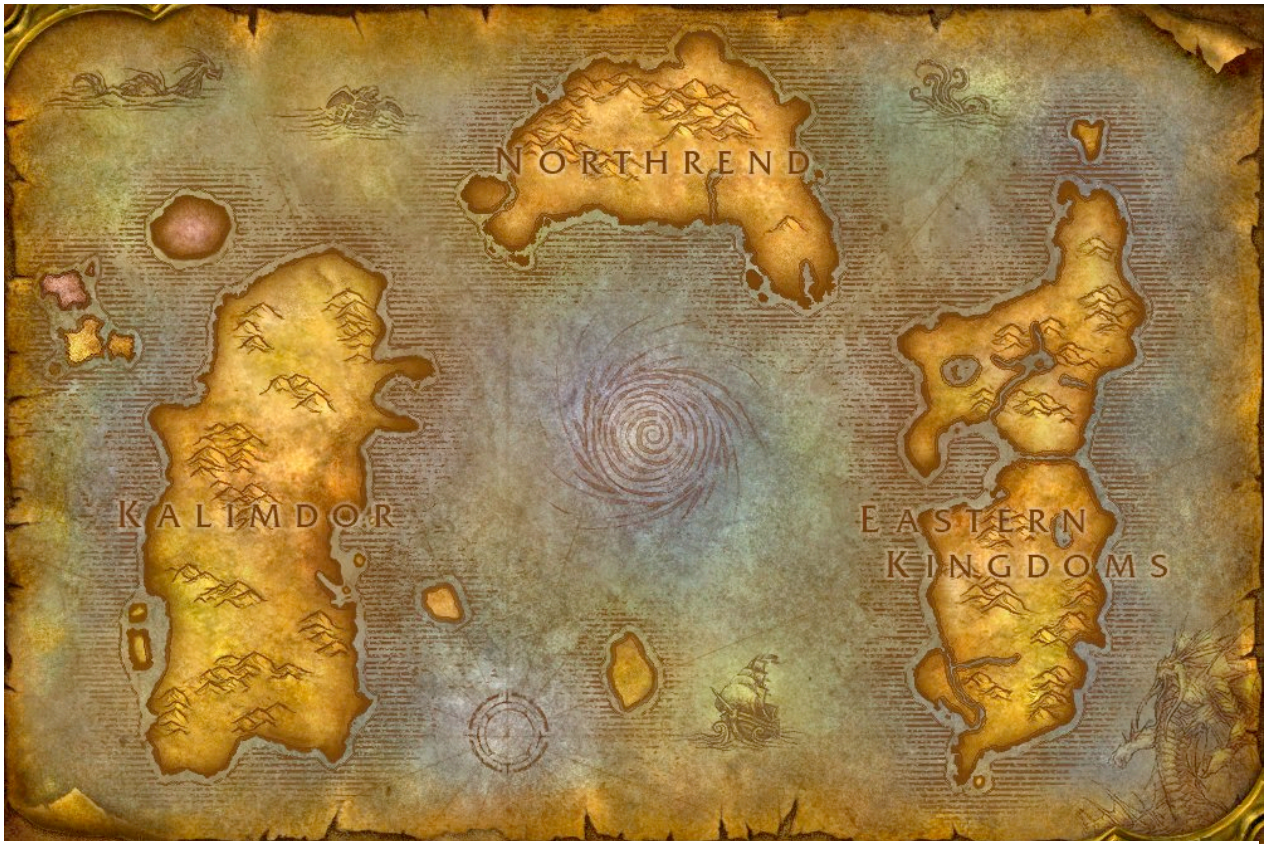


Figure 3.2. A map of Azeroth.

Upon making these choices (and customising select features of the new character's appearance), players will enter the game world.

Just prior to taking their first steps in the game, players watch a short, introduction video that outlines the social, historical, and geographical milieus into which their newly formed character will be inserted. Music and a voiced narrative outlining these essential facts accompany the video. Visually, the sequence is created by a live, aerial camera panning over areas of the starter zone, privileging the new player with a brief, bird's eye perspective of the terrain they will navigate in the early stages of leveling (the sequence

is 'live' in the sense that it portrays the gameworld in real time; if one looks closely one can see other players on the terrain below).

Though the entry narratives considered below are very brief – they average out at 89 seconds in duration and 165 words in content – they are notable for their high concentration of morally relevant information. One can discern in the narratives a design, consciously implemented or not by the creators at Blizzard, to engage the players' capacities for moral cognition and to calibrate their perceptions in such a way that subsequent actions (especially violent actions) will be readily meaningful and justifiable within a framework that channels those capacities. The entry narratives for four races – the blood elves, tauren, night elves, and dwarves – are considered below. In very few words, each manages to communicate: (1) an *in-group* affiliation, reinforced by contradistinction with an out-group posing an extinction threat, (2) a group leader, or *authority* figure, whom players should respect, and (3) a *holy or sacrosanct source of collective identity* – a ritual or ritual object, in the Durkheimian sense – that needs to be defended, regained, or purified. Consider first the blood elves' introduction:[67][68]

> For nearly seven thousand years, the high elves cultivated a shining magical kingdom deep within the forests of northern Lordaeron. But five years ago, the undead Scourge invaded Quel'Thalas and drove the elves to the brink of extinction. Led by the evil death knight Arthas, the Scourge destroyed the mystical Sunwell, thereby severing the elves from the source of their arcane power. Though the scars of that conflict are evident, the remaining elves have banded together and retaken much of their homeland. Calling themselves 'blood

[67] Introductions were transcribed from introduction videos hosted on Youtube. All introductions presented here can also be viewed– sometimes with a few omissions – at (Moreno, 2007).

[68] These introduction narratives were introduced with the *The Burning Crusade* expansion (see Appendix A). Some of these introductions were modified with the release of the *Wrath of the Lich King* and subsequent *Cataclysm* expansions.

> elves,' these grim survivors are committed to regaining the vast powers they once commanded. Inspired by the leadership of their beloved prince, Kael'thas Sunstrider, the blood elves now seek out new sources of arcane magic and the means of defending their land against the undying horrors of the Scourge. As one of the few surviving blood elves, you must master your thirst for magic and help shape the destiny of your people. (Moreno, 2007)

In-group (Out-group)	**Authority**	**Sacred Object**
Blood Elves (Scourge)	Kael'thas Sunstrider	Sunwell

Much like the Christian Smith (2003) script outlined in Section 2.5, which essentialises the moral contours characteristic (according to Smith) of a specific social identity, this compact narrative provides a preliminary framework for calibrating the moral foundations to a complex universe. (1) You, the new player, belong to a group of people called the 'blood elves.' You must cooperate with this group if you wish to survive the antagonisms of certain non-blood elves (i.e., the Scourge). (2) You have a leader named Kael'thas Sunstrider. As a 'beloved' leader, he is probably worth your respect and loyalty. (3) Your essence or nature *as a blood elf* is intimately connected with the 'Sunwell.' Accordingly, Sunwell-related issues should be treated with reverence.

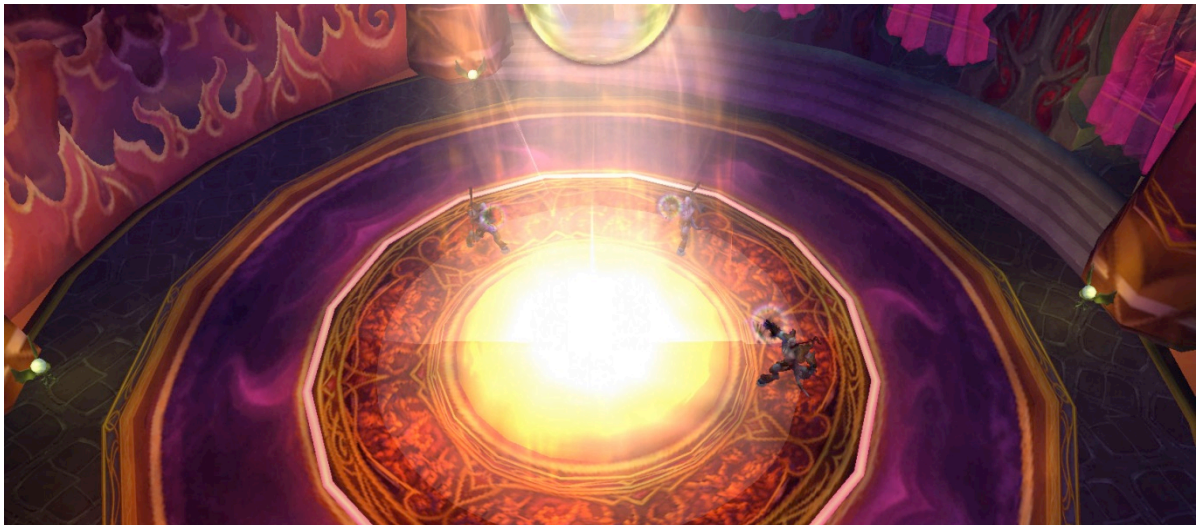


Figure 3.3. Three players visit the Sunwell.

Consider also the following introductions:

> Tauren: Once a nomadic people, the tauren roamed the endless plains of the Barrens hunting the mighty kodo. Scattered across the land, the wandering tribes were united only by their common hatred of their sworn enemy, the marauding centaur. Seeking aid against the centaur, the great chieftain Cairne Bloodhoof befriended the savage orcs who had recently journeyed to Kalimdor. With the orcs' help, Cairne and his tribe were able to drive back the centaur and claim the grasslands of Mulgore for their own. Upon the windswept mesa of Thunder Bluff, Bloodhoof built a refuge for his people. Over time, the scattered tribes united under a single banner. Though the noble tauren are peaceful in nature, the rites of the Great Hunt are venerated as the heart of their spiritual culture. As a tribesman of Mulgore, you must test your skills in the wild and prove yourself in the Great Hunt. (Moreno, 2007)

In-group (Out-group)	**Authority**	**Sacred Rite**
Tauren, Orcs (Centaurs)	Chieftain Cairne Bloodhoof	Great Hunt

> Night elves: For ten thousand years, the immortal night elves cultivated a druidic society within the shadowed recesses of Ashenvale Forest. Yet recently the catastrophic invasion of the Burning Legion shattered the tranquility of their ancient civilisation. Led by the Arch-Druid Malfurion Stormrage and the Priestess Tyrande Whisperwind, the mighty night elves rose to challenge the demonic

onslaught. Though victorious, the night elves were forced to sacrifice their cherished immortality and watch their beloved forests burn. Seeking to regain their immortality, a number of wayward druids conspired to plant a special tree that would reestablish a link between their spirits and the eternal world. Despite Malfurion's warnings that nature would never bless such a selfish act, the druids planted the great tree, Teldrassil, off the stormy coasts of northern Kalimdor. Within the twilight boughs of the colossal tree, the wondrous city of Darnassus took root. However, the tree was not consecrated with nature's blessing and soon fell prey to the corruption of the Burning Legion. Now the wildlife and even the limbs of Teldrassil itself are tainted by a growing darkness. As one of the few night elves still left in the world, it is your sworn duty to defend Darnassus and the wild children of nature against the Legion's encroaching corruption. (Moreno, 2007)

In-group (Out-group)	Authority	Sacred Object
Night Elves (Burning Legion)	Arch-Druid Malfurion Stormrage, Priestess Tyrande Whisperwind	Teldrassil

Dwarves: The stoic dwarves of Ironforge spent countless generations mining treasures from deep within the earth. Hidden within their impregnable stronghold of Ironforge Mountain, they rarely ventured beyond the wintry peaks of Dun Morogh. Recently, however, the dwarves unearthed a series of ruins that held the key to the secrets of their lost heritage. Driven to discover the truth about his people's fabled origins, the great King Magni Bronzebeard ordered that the dwarves shift their industry from mining to archaeology. As part of the Grand Alliance, the stalwart dwarven armies have been called away to battle the merciless Horde in faraway lands. In these perilous times, the defence of the mountain kingdom falls to brave dwarves like you. The spirits of the dwarven kings watch over you, and the very mountains are your strength. The future of your people is in your hands. (Moreno, 2007)

In-group (Out-group)	Authority	Sacred Objects
Dwarves, Alliance Members (Horde)	King Magni Bronzebeard	Mountains, Unknown Ancestral History



Figure 3.4. Ironforge, the dwarves' capital city,
is carved deep into the sacred mountains of Khaz Modan.

These entry narratives, which guide the player's first perceptions in the game world, afford a preliminary glimpse of how the game's structural elements can privilege moral cognition as a defining feature of gameplay. Additionally, although instances of care or justice (e.g., 'the dwarven kings watch over you') may be discernible in these passages, at this early point the game seems to privilege the in-group, authority, and purity foundations (also referred to collectively as the 'binding' foundations, Haidt, Graham & Nosek, 2009). By focusing moral cognition in this way, Blizzard presumably intends to communicate two paradigms of gameplay. First, the importance of community is a priori to all game objectives, as individuals cannot survive alone for long in a world overrun with extinction threats. Second, the player's moral obligations are in some sense

delimited to matters that concern his/her group.[69] By focusing on the binding foundations, Blizzard is creating a 'moral circle' (Bloom, 2004, p. 123) that not only demarcates valued cooperators towards whom one should observe due proprieties, but also excludes those outside the circle from propriety entitlements. As players will soon learn, it is acceptable to harm a Scourge but not a fellow blood elf. It is acceptable to steal, if you must, from the Horde, but not from a fellow dwarf.

Having drawn in tentative, rapid brushstrokes an outline of this circle, the game further motivates, reifies, and diversifies moral cognition in the first few moments of gameplay as the player assumes control of the new character.

3.3.2. Lowbie Quest Narratives and Moral Acclimatisation

Once the aerial camera lands, centering the player's perspective on his/her new character, a non-player character (NPC) with a large, inviting exclamation point overhead stands in the immediate vicinity, offering quests to passersby.[70] This section examines narratives embedded in some of the quests designed to help the player move from Level 1 to Level 5, a process that usually requires between seven and ten quests. Altogether, these require about an hour of gameplay.[71]

Caring for others. Many of these of the early quests are designed to motivate caring behaviours towards others within the character's moral circle. One of the first tasks for

[69] How a player conceptualises his/her group will change as the game progresses. In some high-end objectives, even Alliance and Horde must team up to fight extra-terrestrial forces. At this early point in the game, however, race-centric group dynamics predominate.

[70] Strictly speaking, players are not required to complete these lowbie quests. However, they provide essential gear, money, and experience points, and ignoring them severely handicaps one's ability to make progress in the game.

[71] Levelling becomes exponentially more time-intensive as one advances through the game. It may take, for example, 20 hours of gameplay to advance from Level 69 to Level 70.

novice tauren, for example, is to check on Chief Hawkwind's mother. In 'A Humble Task,' Chief Hawkwind explains to the new player:

> All members of the tribe share in the harmony of life. We live together and work together.
>
> Our commitment to one another carries with it a high degree of responsibility. I ask of you now a humble task.
>
> My mother set out this morning to fetch water from the well to the southeast of Narache. It has been quite some time now. Perhaps you could check on her for me while I attend to tribal matters here? ('Quest: A Humble Task,' 2011)

If the player accepts this quest he/she can, just a few moments later, find a frail and vulnerable Greatmother Hawkwind near the well. She explains:

> I have travelled many paths through life and these old legs lack the vigour they once had. I can still perform my duties to the tribe. Sometimes it just takes an old woman a little longer to do the task.
>
> But you look like an eager <class>. Let's put some of that youthful vitality to the test. Take a water pitcher from the well and bring it to my son, the Chief, in Camp Narache.
>
> Remember that even the most humble task can gain the recognition of elders. ('Quest: A Humble Task (2),' 2011)



Figure 3.5. A novice tauren receiving quests from tribal elders.

Finally, when the player carries the water pitcher back to Chief Hawkwind, he responds:

> You carried this pitcher back at the Greatmother's bidding, I see.
>
> Your willingness to help others and provide for the tauren of Camp Narache leads me to believe you would make the tribe proud in Thunder Bluff someday. (‘Quest: A Humble Task (2),’ 2011)

Upon completing this quest, the player is awarded 16 copper coins, 85 experience points, and 75 reputation points with Thunder Bluff, the tauren capital city. These rewards help to reinforce several moral behaviours important to tauren society: *deference* to tribal authority figures and *care* of vulnerable tribal members.

Novice night elves are likewise asked to undertake a caretaking quest; one that also contains a purity element. In ‘A Good Friend,’ an NPC named Dirania Silvershine asks the player for help:

> A friend of mine named Iverron usually visits me at the same time every day.
>
> The strange thing is that he hasn't been by today at all – he's several hours late, in fact.
>
> I admit, I am a little worried, <name>. Iverron spends a lot of time over by the cave to the north, and I'm sure you know how dangerous it is there – spiders, everywhere!
>
> If you happen to be going that way, though, will you keep an eye out for him? ('Quest: A Good Friend,' 2011)

Players can find Iverron just west of Shadowthread Cave, in the northwestern corner of Shadowglen, the night elf starter zone. He lies writhing in pain, in need of assistance:

> Ughhh... I was bitten very badly by a spider named Githyiss the Vile while exploring the spider cave very close to here. I am sure I have been seriously poisoned; you must help me.
>
> Please tell Dirania Silvershine. She will be able to help me.
>
> Hurry... I'm so dizzy... ('Quest: A Friend in Need,' 2011)

To help Iverron, the player must run back to Dirania Silvershine, who advises that she can make a poison antidote if the player will help her collect the necessary resources. Specifically, Dirania needs seven hyacinth mushrooms, four moonpetal lilies, and one webwood ichor. Once these items are gathered, Dirania creates the antidote and gives it to the player. The player must rush back to Iverron (the antidote is only viable for five minutes) and help nurse him back to health.

Upon completing this task, Iverron is somewhat less lavish with his praise than Chief Hawkwind. He credits Dirania with his salvation ('Oh, I knew Dirania would be able to help me!') and then requests that the player 'clear a path for me through those vicious webwood spiders' ('Quest: Iverron's Antidote (2),' 2011). Nonetheless, the player is

rewarded with experience, reputation, and choice of either a cloth pair of [Sedgeweed Breeches] or a mail [Barkmail Vest]. With these rewards, 'A Good Friend' helps to associate the player's care foundations with other night elves and with the general concern of the night elves with growth and healing through *detoxification.*

Effecting justice and fairness. Many of the lowbie quests seek to engage the fairness MF by asking players to help effect justice by punishing an evildoer or recovering stolen goods. Others are designed to reassure the player's investment in fair reciprocity with fellow group members. In 'Dwarven Outfitters,' the first quest offered to novice dwarves, an NPC named Sten Stoutarm makes the following proposition:

> What do we have here? You look as though you might need something to keep your hands warm, hmm?
>
> I'll tell you what would help: a pair of nice, warm gloves. And, being the kind soul that I am, I'd be more than happy to provide you with a suitable pair. I've one condition, however.
>
> I need you to go get me some wolf meat. Nice arrangement, hmm? You bring me some wolf meat, and I'll make sure you don't lose any digits to frostbite. Well, what do you say? ('Quest: Dwarven Outfitters,' 2011)

There are many wolves in the vicinity, and it will not take the player long to collect the trade requirements. Upon giving Sten Stoutarm the wolf meat, Sten gives the player a selection of gloves (cloth, leather, or mail, depending on the character's class type) and says: 'Ah! Wonderful. The wolf meat should do nicely. Oh, don't worry, <name>, I wouldn't forget my part of the bargain. Here, one of these should fit you' ('Quest: Dwarven Outfitters,' 2011). In effect, while 'A Good Friend' reinforces to players that group members are worth caring for, 'Dwarven Outfitters' emphasises that group members are people with whom you can deal *fairly*.

Hierarchy and authority. The starter zones are especially replete with lowbie quests that reinforce the binding foundations outlined in the entry narratives. Throughout the starter zones, there are group traitors to be rounded up and punished and also many taints and contaminants that must be removed. With respect to the authority foundation, novice *WoW* players are constantly being summoned to appear before authority figures (usually prominently marked with exceptional costumes and intimidating size, and/or elevated upon platforms) and asked to pay tribute and display appropriate protocol. In order to gain acceptance with Chief Hawkwind, novice tauren must fetch him meat and feathers. Upon being summoned to speak to the local druid Tenaron, novice night elves are told to hurry because 'It's best you not keep him waiting too long' ('Quest: Tenaron's Summons,' 2011). Novice blood elves are sent to speak with Well Watcher Solanian and told, 'You would do well to ingratiate yourself with him' ('Quest: Well Watcher Solanian,' 2011). Indeed, Solanian is very intent that all novice blood elves should develop a proper sense of duty to and respect for superiors, both living and dead. In 'The Shrine of Dath'Remar,' he asks new players to pay respects to an ancient blood-elf king:

> Day after day I stand here, watching, waiting. I've been accused of dwelling too much on our past, while my eyes look to the horizon. But it is my firm belief that each visitor to this island should honour those who have sacrificed all so that they [sic] may continue to do so.
>
> Dath'Remar Sunstrider was our first king. He led us here from Kalimdor through the Maelstrom.
>
> Seek out his shrine to the west and do not return to me until you have read the plaque upon it in his honour. ('Quest: The Shrine of Dath'Remar,' 2011).

Once the novice blood elf has found and read the plaque, Solanian gives his praise: 'Ah, <Name> – thank you for sharing your experience at the Shrine of Dath'Remar. First off,

you should be commended for your sense of duty and respect – it will serve you well not only here, but in all of Azeroth as well' ('Quest: The Shrine of Dath'Remar,' 2011). He then offers the player's services to his friend, Summoner Teli'Larien, who advises the player that 'Following the orders of your masters is highly recommended as a young <class>' ('Quest: Windows to the Source,' 2011).

Morally questionable quests. Because gameplay ultimately revolves around warfare and requires players to commit repetitive acts of violence in order to advance in the game, the player inevitably must perform actions that violate – often spectacularly – the concerns of the moral foundations. It is therefore interesting to note how the lowbie quests attempt to frame behaviours that are potentially morally reprehensible to fit into a morally acceptable framework. To illustrate, consider the context Magistrix Erona creates in 'Unfortunate Measures,' a quest wherein she tasks novice blood elves with slaying nearby lynxes:

> Your effort has made something clear that, honestly, I wish were not true. The unchecked power of the Burning Crystals has maligned a much larger swath of the isle's natural balance than I thought. We must now take on more unfortunate measures to reclaim control.
>
> The nearby lynxes have succumbed to the influence of the crystals, and they must be put down. Bring their collars, <name>, as I may yet be able to fashion a magical restraint to turn some back from being uncontrolled. ('Quest: Unfortunate Measures,' 2011)

Magistrix Erona here communicates to the player that harming innocent living beings is not something to revel in. Upon completing the quest she drives home the point:

> It gives me no pleasure to ask you to destroy these beasts. While in times past we have lived in relative harmony with woodland creatures, these are different times.

> The first order of business for all Sin'dorei is survival; make sure you remember that. (‘Quest: Unfortunate Measures,’ 2011)

It follows that by slaying innocent creatures the young blood elf is, in fact, working to preserve the island’s natural balance and *reduce* suffering in the long run. Killing is caring, in a sense. These framing strategies are especially prevalent in the starter zones, wherein players begin moral acclimatisation to the game world and wherein marquee villains (e.g., Scourge or members of the Burning Legion) are absent. They help provide an environment wherein moral cognition is excitingly diverse yet also thematically consistent and reliable.

Finally, while most of the lowbie quests supply information relevant to at least one of the moral foundations, it should be mentioned that not all of these reveal an obvious design to foster a sense of moral rectitude in the player. A very small number of lowbie quests permit overt instances of bullying or theft without providing clear guidelines as to how these actions fit into the group’s moral framework. For example, orc novices (orcs are commonly represented in *WoW* lore as one of the more bloodthirsty races) can obtain a quest titled ‘Lazy Peons’ from Foreman Thazz’ril, who confides to the novice:

> Cursed peons! They work hard gathering lumber from the trees of the valley, but they’re always taking naps! I need someone to help keep the peons in line.
>
> You look like the right <race> for my task. Here, you take this blackjack and use it on any lazy peons you find sleeping on the job. A good smack will get them right back to work! Return the blackjack when you’re done.
>
> Lousy slacking peons… (‘Quest: Lazy Peons,’ 2011)

After receiving Foreman Thazz’ril’s blackjack, the player will find ‘peon’ orcs sleeping at various locations and must strike them firmly with the blackjack in order to wake them.

After completion, Thazz'ril says, 'Good, good. Maybe they'll think twice before slacking next time! Thanks for the help!' ('Quest: Lazy Peons,' 2011) He then rewards the player with experience and reputation points.

As with slaying lynxes, striking other people, especially those who could be considered confederates, would seem to violate the care MF imperative. But as with 'Unfortunate Measures,' these harmful actions are potentially morally salvageable. Any of the following interpretive paradigms could be applied: (1) Sleeping on the job is theft. If Thazz'ril is paying the peons to do a job and they are not doing it, they are not reciprocating in a fair manner. (2) Sleeping on the job endangers the group. If gathering the lumber is a necessary measure in protecting in-group interests, then sleeping on the job could be interpreted as a threat to group prosperity. (3) Sleeping on the job disrespects authority figures. As the peons' superior, Thazz'ril may find it morally loathsome that an inferior would disobey his orders.

However, unlike the previous narratives, which seem designed to enforce a clear interpretation of the moral significance of the player's actions, 'Lazy Peons' is more open-ended and resists any definite moral lessons. Thazz'ril communicates clearly enough that laziness is unacceptable but doesn't take any subsequent steps to fit 'laziness' into a wider moral context. Whereas Magistrix Erona tells us how killing lynxes corresponds to an effort to preserve balance and prosperity in nature, Thazz'ril does not tell us how the practice of beating orcish proletarians contributes to an orcish ethos. Rather, the quest seems designed to permit players to indulge in violence for violence's sake. As is noted in Chapter 1, the fact that some players could prefer this style of gameplay is not wholly surprising. Players who revel in bellicose, gladiatorial

individualism may prefer a style of gameplay unencumbered by concerns for care, tit-for-tat reciprocity, group commitments, respect for authority (aside from aspiring to be the authority figure whom everyone respects), or spiritual purity.

Yet of the many quests informants reflected fondly on in casual discourse and in the testimonials, not one fit the bellicose, gladiatorial individualism mould. Time and again informants discussed quests that, according to them, revealed their in-world personas as caring, just, loyal, reverent, and spiritually pure. The next section examines the 'epic' quest, which received the most discussion.

3.3.3. 'Of Love and Family' – An Epic Quest

There [in the Plaguelands] *is one of WoW's most touching stories, 'Of Love and Family.' That old portrait, you and me, we will never forget it.* T13

The quests that dominate gameplay in levels 1-5 are without exception simple, quickly done affairs. As players progress through levels, complicated, layered quests become available that may require group collaboration and/or large investments of time – perhaps several weeks – to accomplish. Some of these quests have famous storylines that players claimed moved them to tears. The epic quest that surfaced most often in the testimonials and in casual discussions was 'Of Love and Family.'

'Of Love and Family' is actually only one link in a long chain of quests that starts with 'Blood Tinged Skies,' which players Level 51 or higher can receive from a man named Tirion Fordring in the Plaguelands. Tirion, once a hero of the Alliance and a top-ranking member of the Order of the Silver Hand, an elite and just order of holy paladins, appears morose and broken on his farmstead. In 'Blood Tinged Skies,' Tirion grumbles

about the 'all manner of foulness' that has overrun the nearby woods and asks the player for assistance in killing 30 plaguebats. By completing this quest, the player inspires Tirion: 'You are a shining example of decency, <race>! It has been long since I have felt the blood of heroes pump through my veins. Your acts of bravery are uplifting!' ('Quest: Blood Tinged Skies,' 2011). He offers to let the player stay at his farmstead so long as the player earns his/her keep by killing plaguehounds, carrion grubs, and devourers. When the player completes these tasks, Tirion introduces himself properly:

> I must apologise for not being entirely truthful with you in regards to my identity. I had to be certain that you could be trusted – few people would have selflessly lent assistance to an old and forgotten hermit. You have proven yourself as one of those people: A person of integrity and honour.
>
> [Player's auto-response:] Thank you, Tirion. What of your identity?
>
> My son, Taelan, was only a child when I was found guilty of treason and banished[72] from the Alliance to live a life in exile. I chose to remain here [Tirion's hut is near Mardenholde Keep, where Taelan commands a garrison of Scarlet Crusade soldiers] so that I could watch over him, to somehow ensure that he would grow up an honourable man.
>
> As I had hoped, he took my place as lord of Mardenholde; but in a cruel twist of fate, joined the ranks of the Scarlet Crusade [a corrupt offshoot of the Order of the Silver Hand]. He is now their Highlord, <race>.
>
> [Player's auto-response:] That is terrible.
>
> Indeed. The Scarlet Crusade are an aberration of the Order of the Silver Hand. You must believe me, <race>; Taelan is a good man. He needs guidance. He needs to remember... remember what it is to be noble and honourable. I know that in his heart, he knows what he does is wrong. Will you help him? Will you help him remember?
>
> [Player's auto-response:] I will, Tirion. ('Quest: Redemption,' 2011)

[72] It is revealed in parts of the quest series not presented here that Tirion was framed.

An added twist is that Taelan doesn't know Tirion is still alive. When Tirion was banished, Taelan's mother informed Taelan that his father had died and took him to a fake grave in a place called Undercroft.

When Taelan went to Undercroft to mourn his father, he took with him his most treasured possession, a toy warhammer (a miniature replica of Tirion's own warhammer) that Tirion had given him for his seventh birthday. Taelan buried the toy next to the bogus grave. Tirion suggests that if the player wants to help Taelan 'remember what it is to be noble and honorable,' he/she could reunite Taelan with certain reminders from his past. Over the course of several rather intricate quests, throughout which Tirion reflects on happier days he spent with Taelan, players must retrieve the toy warhammer and a family portrait. Tirion collapses and sobs frenetically upon seeing the latter and requests that the player infiltrate Taelan's stronghold at Mardenholde and reunite Taelan with these items (through yet another quest, players obtain a disguise that permits easy infiltration and access to Taelan). Upon opening a box that contains the items of his lost past, Taelan falls to one knee and begins to tremble. Speaking with him again initiates the chain's final quest, 'In Dreams.' Taelan:

> For so long, I have been a puppet of the Grand Crusader. What reason was there to fight against what the Scarlet Crusade had become? It has been decades, yet the memories of my father, those precious memories, they are what have kept me alive.
>
> I have dreams, stranger. In these dreams my father is with me. He stands proudly at my side as I am inducted into the Order. We battle legion of Scourge, side by side. We bring honour to the Alliance, to Lordaeron.
>
> I want not to dream any more.
>
> Take me to him. ('Quest: In Dreams,' 2011)

Taelan attempts to flee Mardenholde, killing all Scarlet Crusaders who try to contain him. At the castle gates, he mounts his horse and leads the player down a road that is flanked by a scout tower. However, Isillien, the Grand Inquisitor of the Scarlet Crusade, steps out from the behind the tower, blocking Taelan's path. Isillien:

> You disappoint me, Taelan. I had plans for you... grand plans. Alas, it was only a matter of time before your filthy bloodline would catch up with you. It is as they say: like father, like son. You are as weak of will as Tirion... perhaps more so. I can only hope my assassins finally succeeded in ending his pitiful life. The Grand Crusader has charged me with destroying you and your newfound friends, Taelan, but know this: I do this for pleasure, not of obligation or duty. ('Quest: In Dreams,' 2011)

A fight ensues in which the player is helpless to intervene (aside from being able to take shots at Isillien's guards). Taelan is killed. Isillien turns his attention to the player, but before he can attack, Tirion, who had been circling Mardenholde hoping to intercept Taelan as he exited, joins the fray and easily dispatches Issilien. Tirion, sobbing, picks up Taelan's lifeless body: 'Look what they did to my boy,' he says. Tirion:

> Too long have I sat idle, gripped in this haze... this malaise, lamenting what could have been... what should have been. Your death will not have been in vain, Taelan. A new Order is born on this day... an Order which will dedicate itself to extinguishing the evil that plagues this world. An evil that cannot hide behind politics and pleasantries. This I promise... This I vow... ('Quest: In Dreams,' 2011)



Figure 3.7. Left: the portrait of Tirion, Taelan, and Karandra Fordring.
Right: a fully-grown Taelan in Scarlet Crusade tabard.

Distraught but renewed in purpose, Tirion gives the player his/her choice of a handsome selection of awards for all his/her help. Before heading off to create the Order of the Silver Hand anew, he bids the player farewell: 'May we meet again, in better times, and reminisce of days long past... battles hard fought... dreams redeemed' ('Quest: In Dreams,' 2011). Indeed players will meet Tirion again. This quest was introduced in vanilla *WoW* and with subsequent expansions Tirion's story evolves.

Two aspects of 'Of Love and Family' are worth discussing here. First, the narrative terrain here is especially rich in moral inferential potential. Herein a man is *unjustly* disgraced and *banished from his group*. He wants only to *care* for his son, whom he can only remember as a small, vulnerable child. The child has been coerced into a cult-like *group* of religious fanatics, which he then *betrays*. The relevant *authority* figures intervene and conflict ensues. And throughout the story are references to the moral *purity* of the Order of the Silver Hand, the moral *taint* of its aberration the Scarlet Crusade, and the many *contagions* (plaguebats, etc.) infesting the Plaguelands.

Second, the narrative terrain here is gaining complexity. By Level 51[73] the simple, quick, and easy storylines that characterised the lowbie quests are mostly gone. In their stead, 'epic' quests and their long, nuanced storylines predominate. As T17 noted above, players must be prepared to become involved in specific, rather intense moral dilemmas for extended periods of time. 'Of Love and Family' is only one of hundreds of epic quests dotting the landscapes that are accessible by players in the low 50s. Likewise, Tirion and Taelan are just two of thousands of detailed characters in an enormous, complex body of Azerothian lore that has been steadily developing since 1994 and the first instalment of the *Warcraft* series (see Appendix A.5). Players must choose which quests they will pursue and which characters (and their accompanying moral quandaries) merit their attention.

(3.4) Moral Action Potentials in *WoW*

This section focuses on the gameworld's *moral action potentials* – or, its opportunities for moral actions. The term 'action potential' is here intended as an analogue of the ecological psychology term 'affordance' (not to be confused with 'cognitive affordance,' as defined in Section 1.1). In ecological psychology, affordances 'are properties of the environment of an animal that have consequences for the animal's behaviour'[74] (Stoffregen, 2000, p. 7). A major aim of research on affordances is to

[73] The gamer has probably invested between 60 and 120 hours in gameplay to advance to Level 51.

[74] Affordances can be better understood by considering them in contradistinction with 'events.' Events are 'static (i.e., stationary) and dynamic (i.e., moving) properties of objects and surfaces defined (i.e., measured) independent of the perceiver' (Stoffregen, 2000, p. 6) and may or may not have affordances for a given organism. A shooting star, for example, is a measurable event that may occur within the perceptual range of a number of animals. However, for most animals this event will be perceived – if it is perceived at all – as devoid of affordances. A shooting star cannot be intercepted, and it does not denote consequences

capture in formal equations the reasoning processes by which minds process whether a given action is or is not possible in a given environment. For example, research shows that if a stair is a certain proportion of a person's leg length, most human subjects will perceive that the stair affords *climbing* (Warren, 1984). Or, if a ball is falling with a certain velocity relative to the speed that a person can generate in running toward it, most human subjects will perceive the ball affords *catching* (Oudejans, Michaels, Bakker & Dolne, 1996). Accordingly, an environment replete with stairs of a certain height and with balls falling at a certain velocity is rich in affordances, or action potentials, for climbing and catching. This section discusses 'moral action potentials,' by which is meant, following Stoffregen's definition of affordances, morally relevant stimuli that permit actionable response. The term 'moral action potentials' is used here instead of 'moral affordances' because, as was pointed out in Section 1.1, the term 'cognitive affordance' carries a particular meaning in this dissertation; and there is no need to create undue confusion.

What would it take for an environment to be rich in moral action potentials? First, an environment would need stimuli that fall within the proper or actual domains of the moral foundations (e.g., in order to provide care, one must have something to provide care *for*). Second, these morally relevant stimuli must be readily perceivable as permitting responsive actions by the perceiver. At this point it is possible to articulate a distinction between moral *inferential* potential and moral *action* potential – the latter may be said to indicate the former, but the opposite is not necessarily the case. To illustrate, though a

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for the animal (unless, of course, it is on a collision course with the animal). It is not perceived with actionable concomitants such as '*get out of the way*' or '*interact with that.*'

newspaper may be exceedingly rich in moral inferential potential, the stimuli therein are usually not perceived as action potentials. For example, a story in the *New York Times* about disadvantaged children in a faraway nation may move a reader to feelings of compassion, but how is the reader to engage those 'care' MF inference outputs? The children are not within easy range of the reader's capacity to act. The perceiver might travel to the faraway country, or might engage that compassion on children or pets closer to home. But these are added complications that put time, distance, and/or money between the stimuli and the action potential. As media, newspapers may be strong in moral inferential potential but they are usually quite poor in moral action potentials – they often do not successfully communicate to the mind an opportunity for action relative to the morally relevant stimuli.

On the other hand, real-life environments such as home or the workplace may not have the sheer moral inferential potential of a newspaper, but usually these environments are richer than newspapers in moral action potential. A baby crying affords tending to; an order from a superior affords the opportunity to do a good job, etc. An environment that maximises moral action potential is rich in both domains. Such an environment (1) has a large number of morally relevant stimuli that (2) afford responsive actions.

Though actions, or what are here termed 'action potentials,' do not feature in the primary literatures articulating the inferential potential and relevance concepts, they are discussed here and intended to be read as indices of moral inferential potential for the following three reasons. First, a moral action is generally a response to a morally relevant stimulus that produced inferences that suggested the need for the action. Consequently, moral actions would generally indicate moral inferences. Second, in some cases moral

actions will not only indicate moral inferences, they will indicate a superabundance of them. As was illustrated in Section 2.5, which discussed the relationship between touch and oxytocin,[75] it is sometimes the case that actions (e.g., touching) boost the production of inferences *qua* feelings that result in even greater dispositions to engage in moral actions (e.g., touching an infant generates the inferences *qua* oxytocin that motivate in the mother yet more caring actions). Regarding the importance of actions to the generation of moral inferences, Durkheim (see Section 2.3) seems to have had something similar in mind when he discoursed not just on ritual symbols but also on ritual *actions* as being crucial to the generation of the sentiment necessary to preserve social order. Third and finally, there is a need to discuss moral actions because these are what the testimonials expounded upon at length. By these lights, the 'moral action potential' concept allows these analyses the freedom to remain true to the ethnographic data while still fitting those data into the moral inferential potential/relevance analytical frameworks presented above.

This section showcases testimonials that reveal an Azeroth replete with moral action potentials. Below are the moral actions, categorised first by MF and then by specific morally relevant stimuli, that were most frequently discussed in the testimonials. Attention is given to the phenomenological properties of the stimuli that likely enhance their appeal to the relevant MF detection devices, the gameplay mechanics that enable the actions, and also the game's controls and feedback systems that give the player a sense of confirmation that he/she has successfully performed/received the action.

[75] Interestingly, in certain circumstances it seems to be the case that when two avatars touch in a virtual world, the corporeal bodies of the real world social actors piloting the avatars release oxytocin (Hornbeck & Barrett, 2008).

3.4.1. Caring Actions

> *I had fallen into that drain pipe of darkness. There was no way out. I was struggling in the water but could not get up. And he* [an unknown player, a paladin] *jumped into the water and told me to come with him. Since then I have trusted him unconditionally and regarded him as my first special friend. Whoever helped you when you are in adversity must be your friend. Since then he has given me a lot of help and let me feel the warmth of a stranger in this virtual world.* T75

The testimonials often discuss *WoW* as an environment replete with opportunities to help and care for others. T84 and T94 provide a general introduction to players' sentiments by pointing out that *WoW* makes caring necessary by virtue of the cooperation required to front game objectives, and cheap by virtue of the fact that the game cards aren't too expensive.

> *Emotions in real life will sometimes be constrained. Because of the circumstances and influences of the environment we sometimes have to control ourselves when we want to express something. Emotions in real life are sometimes un-expressible or we don't have the ability to express them. . . . In* [real] *life we might want to take care* [of] *or love someone but because we don't have enough money* [or because] *we have other troubles, we cannot help. In the game it is different. . . . You can help others whenever you want. It's only 30 or 40 kuai and you can save someone. People can express their feelings and emotions unlimitedly.* T84

> *In this magic world because we need to cooperate we became generous and love to help. Because of the low-punishment of death, we became brave and ready to sacrifice. Because of the power of the monsters, we began to treat others with broad minds.* T94

Below are the in-game stimuli and actions discussed most often in the testimonials and/or in casual conversations with players.

Stimuli #1: Vulnerable teammates that afford saving. There are many ways to die[76] in Azeroth. One can be bashed, gashed, and stomped; pierced by arrows, bullets,

[76] Penalties incurred for dying are financial and temporal. Dying incurs damage to the character's armours, which must be repaired – often at great cost (payable in in-game gold) if they are to remain effective.

and lances; blasted by frost bolts, fireballs, and lightning bolts; ridden with diseases, curses, and poisons, and so on. Incurring these or other injuries will result in audible and visual cues that signal to teammates and/or passers-by: 'I am vulnerable; I need help.' With respect to audible cues, the attack itself will produce visceral, physical-sounding noises – e.g., various thuds, whacks, *ka-pow*s[77] – that communicate violence. In response, the assailed character may emit various grunts, groans, or cries. With respect to visual cues, the assailed character will (1) be moved, contorted, or generally tossed around by the assault; (2) may display serious wounds, evidenced by extensive, vividly-coloured bleeding; (3) may change colours (e.g., some poisons will turn a character yellow and envelop him/her in an ill-seeming, glowing aura) or execute special animations (e.g., fear response includes a screaming face, hands flailing overhead, and panicked running); and (4) the character's health meter will drop.

Dying also sends the character's soul to the graveyard, and the soul must then run back to the scene of the death to retrieve its corpse. Oftentimes this is a confusing, time-consuming task, as graveyards tend to be located in maze-like locations that render finding one's way back to one's corpse difficult. In effect, it is often the case that impatient raid members will leave the dungeon team immediately following a wipe, resulting in everyone having to spend time finding replacements or abort the raid entirely.

[77] Blizzard's Foley artists are quite effective at designing sounds that bear on the hypothesis that someone is being stabbed, raked, mauled, etc.



Figure 3.8. A dwarf priest recoils from a punch.

One can assist such vulnerable confederates in several ways. If one's character class has healing abilities, one can heal the player. T35, for example, comments on healing as a method of helping others.

> *I will not make any harmful magic. I will only help my teammates by growing them up little by little* [e.g., by healing them]. *I just pull them up from the land* [e.g., heal them when their health drops] *so that they may fight vigorously. I just help them.* T35

If one's character is especially well armoured, one can 'tank' the enemy away. Tanks are characters that have the ability to wear plate armour and are capable of withstanding large amounts of damage. In dungeon raids, the tank's job is to hold the aggression (i.e., 'hold aggro') of the enemies – for example, by using taunting or threatening abilities – so that

those enemies do not attack the more vulnerable, cloth- or leather-wearing group members. As T34 points out, tanking is synonymous with 'protecting':

> *I chose a warrior* [i.e., a tank class] *as my first career so that I can always have someone to protect.* T34

Finally, if one's character has good DPS ('damage per second'), one can attack the assailant and kill it before it can kill the confederate.

All these actions are attended by visual and aural feedback signals that confirm the player's agency in the gameworld. Upon casting [regrowth] on a target, a restoration druid (and any nearby players) can witness on that target a swirling, healthy-seeming, green aura, flecked with tree leaves and bits of light and attended by a spell-sound evocative of regeneration. Or, upon using [taunt] on the assailant, an arms warrior will see a series of contorted exclamation marks appear over the assailant's head, which will now turn its attention towards the warrior. Or, upon casting [pyroblast], a fire mage will see the assailant's body recoil under the weight of the blast and hear the sizzle of the burn commixed with the assailant's anguished cries. These images and sounds help to cement for both the caregiver and the care receiver a sense of having cared for or of having been cared for by others.



Figure 3.9. A night-elf druid is surrounded by a glowing aura after casting a healing spell on himself.

Stimuli #2: New players and lowbies who afford parenting. Players such as T75 quoted above who are just starting their adventures in Azeroth may be confused or overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the gameworld. Though the starter zones feature implements that help new players get their bearings, new players are nonetheless often confused about where to go, with whom to speak, how to fight mobs and loot corpses, what types of gear to wear, how to acquire teammates for quests that require more than one player, how to train for new abilities, and so on. The starter-zone chat channels are often filled with requests for assistance regarding basic aspects of gameplay. Furthermore, all lowbies, regardless of their actual competence levels, *look* weak and

vulnerable by virtue of the flimsy lowbie armours they will wear until they can level into the 60s.



Figure 3.10. A tauren druid in starter gear (left) and a druid in epics (right).

In C*WoW* I frequently encountered 70s and, upon the release of *Wrath of the Lich King,* 80s whose primary attraction to the game seemed to lie in helping newbies and lowbies get their bearings. These benefactors were commonly observed engaging in one or both of the following. First, some 70s and 80s liked to patrol the starter zones and distribute advice, gold, or helpful items (oftentimes bags that can be used to carry loot) to nearby lowbies. Sometimes these 70s and 80s would even group with the lowbies and fight beside them as they attempted to fulfil difficult quest objectives. For example, in Snowtree's very first days in C*WoW* he accepted a quest that required him to enter the treacherous Ban'ethil Barrow Den, a hibernation cave full of narrow passages patrolled

by Gnarlpine furblogs in south-central Teldrassil. As I had struggled with Ban'ethil in NA*WoW* (I recall on one occasion dying four or five times over the course of an hour), I approached it warily. To my surprise, this being a starter zone, I saw a 70 night-elf mage sitting outside the den entrance. The mage gave Snowtree a hug and offered to group up with him. I gladly accepted and ran behind the mage as she effortlessly dispatched dozens of hapless furblogs with her high-powered Level 70 abilities, taking just minutes to clear an easy path to my quest objective. Before Snowtree left, she gave him 50 gold pieces (a considerable sum for a lowbie) and Snowtree reciprocated with a hug, a bow, and many thanks.



Figure 3.11. A night-elf druid bows to a friend.

Many of the testimonial authors fondly recalled similar instances wherein they felt lost, confused, or nervous and were subsequently rescued by a kindly stranger. For example:

> *The Stranglethorn Valley* [an area for low to low-mid level players] *is a place that changed my gaming career because it is the place where I met a player named VIII and another named Fruitcake and I would not be playing until now without their help. VIII is patient. He will type a lot* [of words] *for me to explain one simple question. And I thought 'VIII knows everything,' and he told me a lot. I remember the first time killing the* [indecipherable], *I was so nervous and asked him 'What can I do?' He told me what skills these bosses have, and what should I do. I appreciated that. . . . Asparagus is also a very good man. . . . Once I was in a dark swamp and I was a corpse. Asparagus knew that and came and helped me. I was almost crying at that time.* T73

Second, both Fat Guys and Coma Divine had (1) a considerable number of lowbies that commonly requested assistance with various game objectives and (2) a 'guild father' or 'guild mother' who would reliably stop his/her current activities and cheerily go out of his/her way to provide this assistance. Oftentimes this entailed helping a lowbie with an especially difficult leg of a quest, or supplying a lowbie with the necessary materials to develop professional skills (e.g., tailoring, enchanting). Some players marvelled at the willingness of the guild parents to accommodate these lowbies. In terms of the game's material and points rewards systems, there is nothing to be gained by work of this sort. The guild parents I spoke with said they simply enjoyed helping others and that it was a pleasure to receive hugs and thanks and admiration from the lowbie players.

Stimuli #3: Pets that afford caretaking. In real life, household pets are easy targets for caring behaviours and may even, for youth or childless couples, serve as proxy children. In C*WoW*, as in real life, players love to lavish care and attention on their (NPC) pets. A pet is a creature that fights alongside the player's character, has certain abilities,

and responds to the player's commands. In vanilla *WoW*, only hunters and warlocks could have pets.[78] Hunters, for example, can tame a variety of animals, each of which has specific skills and abilities, to accompany them throughout their pursuits in Azeroth. A hunter's pet has to be tamed, kept happy by feeding it the foods specified in its diet (the happier a pet is, the more damage it deals), and trained in order to level its skills. Pets respond in kind by being happy, by making species-specific sounds (e.g., wolves howl, tigers roar), or by running away altogether if displeased with their master's caretaking efforts. However, the latter is rarely an issue as caretaking is often attended to with great affection. Players stroke their pets, show concern about how they are thought to be feeling (e.g., a player may announce to teammates: *'Barkley is grumpy today'*), show them off to their friends, and take great pains to give them the right name. I frequently witnessed hunters telling their pets 'good boy' after a fight and/or randomly announcing to nearby party members: '*I love my pet!*' (T61).



Figure 3.12. A dwarf priest rests
with his baby polar bear companion.

[78] Pets were so enormously successful that Blizzard gradually found ways to make them available to other classes. As of Patch 3.3, frost mages could specialise in a way that gave them use of their 'water elemental' pet indefinitely (prior to 3.3, water elementals could only be summoned every two minutes for 45 seconds). Death knights, a class introduced with *WotLK*, can also summon a ghoul pet. Furthermore, all players are eligible to collect non-combat pets – including exotic birds, felines, and dragons – called 'companions' (because companions do not factor into combat, they do not disturb the game's balance of skills and abilities). The demand for such companions is intense. Rare ones sell for exorbitant prices at the in-game auction house and Blizzard even sells some companions for real-world money on its website.

3.4.2. Actions that Indicate Superior Status or Deference to Superior Status

> *I was thinking 'After I solve the epic quest, I can prove that I am a qualified hunter. And then I will shout: Do you see me!?* [I am] *A great hunter!' And then I will leave Mount Hyjal forever and let people remember that there was once a great hunter, a great hero!* T32

Players clearly enjoyed negotiating the game's hierarchy and authority schemes and acting out their roles as *superiors* and *subordinates.* Those who would aspire to be superior to others enjoyed acquiring indices of status, exhibiting leadership skills, and/or exercising power over subordinates. And those who were content to be subordinates appreciated the opportunity to interface with leaders that were worthy of admiration and respect.

Stimuli # 1: Levels, titles, achievement scores, and epic gear that afford acquisition and exhibition. *WoW* contains many attainable ornaments that are commonly accepted by other players as indices of status, including levels, achievement scores, titles that appear next to a character's name (e.g., 'Autumnal the Kingslayer'), and so on.[79] Yet in my experiences in both NA*WoW* and C*WoW*, no index of status is more enthusiastically sought than *epic gear*. The next chapter will describe more fully the many types of value that epics confer on the wearer (Section 4.7.2), but here it will suffice to say that epics communicate status by virtue of their appearance and by virtue of the fact that they are usually difficult to obtain. Regarding appearance, epics are usually flashy and glittery and often enhance the player's appearance in ways that accentuate

[79] Taylor (2006) makes a similar observation in her work in the *Everquest* MMOG: 'With a quantified marker of game progression it should also be no surprise that modes of status and hierarchy are at work in the game. Whether it be having a prestigious guildtag or a highly valued piece of equipment, social life of *EQ* is rife with markers of success, both skill-based and 'material'' (p. 49).

size. For example, consider the epic spaulders vis-à-vis the lowbie shoulder pads in Figure 3.13.



Figure 3.13. A night-elf druid in lowbie shoulder pads (left) vs. epic spaulders (right).

The epic spaulders increase the character's size, making him/her seem more threatening and/or capable of inflicting damage. These epic spaulders signal to other players: 'I have the capacity to help or hurt you.'

In order to acquire an epic, one must have the necessary combat skills, social capital (the *best* gear can only be obtained in 10- or 25-man raid dungeons, and it can be difficult to gather enough quality players to attempt these dungeons), and dedication (acquiring a

single epic piece may take over a month). It follows that possession of an epic signals accomplishment along these lines. Moreover, because the majority of epic gear cannot be bought or traded – it must be earned by the player him/herself – players can have little doubt that the bearer of epics is worthy of admiration. When playing in *wangba*s my C*WoW* colleagues sometimes abruptly grabbed my arm while pointing excitedly to a character on their screen who possessed an especially rare epic. We would marvel together at what the player must have endured and accomplished to have won so spectacular a trophy.

Yet unlike their real-world counterparts, these ultimate in-game indices of status are *obtainable* by all players regardless of their race, profession, or social history. If players collect enough [honour] points, [justice] points, or [stone keeper's shards]; if they complete enough quests, or exhibit rare mastery in their professions; if they fell a certain boss, or explore a large enough terrain; if they can somehow sack a city of the opposing faction, or if their guild collects enough achievements, a lowly player can obtain something that denotes, as T25 puts it, kingliness:

> *I began my career with WoW. . . . At that time it was like being a prostitute. I was not pretty nor sexy. I tried my best to flirt but I did not know when I could get a customer* [the author means that because his gear was so poor he had a hard time gaining access to dungeon raid groups]. . . . *I remember the time I got my first purple* [i.e., epic] *bracers in Zul'Gurub* [a dungeon], *I was like a king.* T25

In addition, players love to *display* their epics in busy trade centres by standing in conspicuous spots (e.g., in a fountain or on a pedestal) and allowing other players the opportunity to [inspect] them – that is, to use a viewing tool that allows players to

investigate another player's gear. Additionally, players can click on other players to see whether or not they are being viewed by those players.



Figure 3.14. This figure presents the top left-hand corner of the interface of a player named 'Coffeemug.' Coffeemug has clicked on a player named 'Belken,' thereby bringing Belken's icon onto Coffeemug's interface. The Coffeemug icon immediately below Belken's icon indicates that Belken is viewing Coffeemug.

This function affords epic bearers confirmation that they are being gazed upon, presumably with envy. Yet others may boast about owning certain epic pieces in the trade chat channels, and it is common practice for owners of especially large epic mounts to park them atop the auction-house mailboxes (players must use these mailboxes to retrieve items bought from the auction house and to send items to other players). Doing this in effect forces all other mailbox users to notice them by obstructing their access to the mailbox (e.g., it is difficult to click on the mailboxes when they are covered by a woolly mammoth's trunk). T48 comments on the joys of having and displaying gear that is superior to others' (the testimonial was submitted and is reproduced here in poetic form).

Who has not experienced the happiness of getting a good weapon?

WoW is like life, we are all ambitious animals.
We all like higher salary, higher scores.
In WoW we all like better equipment.
We like to see that our equipment is better than others'.
Don't pretend you have never seen someone showing off their good weapons. T48

Stimuli #2: Bosses, battlegrounds, and faction raids that afford leadership. Players must team up, usually in 10-, 25-, or 40-man teams, to pursue the game's most vaunted PvE and PvP objectives. As has been mentioned, these objectives require a high level of coordination; a wrong move by any member can result in a battleground loss or a time-consuming and financially costly 'wipe' (a situation in which all group members die). To effect tighter coordination, teams will usually be broken down into sub-groups overseen by sub-commanders. All units and sub-commanders will ultimately answer to the raid or battleground master, who will be issuing commands via text or, more commonly, voice chat. Quality leadership is crucial to the group's chances for success. Having a capable raid master, for example, can make all the difference between a three- or six-hour dungeon raid that results in victory vs. one that ends in defeat. Raid masters acquire social capital for themselves by *leading* the players through dungeon hardships – for example, by negotiating labyrinthine passages, educating teammates on nearby extinction threats (recall that players can be impacted by over 70,000 different types of spells and abilities), noticing and calling out 'de-buffs' (i.e., enemy-inflicted conditions that render a character disabled or in need of special help), tracking boss phase progressions, coordinating 'aggro' distributions (i.e., deciding who should take damage and who should rest), etc. – and, afterwards, by dividing the spoils of war in such a way that all group members are happy. By excelling in and displaying these capacities in front of multiple audiences (e.g., different raid groups over time), quality leaders can become

locally well-known and can enjoy the prestige concomitant to being a successful raid master. As T67 points out, excelling in the role of guild master is admirable.

> *In WoW I think most of the guild masters are admirable. You can never think that to manage a guild is easy. As a guild master, you must know how to command and coordinate and maintain the order of the guild. And* [you] *also have to know what kind of people are needed and what kind of people are harmful. . . . Guild masters must have the quality of leadership. You have to guide hundreds of people under your control, so it is not easy to be a guild master. And I can say a guild master is like a manager of a middle-sized enterprise. . . . This is far better than being a monitor in school*.[80] T67

Stimuli #3: The accomplished player who affords respect and appeasement. The presence of deserving authority figures in C*WoW* afforded subordinates opportunities to show deference to and feel respect for their superiors – opportunities that they sometimes lacked in real life. Real-life superiors, for example, are sometimes corrupt and/or take advantage of one's acts of subordination.

> *A commander is a leader. If he leads well, people will listen to him and will be united and solve problems! If the commander himself has very big weaknesses, no one will listen to him. . . . In the game, if the guild master has his faults, people will forgive him. But in reality if you forgive those bribers* [i.e., people in positions of authority who take or give bribes], *there will be more bribers. In the game, players can tell you what is right and what is wrong. But in reality who will tell you that? If you do something wrong* [in reality] *people will climb to the highest status by stabbing your body. This is the difference between the virtual world and the real life!* T36

Unlike real life, the gameworld had leaders who could be respected for their abilities and deferred to accordingly. Or, if in-game leaders were incompetent, they could be rejected without severe consequences. Generally, though, and as T67 points out above, players

[80] 'Class monitor' is one of the most prized leadership positions that Chinese students of any grade can obtain. For reference, a BBC documentary, *Please Vote for Me* (Chen, 2007), chronicles the aggressive campaigns young children in a Wuhan grade school waged to become class monitor.

admired their in-game leaders. Some testimonials contain descriptions of attempts to appease these persons. As T37 and T73 show below, players often felt euphoria when receiving praise from these leaders for their dungeon-raid performances, and anxiety over potentially displeasing them.

> *After that, another man who changed my gaming career appeared. That was my* [guild] *master. He was a hunter, too. He taught me everything including how to carve things on a wall and took me to kill the dragon in Blackwing Lair and my DPS grew from the last to top ten and the guildmaster spoke highly of me and I remember once I killed a boss and I was OT* ['off tank' – the author means that she generated so much damage that she aggro-ed the boss off the tank and onto herself. While this is not a good thing, it indicates that T73 was generating unusually large amounts of DPS, which is a compliment to her abilities], *and I asked the guild master why was that . . . it hadn't happened before. The guildmaster told me it was because I was too strong and next time please control your hatred. I was too happy, overwhelmed. . . . Even though my master is online less and less, whenever I talk with other hunters I will think about him.* T73

> *The first time I raided the Black Temple. . . . I was so excited and nervous. I was there with so many people for the first time, I was so worried that my single mistake might lead to the team's annihilation. So my hand was trembling when hearing the voice of the commander.* T37



Figure 3.15. Groups require leadership.

3.4.3. Actions that Effect Group Solidarity

> *When you are almost dying and you see that the priest is casting* [a healing spell] *and then you realise your health is full, will you not be moved? When your team is about to be destroyed and everyone is retreating and there's only one warrior and he says to you, 'I will be here, you all go back,' will you not be moved? In your team if there's only one warlock but you are a priest, you will see the warlock holding a soul stone that is as important as his life and put it in your hands and leave. Will you not be moved? Maybe you will say 'It's just a game.' Yes, it is a game. But there are so many things in the game that are more than just games.* T66

The testimonials are replete with statements expressing love for, loyalty towards, and feelings of belonging to various in-game groups. Blizzard is sometimes praised in the testimonials for helping assuage the atomisation and loneliness that players felt was endemic to the lives of contemporary Chinese urban youth, most of whom are 'only children' as a result of China's 'One Child Policy' (discussed in detail in Section 4.5). For these respondents, Blizzard has provided 'brothers' and 'sisters' in Azeroth:

> *I have been thinking about what makes WoW so attractive. I think it is the fact that WoW has brought us so many things that we are longing to get but we can't get in reality. . . . How many of us can experience the warmth of a big family*[81] *like our parents have? A lot of people on the net are always crying that they are lonely and empty. We want to experience the passion of fighting monsters with our friends. And we want to suffer together with brothers.* T23

T23 and other testimonials express thoughts revealing that greater feelings of togetherness or even of kinship are effected in the gameworld through acts of suffering and sacrifice for the 'group.' Accordingly, as player X makes sacrifices for player Y, and vice versa, X and Y become 'brothers.' What *WoW* supplies in this regard are in-groups to which the players can belong and a steady stream of out-groups and extinction threats that render contributions and sacrificial actions necessary for the survival of those in-groups.

Stimuli #1: Factions that require contributions and sacrifices. Though the Azerothian racial and political landscape is complex, involving many cartels, tribes, leagues and so on, the world is first and foremost split between two bitterly opposed factions: Horde and Alliance. Members of these two factions will try to dispatch one another on sight. They were introduced to players in 1994 when the first instalment of the *Warcraft* series, a 'real time strategy' game called *Warcraft: Humans vs. Orcs*, was released. Since then, as outlined in Appendix A.5, Blizzard has been advancing the conflict storylines through novels and subsequent instalments of the *Warcraft* series. In my experiences in both NA*WoW* and C*WoW*, players enjoy partaking in their factional identities and effecting sentiments of factional solidarity by making sacrifices for their

[81] In Chinese traditions, large families are valued as loci of *renao* (热闹, warmth and liveliness). To be without such a large family would leave one cold and lonely (e.g., see Chau, 2006, pp. 147-168).

faction *qua* taking measures against the out-group. For example, PvP battlegrounds afford players the opportunity to fight against players of the opposing faction. At the time of writing *WoW* contains eight different battlegrounds, each of which has its own objective (some are 'capture the flag' contests, others require that each faction capture and defend strategic locations, and so on). The battlegrounds may involve as few as 10 vs. 10 players or as many as 40 vs. 40.

In the battlegrounds, factional members can be seen reaffirming allegiance to their faction in several ways. First, just prior to the battle, when players are readying themselves in their faction's strongholds, players invariably join shouts of '*For the Alliance*!' or '*For the Horde*!' to derogatives aimed at the opposing faction (members of one faction cannot communicate with members of the other faction, so these derogatives serve mainly to bolster unity against the out-group). Additionally, many players who play primarily for PvP objectives have names that betray their loyalties, such as 'Allykiller' (i.e., 'Alliance killer') or 'Whackahorde,' and these will often be approvingly acknowledged.

Second, when the battle begins, the act of killing players of the opposing faction creates [honour] points for those involved in the kill. In addition to quantifying and lending a sense of moral justification to the killing of out-group members (i.e., by making it 'honourable'), [honour] points are highly coveted for the fact that they can be exchanged for powerful weapons and armour. It follows that players are highly motivated to generate as much 'honour' for their faction as possible, and lopsided matches that could easily be won by one side are sometimes prolonged by the more powerful side as they 'farm' the other side for [honour] points.

Finally, as with most real-world sports, victory or defeat in a battleground is defined at the group level. Teams, not individuals, win or lose, and this generally results in a collective sense of victory or defeat. As one might expect, victories tend to generate pro-in-group statements ('*gj ally!*' – i.e., '*Good job, Alliance*'), reaffirmations of the inferiority of the out-group ('*Those cry-baby night-elf pansies are probably in tears right now!*'), and belittling behaviours (e.g., spitting, laughing) aimed at out-group members.

As a result of these and other group-making action potentials, the game makes it easy, as T32 demonstrates here, for players to feel pride in belonging to a group that is imagined to be wholly superior to an out-group. In this case, after a career spent playing for the Alliance, T32 decided to make a Horde character to see what it might be like:

> *When I played for the Alliance people were so honourable, but when I played for the Horde I felt that those people were all dark. When I was in the Alliance people helped me a lot. And in the Horde they are always shouting at each other. . . . There are so many inglorious people in the Horde. And you can see this from the surface of the Alliance and the Horde – one side stands for justice and the other side stands for evil and barbarians.*[82] T32

Stimuli #2: Dungeon raids that require sacrifices. As has been mentioned, *WoW*'s high-end objectives require high degrees of player cooperation. This invariably requires that in some cases individual interests or ambitions must be curbed if the group is to prosper, and this creates opportunities for players to make sacrifices for group prosperity. Here are two examples. First, players often sacrifice their own bodies *qua* avatars for other players. This is especially the case for tanks and DPS, who must do everything possible to avoid allowing the healer to get hit (if the healer dies, a wipe – i.e., a situation

[82] Though Horde contains the more fearsome-looking races, this comparison is unsupportable. In the history of Azeroth both factions have committed acts of goodwill and also large-scale atrocities. Bainbridge (2010) even suggests that the Alliance is the more immoral of the two.

in which all players die – is usually imminent). As T66 illustrates above, players often feel quite moved at the sight of another player sacrificing him/herself for the group.

Second, players often give valuable items to other players who have a particular need of them. In the testimonial above, for example, T66 references a [soulstone] given by a warlock to a priest. The [soulstone] is a valuable resource that only warlocks can (occasionally) produce. It instantly returns the [soulstone] holder to life (one time) should he/she die. By giving the [soulstone] to the priest, the warlock is surrendering his/her rights to an instant reincarnation and enabling a quicker reincarnation for all the other teammates. To illustrate, a soulstoned priest can instantly reincarnate at the point where he/she died and begin casting revive spells on the corpses of the nearby teammates. This process, though time-consuming, is usually much quicker than having everyone run back from the graveyard to retrieve their corpses. Players sometimes get hopelessly lost during the corpse-retrieval process, and collecting everyone may become such an ordeal that players leave the raid group. This leaves the remaining teammates in a bad situation, as it can be difficult to find replacements and have them transported to the dungeon. Players may have to choose between giving up on the (perhaps hours of) work they have put into the dungeon and spending half an hour or so on finding and transporting a replacement.

With respect to these two examples, onlookers may reason that sacrificing one's virtual body or virtual goods for a teammate does not amount to much of a sacrifice. After all, one hasn't lost anything that cannot be recouped in a matter of minutes or hours. And because players are presumably cooperating in order to obtain something (e.g., the epic gear that will drop from the dungeon bosses), sacrificing one's body or soulstoning the priest is perhaps better viewed as a trade-off made in the pursuit of

personal wealth. Nevertheless, T66 illustrates that for some players these actions are viewed as *sacrificial* and as having moral significance – or at least significance that elevates these actions to something constituting, in T66's words, 'more than just games.' Player sentiments are consistent here with the framework on moral intuitions provided in Section 2.4, wherein it was shown that stimuli that meet the MF input criteria can be processed, and the concomitant feelings generated, even when the stimuli in question would seem in some sense to be 'incorrect.'

3.4.4. Actions that Effect Fairness

> *Personally, I think WoW is fair. But in other games maybe you will find there will be a strongest class, and maybe many people think that their class is just rubbish compared with the strongest class. This makes people very upset and they lose confidence in the game. But this can't happen in WoW, because every class has their own charm, their own characteristics.* T1

While some testimonials discuss *WoW* as being fair or having great balance, few discuss specific instances of fairness-related actions. Rather, as the following testimonial suggests, some players felt as if fairness, or balance, flowed through the very essence of the game:

> *I think one of the most important reasons WoW can be played for such a long time is that it has balance. Everything in the world has a balance of yin and yang, and if you break the balance of the yin and the yang the result is a catastrophe, and it's the same in games. No matter if it is the balance between two factions, two enemies, or the balance of each profession and their skills, etc., Blizzard did it very well. And this is why the game always belongs to its players. . . . This is why the game always has endless players.* T56

Here T56 references *yin* (阴) and *yang* (阳), the complementary opposites that constitute *qi* (气), which in the Taoist tradition is the constituent element for each modality of being

in the universe. In Chinese traditions it is generally the case that when *yin* and *yang* are balanced, prosperity ensues. Likewise, because all the elements of the *WoW* universe are in balance, the gameworld is filled with satisfied players. As examples, T1 and T56 reference the balance that exists between character classes and professions. To illustrate, these authors are presumably commenting on the fact that in *WoW* no one class (e.g., paladin) can reliably overpower another class (e.g., warriors); no one profession (e.g., tailoring) is intrinsically more lucrative than another (e.g., enchanting). Rather, a paladin's victory over a warrior or a tailor's income relative to an enchanter's is usually the result of skill and effort. Players can reliably withdraw from the game what they put into it.[83] To their observations it should be added that this same tit-for-tat template undergirds almost every aspect of gameplay – killing X numbers of monster W will always yield Y experience at level Z; quest givers always produce the promised rewards when a player completes the quest; in the battleground summary statistics, each player will always receive numerical credit for each and every last point of damage he/she inflicted on the enemies. By my reasoning, players are often involved in a satisfying and perpetual yet barely noticeable flow of balanced reciprocity with the gameworld, wherein players experience pleasure at having their every effort noted and repaid with algorithmic precision.

Stimuli #1: Buffs that can be shared. Though the testimonials are not articulate on specific instances of in-game reciprocity, I can draw on my own experiences in C*WoW*

[83] As one player stated in a post-fieldwork instant messaging discussion: [in English] 'Once people achievement [sic] something, people usually feel quite satisfied. And if they spend enough time and effort [in *WoW*], they can get better and gain better gear, pets, dragons. . . . But in real life, it is so hard to get an achievement or good items through efforts. . . . After university when we go to work, getting an achievement is slow, confusing, difficult, and you don't know how long it will take. People get frustrated, and everything is unfair in real life.'

for an example of a common practice – I will call it 'buff reciprocity' – that strikes me as representative of this satisfying, ever-present, subtle flow. Each character class has several 'buffs' – spells or effects that enhance combat capacities – which it can administer to itself and to other classes. A mage, for example, can cast [arcane intellect] on an ally to grant that ally an increase in [intellect] statistics – in other words, [arcane intellect] *buffs* the recipient's [intellect] stats, thereby increasing the recipient's available pool of [mana][84] for thirty minutes or until the recipient dies, at which point all his/her buffs will expire. A player can have as many buffs as he/she can collect. When a mage casts [arcane intellect] on another player, the [arcane intellect] icon animation, accompanied by the [arcane intellect] spell sound, will appear temporarily over the buffed character's head. Additionally, an [arcane intellect] icon will appear at the top right-hand corner of the recipient's interface, confirming for the player that he/she has been buffed. To give a buff is inexpensive. In this case, [arcane intellect] costs only a small amount of the mage's [mana], which will automatically replenish shortly after casting. There are no serious cost-barriers to stopping a mage from running around casting [arcane intellect] on everyone he/she meets. Indeed, when two strangers cross by chance in the Azerothian wilderness it is not uncommon for them to exchange buffs without breaking stride.

Yet despite their low cost, buffs are valuable gifts. In battlegrounds peopled by similarly skilled and equipped combatants, buffs can help decide skirmish outcomes (e.g., if mage A runs out of [mana] before mage B, then mage B will likely win). Buffs also contain something of the exotic otherness of different classes in that they impart to the

[84] In *WoW*, [mana] is a magical substance that empowers spellcasting.

receiver benefits the receiver could never generate for him/herself. One may spend months or years developing one's mage, working within the schools of magic and within the categories of talents available to mages and cultivating these to their maximum potential. Yet no matter how hard a mage trains she will never, by her own hand, be able to partake in [shadow], [holy], or [nature] magic; she will never, by her own hand, be able to [levitate] above the ground or sprout [thorns] from her body; nor will she ever, by her own hand, generate the [blessing of kings] or the [mark of the wild]. For these a mage must be buffed by other, non-mage characters. Through buff reciprocity, players share with other players the combat-enhancing stuff of their given class type.



Figure 3.16. A dwarf priest casts his [Power Word: Fortitude] buff and the 'fortitude' insignias blaze momentarily overhead.

Routine instances of buff reciprocity were clearly sources of pleasure for C*WoW* players, and this was especially evident in PvP battlegrounds. To illustrate, when players enter a battleground they are enclosed in their faction's stronghold, wherein they must wait for approximately two minutes for the battle to begin. This is the time to put on the correct gear, identify friends, berate the opposition, talk strategy, organise battle groups, and administer buffs. During this waiting period the stronghold effervesces with buff animations and a cacophony of spell sounds. Players seem to derive pleasure from simply *giving* the buffs, as many players will cast their buffs repeatedly, sometimes dozens of times, even though casting it once administers it to all players and there is nothing in terms of combat benefits to be gained from these additional casts. It is as though the act of contributing to the group, evidenced through and made beautiful and mellifluous by the buff animations and spell sounds, is a source of pleasure in itself. And most players, having cast their buffs, will check to make sure they have *received* all the buffs available from the present class types. Those who have not fulfilled the unspoken rule of buff reciprocity may be gently nudged into action. On one occasion when Autumnal was playing without her guildmates, after joining her in a Warsong Gulch battleground where she was surrounded by players I did not know, I let my attention wander for a few moments to real-life contingencies. When I looked back at the screen Autumnal had received many buffs, and four or five of my nine teammates were bouncing around her, playfully poking and tickling her while chanting '*Mage buff! Mage buff! Mage buff!*' When I cast [arcane intellect] and the animations burst overhead, Autumnal's petitioners cheered and laughed and thanked me and hopped off towards the battleground gates. This

tiny instance of reciprocity wherein, with a little nudging, balance was achieved in the give and take of contributions was clearly a source of pleasure for everyone involved.

(3.5) Conclusion – A Pure World

We can chat and sing together, or take photos in all corners of Azeroth. We enjoy the friendship formed in the game, the success of beating the bosses. . . . WoW has brought us a new life. . . . I really enjoy the pure feelings! T2

In this chapter it has been argued that a partial explanation for *WoW*'s cross-cultural popularity may be obtained in viewing *WoW* as an environment rich in moral inferential potential. Examples in the previous sections have illustrated *WoW*'s plenitude of clear-cut, morally relevant narratives and moral action potentials. Implicit in these analyses is the suggestion that *WoW* is greater in moral inferential potential – or at least in positively valenced moral inferential potential – than the milieus that characterise the players' offline lives. Several of the testimonials quoted above suggest as much. T23, for example, describes *WoW* as a place where one can feel the warmth of a big family that one 'cannot get in reality.' This final section will briefly discuss how testimonials that comment on the game's 'purity' (*chunjing*; 纯净的) can also be read as supportive of the hypothesis that *WoW* is greater in (positively valenced) moral inferential potential than the milieus that characterise these players' real lives.

The Chinese term for purity, *chunjing*, is used, like its English counterpart, to make statements about homogeneity. 'Pure' water may be water that is free of soil, microorganisms, or chemicals. Likewise, in verb form, to 'purify' something is to enhance its homogeneity, often in a way that enhances functionality. For example, purifying oil removes undesirable elements and renders the resulting product more

suitable to use in motor engines. With these semantic concomitants to 'purity' in mind, consider the following testimonials.

> *I love the unconditional caring between people. I like the cooperation of a team. I want to see the pure and the real emotions between people. In the real world all this ugliness has brought us too much pressure and fatigue. In the virtual environment we should pursue those things we don't have in reality. Let the virtual world give us a peaceful harbour like heaven. Maybe a lot of people will say I am naïve but this is the fantasy I have for WoW. In the end of the life for everybody it is the same. Death.* [We will all be] *Like dust. But when you die what can you take away? The fortunes in real life or the virtual equipment* [in *WoW*]*? After 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, whenever you are reminded that you played a game called WoW, what will be in your mind, those epic pieces of gear? Maybe some people will say yes, but in my memory it is only the pure sincerity and the pure happy time with my friends.* T61

> *The process of struggling for your goal is mixed up with opportunities and difficulties. The long waiting tests your perseverance. Difficulties in the process test your determination. . . . The reason why I can play until today is because of the help of my friends. I had never thought the playmates are just playmates. It's different from friends. Your friendship is purified in the game. And you have grown up in the game. Thank you [author is presumably addressing either Blizzard or the speakers' friends] for all the friends I had playing with me!* T62

According to T61, purity inheres in the quality of emotional experiences extending from cooperation and also in the sincerity of people's intentions. And as T62 illustrates, the cooperative aspects of gameplay that engage the moral foundations (e.g., 'struggling,' confronting 'difficulties,' and 'persevering') and that generate these aforementioned emotional experiences serve to purify friendships (to this end, T62 seems to suggest that his in-game friendships are of a special, presumably *purer* calibre). Considered in context with the other testimonials presented in this chapter, these testimonials affirm a gameworld that generates *pure* moral experiences – that is, experiences homogenous of caring sentiment, belonging sentiment, etc. that are untainted by any negatively valenced

concomitants – that have the function of *purifying* (i.e., strengthening or improving the functionality of) social relationships.

On the other hand, real life's capacities for friendship and cooperation were sometimes described as 'polluted.' Some testimonials express frustration with the moral depravity to which authors believe real life has sunk, often under the influence of 'rich kids' and the government:

> *WoW is an excellent game. And that's exactly why it has received so much harmonisation* [i.e., interference from the government; see Section 4.3.1]. *Maybe such a pure game like WoW just cannot be understood by officials in a country like China.* T30

> *So we do not wish the rich children*[85] *to come in here* [in *WoW*]. *We need a clean land. . . . Happy moments are always short and the people who want to destroy them are so many. The people who want to destroy them are under the banner of creating a harmonious society* [author is likely referring to the PRC government; see Section 4.3] . . . *people under the banner of harmony actually do harm. Poor work and struggling of life, and more and more Foxconn*[86] *situations emerge. And it squeezes the space of our survival, which is already narrow. . . . Here, there is tranquillity that has not been polluted. We can find friends here. And we can also learn a lot of survival techniques and skills here. Yes, we have. Most people* [in the game] *learned how to accumulate their fortunes little by little. To let them grow up. And also the businessmen* [the author here suggests that the game teaches responsible entrepreneurial skills]. *They also learn how to make money. And we also become more sensitive, and much more. And we learned to cooperate and coordinate. And in this world we gained the fortune of life, friendship.* T35

In the latter testimonial, T35 echoes an opinion, common among players, that it can be quite difficult to experience cooperation and to create significant bonds of friendship in

[85] The author is likely referring to the privileged children of party officials and successful entrepreneurs. See Section 1.5.

[86] The author is here referencing the string of suicides that occurred at the Foxconn manufacturing plant in Shenzhen, China between January and November of 2010. During this time period, 18 Foxconn employees attempted suicide; 14 were successful. Subsequent investigations by 20 Chinese universities suggested that working conditions at Foxconn were deplorable and similar to those obtaining in labour camps.

the real world. Reasons as to why this seems to be the case will be elaborated on in Chapter 5.

Here and as a conclusion I argue that these statements of purity can be read as indicators of *WoW*'s superior moral relevance. In *WoW* it is simply *easier* for the mind to generate (positively valenced) moral inferences. *WoW* has an advantage over reality in that it can provide the inputs for which the MF receptors are designed in a more relevant, or *purer*, form. The inputs in *WoW* are more numerous, more colourful, bigger, more accessible, freer of distracting contingencies, freer of damning consequences,[87] and more capable of being acted upon, than their real-world counterparts. Vivid images of vulnerable teammates isolate and streamline, like saccharine or pornography, inputs for which the mind has dedicated receptors, thereby allowing intuitions to flow with minimal effort on the part of the perceiver. In contemporary Chinese society, on the other hand, the inputs are so often rare (e.g., a child must stare at a science book all day), or confusing ('*Is it okay for me to give care to that lady's screaming baby?*'), or of dubious origin ('*Is he being nice, or does he just want to sell me something?*'), or perhaps even self-incriminating ('*If I give that lady help, will she try to sue me?*').[88] The inputs, when they appear, are often so dirtied with contingencies and concomitants that they either

[87] China currently lacks the 'good Samaritan' laws that protect first responders or bystanders from being sued for lending assistance in emergency circumstances. In recent years, legal cases wherein bystanders who tried to help an accident victim and who were later successfully sued by the accident victim have made headlines. As a result, many Chinese are wary about helping in emergency circumstances and my Chinese colleagues occasionally passed around Youku and Tudou videos wherein bystanders watched but refused to help injured motorists or pedestrians.

[88] A moral relevance differential may also obtain for *WoW* relative to contemporary American society (or *WoW* relative to any society). However, that such a differential exists does not ensure that players will cultivate the gameworld for moral cognition. As the end of Section 3.2 illustrates, many relevance differentials pertaining to a variety of cognitive mechanisms may exist. As Steinkuehler (2006) argues and as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, extra-game agencies will influence the types of in-game experiences players seek.

cloud the detection processes or contaminate the MF-derived feelings with attendant feelings of distrust and anxiety.

In summary, why would anyone play in a virtual world such as *WoW*? This chapter argues that one reason may be for the greater purity, or relevance, of moral cognition and moral sentiment that can be obtained therein. The gameworld is replete with stimuli and action potentials that activate cognitive mechanisms that commandeer attentional resources and output inferences indicative of *moral* significance.

Chapter 4 – In-game Spiritual Experiences and *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion

The game provides the players the real spiritual sensation they lack in real life. All in all, the emotion that people have in the game is for making up the real emotions that are not enough in real life. T84

This chapter builds on the analyses presented in Chapter 3 by examining how the game's opportunities for moral cognition were used by C*WoW* players in the production of in-game *spiritual* experiences, and the centrality of these spiritual experiences to a *WoW* guild's capacity to remain an intact, coherent unit in the face of extinction threats levied by the Chinese government and players' parents. The chapter is in two parts. Part I introduces these spiritual experiences. Section 4.1 presents the terms 'spiritual' (*jinghsen*; 精神) and 'soul' (*linghun*; 灵魂), which are used in the testimonials to discuss spiritual experiences in C*WoW*, and illustrates that moral issues are commonly associated with spiritual significance in a wide variety of Chinese traditions. Hence, in-game moral cognition may be interpreted as having spiritual significance. While there is little direct evidence that any particular framework is motivating the identification of moral actions with spiritual significance, it is pointed out that there are two noticeably Confucian undertones to the testimonial reports of spiritual experiences. The testimonial reports are then presented in Section 4.2.

Part II examines a 'mangle' (following Steinkuehler, 2006) of extra-game agencies that seem to have motivated the production of these in-game spiritual experiences. The main argument pursued is that the intense pressure to quit playing *WoW* levied by various government institutions and by concerned parents motivated players to justify gameplay and keep guild memberships intact by promoting the game as a gateway to moral

distinction and spiritual experiences such as could not be obtained in real life. Sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 outline some of the extinction pressures levied by government organisations and parents.[89] Section 4.6 illustrates why the precipitates of these extinction threats, player defections from *WoW* to the real world, were costly for the remaining guild members and, accordingly, why guild members were so keen to prevent these defections. Section 4.7 discusses strategies players undertook to stem the flow of defections to the real world. Here it is pointed out that by emphasising gameplay as a means to moral distinction and spiritual experiences, players used the game as a 'religion-like tool' (following Sosis & Alcorta, 2008) for effecting levels of group cohesion that could better withstand pressures levied by these extinction threats. Finally, Section 4.8 summarises these findings and contextualises them within the dissertation's superordinate aims.

Part I: What are In-Game Spiritual Experiences?

(4.1) *Jingshen*, *Linghun*, and the Moral-Spiritual Dyad

In the testimonials presented below, reports of 'spiritual experiences' in C*WoW* always make use of one of two concepts: *linghun* (灵魂) (translatable as 'soul' and, less often, 'anima' or 'ghost') and/or *jingshen* (精神) (translatable as 'spirit' or 'essence'). Both concepts have etymological ancestry in the Taoist concept *shen* (神; Smith, 1958),

[89] Because the current project collected no data on American players, I cannot comment on how these factors might explain variations between styles of gameplay observable in NA*WoW* and C*WoW*. What follows are analyses of situations common to my informants' lives that seem to have motivated the cultivation of in-game moral cognition and spiritual experiences presented in Section 4.2.

which refers to a positive life-force[90] component to, or aspect of, *yang* (阳) in the *yinyang* (阴阳) system. In *jingshen*, *shen* is coupled with *jing* ('essence' or 'extract') and used to indicate a positive or benevolent 'spirit' in a general, protean form. For example, *jingshen* can function as 'spirit' in 'the spirit of teamwork' or 'the spirit of the Chinese people' (Ku, 2011). *Jingshen* can also refer to a person's inner spirit (similar to a soul), and activities that are *jingshen* ('spiritual') are those that are good for one's inner spirit, promote growth in it, or somehow resonate with it. Finally, a *jingshen* can also be a good, benevolent spiritual entity or minor deity that exists outside a human body. In this sense, a *jingshen* is the obverse of the negative, evil spirits depicted in Chinese rural traditions as roaming the countryside after nightfall (Potter & Potter, 1990).

With respect to *linghun*, *ling* translates as 'heavenly aspect of the soul' and is used interchangeably with *shen* in both classical and modern Chinese (Tu, 1987). The main difference between *jingshen* and *linghun* is that *linghun*, or 'soul,' more regularly refers to a spiritual force localised in a person. It follows that one would generally refer to Lihong's soul (*linghun*) rather than to Lihong's spirit (*jingshen*), and one would generally refer to the spirit (*jingshen*) of teamwork rather than to the soul (*linghun*) of teamwork. Technically, though, the terms are largely interchangeable in these and other circumstances where the discourse involves a positive or benevolent life-force of sorts that is believed to inhere in an entity or concept.

Why do many C*WoW* players consider Azeroth to be so conducive to the development of their *linghun* or inner *jingshen*? The testimonials are clear that experiences of moral betterment or exemplary moral behaviour are at times identified as

[90] Perhaps roughly akin to the French concept *élan vital* or the yogic *prana*.

having spiritual significance. Hence and for many, partaking in the opportunities for moral cognition outlined in Chapter 3 can be considered a positive spiritual endeavour. However, the testimonials are not clear on why there should be such a close association between the moral and the spiritual; and because a primary aim of this project is to give defensible suggestions as to how spiritual experiences can be obtained from gameplay, the nature of this moral-spiritual dyad wants some examination. Two potential, perhaps mutually reinforcing, agencies may be suggested. First, given the strong association between 'moral' and 'spiritual' in major world religions, it is possible that an innate structural relationship exists in human minds between the moral foundations identified by Haidt and Joseph and intuitive processes that inform reasoning about the souls, spirits, essences, life-forces, and so on that humans so readily believe exist in themselves and other entities. Following this possibility, the cognitive properties of the spiritual experiences discussed below are examined in Chapter 5. A second possibility is that there exist interpretive precedents in Chinese religious, philosophical, or political frameworks that motivate an identification of moral cognition with spiritual significance. It was this second possibility that I was concerned with during fieldwork. A brief synopsis of my findings pertaining to this second possibility is given here as a preface to the testimonial reports presented in Section 4.2[91].

Aside from an occasional nod to unspecified 'Chinese traditions' (e.g., T64 below), the testimonials are unclear as to which, if any, cultural frameworks might motivate the moral-spiritual association recurrent therein. I showed the relevant testimonials to over

[91] In presenting these findings here, the intention is also, in addition to illustrating a possible reason for the moral-spiritual dyad evident in the Chinese testimonials, to de-sensationalise what otherwise might seem to be fantastic in-game experiences by outlining points of resonance with wider Chinese contexts.

ten informants and solicited their opinions. All the informants expressed surprise at these 'spiritual experiences,' and no informant could state with any confidence what specific framework(s) might be guiding the moral-spiritual association. Several informants pointed out that the moral-spiritual association is common to many different Chinese bodies of thought, and here their suggestions have been separated into two categories: ancient philosophical/religious traditions and modern political propaganda. Regarding the former, it was pointed out that each of the 'three teachings' (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) as well as the majority of China's many religious and quasi- or crypto-religious traditions (e.g., *Falun Gong*, syncretic movements such as *Daoyuan,* redemptive societies such as *Xiantiandao,* etc.) heavily emphasise the importance of moral development to spiritual prosperity. In the Confucian traditions, for example, one literally grows one's *shen*, the 'heavenly aspect of the soul' (Tu, 1987), through the performance of moral actions. Herein, the soul is believed to be made of the same substance as heaven, and so by growing one's *shen* one increases one's heavenly substance. Hence moral actions are said to be 'transcendental' and to serve as a bridge between oneself and the heavens, or between 'this life and the beyond, the limited and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal' (Yao, p. 46). In fact, by living a morally exemplary life one may even become entirely subsumed by this divine substance. To this effect the influential Confucian scholar Mencius (372-289 BCE) noted: 'the man who has passed through the stage of completing his virtues and sheds forth his spiritual light brilliantly, and then can transform the world, is called a sage. The sage, unfathomable by intellect, is called holy or divine' (Chun-I, 1986, p. 198).

Informants also pointed out that a moral-spiritual association features regularly in CCP propaganda. CCP leaders from Deng Xiaopeng to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have frequently gone on record citing the need to build a 'socialist spiritual civilisation' (for Deng, see Baum, 1994, p. 144; for Jiang and Hu, see McGiffert, 2009, p. 15), and in 1997 the PRC established the 'Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilisation of the Communist Party of China' (中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会). CCP visions of 'socialist spirituality' have in past campaigns emphasised all five moral foundations. Such campaigns encourage care for the proletariat, fair distribution of resources, self-sacrifice for group prosperity, unconditional subordination to party



Figure 4.1. 'Always prepared' (right) and 'The people's interest is placed above everything else;' from the 'Socialist Spiritual Civilization (1980-2000)' collection of CCP propaganda posters (Landsberger, 2012)

policies and/or major party figures (e.g., Landsberger, 2004; 2012), and the necessity to keep oneself pure of 'bourgeois' pollutants. For group loyalty example, the 1983 'Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign' took aim at, among other things, soldiers' photographs of girlfriends. As Gittings observes:

> The campaign against spiritual pollution betrayed the obsession of old men and jealous cadres with the trivia of daily life and a nostalgia for earlier simplicity. The reformist Party secretariat was soon able to compile a dossier of absurdities: women had been told not to let their hair descend below the shoulders; soldiers had been ordered to hand over photographs of their girlfriends; the Beijing Party Committee posted a notice banning long hair and high-heeled shoes; young people had their sunglasses confiscated in the street (2006, p. 183)

Keeping photographs of girlfriends was primarily an offence in that it smacked of bourgeois Western dating norms, but it was also morally condemnable on grounds of giving the appearance of prioritising family or personal relationships over national interests, a cardinal sin during the headiest days of the then not-too-distant Cultural Revolution, when Mao's Little Red Book was referred to as 'spiritual food' (Chang, 1992, p. 451) and when attending the funeral of one's own parent was condemnable as treason.

While there may be precedents for 'socialist spirituality' in Marxist and Marxist-Leninist literatures that have influenced CCP propaganda, the CCP has also taken efforts to construct a party image atop the moral-spiritual associations of the aforementioned philosophical, religious, and pseudo- or crypto-religious traditions. Goossaert and Palmer point out that in the 1930s and 1940s the newly formed CCP encouraged peasants to place portraits of Mao Zedong or other CCP leaders on family altars that had previously been reserved for ancestral tablets and, per the dictates of filial piety, prayer to and

veneration of ancestral spirits (2011, pp. 183-184). In addition, in an effort to gain greater representation in peasant festivities, the young CCP also employed spiritual mediums and temple performers as educators and recruiters. These were mainly travelling storytellers who specialised in 'Prayer Storytelling' (i.e., the storyteller summons a local spirit by giving a reverential telling of the spirit's past life accomplishments and then makes an appeal for blessings) and *yangge* dance troupes that typically performed for gods at temple festivals. These performers were retrained in CCP propaganda and commissioned to perform their repurposed routines on traditional occasions (Goossaert & Palmer, 2011, pp. 183-184). Finally, both before and since the Cultural Revolution, key CCP speeches discussing socialist spiritual values have often been replete with quotes from the three teachings. For example, in Liu Shaoqi's well-known 'On the self-cultivation of a Party member,'[92] a plethora of quotes from Confucius' *Analects* and *The Great Learning* pace Liu's exhortations to cultivate in one's inner self the moral infrastructure of obedience and self-sacrifice that is required to embody a 'proletarian communist spirit,' 'party spirit,' 'revolutionary spirit,' 'class spirit,' and 'the spirit of Marxism-Leninism.'

Any or all of these moral-spiritual associations may have served as interpretive precedents that motivated players to associate in-game moral experiences with spiritual significance. There are, however, two noticeably Confucian undertones to several of the testimonial reports of spiritual experiences presented in Section 4.2. First, the Confucian traditions generally advocate an *intuitive* and *feeling-driven* morality[93] (and hence spirituality) that is compatible with many of the testimonial reports. Confucius spoke of

[92] English title: 'How to be a Good Communist' (Liu, 2004 [1939]).

[93] The Confucian traditions here are contrary, for example, to 'socialist spirituality,' which often requires repression of basic instincts and intensive intellectual study of relevant communist literatures.

the importance of cultivating an inner spirit of benevolence and love, called *ren,* that he believed was innate in all human souls and that would, if allowed growth and expression, motivate pro-social actions. He was firm in his insistence that this *ren* is not cultivated through texts or formal education – rather, when a morally relevant occasion obtains, *ren* simply arises naturally[94] as a *feeling* that dictates a response.

To illustrate, Mencius, who elaborated upon and popularised the *ren* concept in his treatises on 'government by *ren*,' offered an oft-cited example about a small child who is about to fall into an uncovered well. Mencius postulates that anyone who witnessed a young child hovering on the precipice of a well would immediately rush to save the child. This will to save the child is not instilled through education, nor is it motivated by the promise of a material reward. Rather, as the child totters around the well, *ren* simply arises and the onlooker acts accordingly. As Mei summarises:

> Mencius explicitly maintained that *jen* [*ren*],[95] with its accompanying virtues of righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, arose from the inner springs of the human heart. His doctrine of the goodness of human nature is well known and his illustration of the 'poor child about to fall into the well' has been used until it is in tatters. What it says, in a nutshell, is that the expressions of the four cardinal virtues are universal and come naturally, just as taste for food and hearing for music and sight for beauty come naturally. Therefore, if it is guided by its innate feelings our nature will be good. Evil and misbehaviour are due to pressure and influence, the sources of which are external. (1986, p. 156)

By these lights, a recurrent focus in the testimonials on spiritual experiences informed by *feelings* automatically catalysed by morally relevant situations may betray Confucian knowledge. Some testimonials even seem to recreate Mencian examples. For example,

[94] On this point, Confucius said, 'Is jen [*ren*] something remote? If I want *jen*, behold *jen* has arrived' (Mei, 1986, p. 152).

[95] Prior to the late 1950s, when the *pinyin* system for transcribing Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet was standardised, *ren* was often written as *jen.*

T75, cited in Section 3.4.1, reports feeling 'warmth' at being pulled out of a well by an unknown player.

Second, some of the spiritual experiences discussed below are described as *expanding* one's soul and/or involving a *merger* with other players or the environment; and these expansions/mergers occasionally result in enhanced powers or knowledge. Regarding soul expansion, recall that in the Confucian traditions performing moral actions literally *grows* one's *shen.* And regarding merger and enhanced powers, because *shen* is made of the same substance as heaven, one is not becoming more and more 'like heaven' as it grows – rather, one is becoming heaven itself. The sage has developed his *ren* to such an extent that his *shen*, his 'heavenly aspect of the soul' (Tu, 1987), overwhelms his personhood, rendering the sage heaven itself. As T'ang Chun-I summarises:

> As this kind of mind of one who develops his moral life to the fullest extent, and whose *jen* [*ren*] is wholly actualised as a sage, so the sage is said to be the same as Heaven, and human nature is therefore sometimes called heaven-nature, and the human mind is called the mind of Heaven. (1986, p. 198)

Likewise, Mencius characterised the virtuous man as unifying heaven and earth: 'His virtues are confluent with Heaven above and with Earth below;' while Confucian scholar Wang Shou-jen reported: 'Pervading Heaven and Earth is just this spiritual light – my spiritual light – which is not separated by, or separated from, Heaven, Earth, deities, and the ten thousand things' (Chun-I, 1986, p. 198). According to this framework, moral actions can effect a merger with heaven and a concomitant acquisition of heavenly capacities. Consequently, the following testimonials which contain descriptions of mergers and the attainment of extraordinary new capacities may likewise betray Confucian knowledge.

Regardless of what specific frameworks might motivate the moral-spiritual association, the association is well represented in many Chinese sources. One can imagine, then, that a world filled with vulnerable confederates in need of rescuing, brimming with worthy superiors who have dockets of wishes waiting to be fulfilled, overflowing with opportunities to effect justice, and so forth, might be a good place for developing one's *linghun* or *jingshen*. Given the moral affordances outlined in Chapter 3, it should be easy to see how Azeroth could be perceived as such a world.

(4.2) Examples of Spiritual Experiences Reported in C*WoW*

The testimonial reports of spiritual experiences are subdivided into three types. First, and most frequently, *WoW* was referred to as a place that affords spirituality through actions denoting loyalty, caring, and so on, through actions that effect friendship, and through actions that effect good feelings between confederates. T64 and T53 are representative of these testimonials:

> *WoW has given me a spiritual feast. I haven't had teamwork for a long time. It is so much more than the teamwork allowed in school on very limited circumstances. In WoW, it emphasises more about unconditional loyalty and friendship just like in the Chinese traditions. . . . WoW to me is a long spiritual odyssey. I have to keep walking and I should keep walking.* T64

> *If we help them* [other players] *feel loved, and give them good memories, you will be able see their souls set free and you will in turn feel warmed up by them, because you have made them free.* T53

Note that true to the Confucian depiction of *ren* as discernible naturally through embodied feelings in tones similar to those one has for food or music, T64 and T53 use

such bodily metaphors as feasting, journeying, and thermo-sensations to convey the experience of spirituality.

Second, *WoW* is sometimes referred to as a *jingshen* entity – a spirit of some sort – that resembles a Durkheimian ritual object in having its own agency in giving, conveying, or impressing upon players feelings of caring, friendship, etc.:

> *WoW has brought us more than just a game. It brought me experience of friendship and caring and I have developed a sense of responsibility. . . . We had been killed again and again in front of a strong boss but we didn't give up. And everybody in the guild discussed why we were killed. And after a little cooperation and practice we knew how to work as a team. And eventually we defeated Kil'jaeden* [a dungeon boss]. *And that night I heard the scream on the other side of YY and I heard the excitement of the guild master and, yes, WoW had witnessed our friendship. . . . WoW is a spirit. There is no brotherhood without WoW. It taught me the details of being a good person.* T46

> *WoW is more than recreation or entertainment to the players. It's more like a conveyor of spirit that releases the bonds of the real world. The addiction to the game comes from the wanting a good life, just like the Christians overcome the difficulties by their own wills under the guidance of God.* T80

Third and less frequently, some testimonials report mergers with (or the desire to merge with) aspects of the gameworld. These are categorised into two types. On the one hand are testimonials that report enhanced powers gained by a merger with aspects of the gameworld. For this dissertation, these are termed 'fusion' experiences:

> *I always think that playing a character in the game is playing the soul of a person. When you are playing the game with your heart, the departing and reunion of your soul will have bound with the soul of the character and you will realise the nature and the character of human beings.* T79

Here T79 echoes, consciously or not, the idea espoused in Confucianism that entering into communion with other spirits is akin to acquiring wisdom. Accordingly, by allowing

his/her soul to combine with other souls, T79 can realise 'the nature and the character of human beings' because he/she has actually become one with another.

A similar fusion-like logic can be observed in testimonials that discuss the significance of '1+1=>2':

> *But I have to say in WoW what is most attractive to me is the so-called teamwork spirit. This is what every player should learn. In WoW, I finally experienced the concept of 1 + 1 = more than 2. Two friends with their cooperation and sensitivity can build up a legend. The game told me that alone, no matter how good your weapons are, no matter how high your skills are, you cannot achieve greatness. And only by cooperating can you two both benefit.* T20

> *In WoW one person is weak, the group is powerful. 1 + 1 in WoW does not = 2* [i.e., 1 + 1 = >2]*, of course the more people you have in your group the shorter* [time] *you will spend on your tasks and the faster you can raise your level.* T1

Though no souls or spirits are mentioned here (aside from a 'teamwork spirit'), the same logic that an exponential increase in one's capacities can be gained through communion with others obtains. Furthermore, a merger is suggested in the dissolution of discrete integers.

On the other hand, there are merger experiences, or desires for merger experiences, that seem to betoken great sadness on the part of the author:

> *I do not know how much longer this game can last. More and more people came and left. Less and less people chose to stay. I did not look down on players of a certain age. And I would like to say, the people who started playing from the data base testing will better understand what I feel. And a lot of people say this is not only a game, it recalls the memories of our youth. This place is just like when we were first in love* [the author presumably means the experiences he has in-game have the same vividness of 'first love' experiences]*. . . . I joined the workforce. The problems and the chores are getting more and more. And the time I'm in this world is getting less. But here it is my spiritual homeland. . . . I think I will stay here forever to see the end of this world. At that time, I will take off all my*

> *equipment and swim to the depth of the endless sea and I will pass away. And I will pass away silently along with the wrinkles of my memory.'*[96] T38

These 'melancholic mergers,' as I have termed them here, usually occur in 'memory-centric' (see Table 1.2) testimonials that lament having lost the companionship of friends who have quit the game. Some melancholic mergers do not mention souls or spirits explicitly but make reference to something 'inside the body' that is intimately connected to the game. For example:

> *Every time I play WoW it's like I'm in love. I hug her and breathe her and in WoW everything is so joyful and when leaving I am always looking back. I know inside my body there is something connected with this game. Very closely. I know that the WoW has an inherent magic in the game and she catches me. . . . I could not express my love towards WoW more precisely because I am in it; I cannot see clearly and I cannot read.* . . . [the author recalls at length some favourite in-game experiences with friends] . . . . *In every inch of Azeroth there exists my sweat and blood from the trail of battle, but now that the five* [the author's five best friends] *have gone* [i.e., quit the game] *this seems to be so shameful. . . . There was a road we walked on with hardship and there was a friendship we did not want to lose. There was a dream we wanted to have every day. I experienced love, belonging, pain, and I cried. I experienced being alone, a song, a period of time, a sense of loss, and a sense of missing.* T24
>
> [my underlining]

Given that these melancholic mergers contain, like most 'memory-centric' testimonials, ample discussion of hardships overcome and battles fought with friends who are now gone, it seems possible that these testimonials indicate the emotional residues of previous and now unobtainable 'fusion' mergers. Players may have fused with the game and so may recognise having been 'in it' at one point, yet now that the experiential means to merger are unavailable, discussing the game's significance generates sadness and

[96] This curious wish to die in and merge with the gameworld is also echoed by Bainbridge, who explores the gameworld through different character personas, one of which expresses a desire to merge into it with death (2010).

nostalgia. The relationship between merger experiences and depression is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Finally, as a source of spirituality *WoW* was so potent that testimonial authors occasionally spoke of the game in terms of spiritual dependence and/or reliance. For example:

> *In the beginning WoW was just a part of my leisure life, but it gradually became the spiritual thing that I rely on.* T13

As subsequent sections illustrate, this reliance was accompanied by a pervasive fear that one's confederates, or the gameworld itself, might someday disappear. Several testimonials question what would become of their lives and souls should the game cease to exist:

> *If WoW disappears like some other games have, what will happen? . . . I think when the pillar that holds up your spiritual world* [i.e., *WoW*] *collapses there must be rain touching your cheek* [i.e., something else will come along]. *Even though WoW will disappear we can open another door in real life and give our souls work. When WoW comes to an end, it's not the end. Just like my countrymen struck by the earthquake a year ago, we can hold up our sky by our hands. And I believe this must be a new start. I would like to use this essay to commemorate the people killed by the earthquake and also the game that we love.* T80

Here the hypothetical end of *WoW* is likened to no less a disaster than the 7.9 magnitude earthquake that struck Sichuan in May 2008, resulting in the deaths of nearly 70,000 people. T80 remains optimistic by noting that such disasters, though horrendous, do at least afford new opportunities for 'soul work' through helping others and rebuilding communities. T80's attitude underscores once again the importance of difficult situations requiring close-knit cooperation to the production of spiritual experiences. As subsequent

sections will show, such difficulties must be preserved if an environment is to retain its capacity for spirituality.

In summary, though reports of spirituality in C*WoW* come in various forms – that is, as appetitive bodily sensations, as gifts from the gameworld, and as fusion and melancholic mergers with the gameworld – all seem to emanate from feelings of love, gratitude, respect, cooperation (or from memories of these), and so on, that by Haidt and Joseph's reasoning extend from the moral foundations which, in the circumstances considered here, are activated by the game's moral narratives and action potentials – that is, by the in-game opportunities to heal one another, to effect justice, to follow orders, and so on, that were outlined in Chapter 3. That these MF-derived feelings are interpreted as having spiritual significance and as betokening a greater holism with one's environment is quite interesting. It may indicate: (1) an innate structural relationship in human minds between the moral foundations and intuitive processes which inform reasoning about souls, spirits, essences, life-forces and so on; (2) the influence of an interpretive framework that associates moral experiences with spiritual significance; or (3) both. The next chapter will investigate the cognitive properties of these spiritual experiences. The present chapter now turns to an examination of the social circumstances that seem to have motivated the production of these spiritual experiences in C*WoW*.

Part II: The Social Production of In-game Spiritual Experiences

How *WoW* could potentially motivate *jingshen* and/or *linghun*-related experiences should now be apparent. However, as discussed in Section 3.2, the gameworld contains a wide range of evolutionarily salient phenomena that are especially relevant (i.e.,

compared to real world counterparts people encounter on a day-to-day basis) to a variety of intuitive cognitive mechanisms. These evolutionarily salient, inferentially potent phenomena may therefore have to compete with one another for attention. To understand why some phenomena are selected over others, it may be necessary to look beyond the gameworld. Recall from Section 1.8.3 that Steinkuehler emphasises that gameplay experience results from a 'mangle' of agencies made up of software rules, on the one hand, and a mélange of user practices, socioeconomic conditions, and technologies on the other (Steinkuehler, 2006). In Section 1.8.3 I concurred with Nardi in rejecting the characterisation of software rules as malign hegemony. Yet, as Steinkuehler's example of the rescuing *Lineage* clans illustrates, it is obvious that players do select some activities over others from the allowances inscribed in the game's software[97], and social circumstances inhering in the mélange will surely influence what gets selected. Taylor, following Steinkuehler, summarises as follows:

> There are then at least two levels – constantly interlinked and redefining each other – that work to acculturate players into the world and the gameplay: the structure of the game itself, and the culture and practices that have emerged in and around it. These form a much broader game apparatus, a sociotechnical one, that goes well beyond the artefact contained within the off-the-shelf box the game purchaser first encounters (Taylor, 2006, p. 32).

The remainder of this chapter identifies social agencies that originated beyond 'the artefact contained within the off-the-shelf box' and that seem to have motivated the cultivation of in-game moral/spiritual experiences. The main argument pursued is that intense pressure to quit playing *WoW* levied by various government institutions and

[97] I.e., in this situation players have chosen to protect rather than exercise forceful control over vulnerable lowbies.

concerned parents had the effect of motivating players to justify their gameplay and to keep guild memberships intact by promoting the game as a gateway to moral accomplishments and spiritual experiences that could not be obtained in real life. As the final two sections illustrate, certain characteristics of the functional role *WoW* plays in the 'mangle' of agencies outlined here qualify *WoW* as a 'religion-like tool' for group cohesion.

(4.3) Pressure to Quit Playing *WoW* – Government River-Crabbing, Addiction Rhetoric, and Internet Addiction Recovery Centres

The popularity of WoW in China is incredible. Even the government interferes with the TBC [*The Burning Crusade* expansion] *and the people have to think about this phenomenon.* T84

Early in my first semester as an instructor at Jianghan University, I derailed a class discussion by inadvertently trespassing on a politically sensitive topic. I had opened discussion with an oral English class by asking about Wuhan landmarks: 'What is Wuhan's most famous landmark?' I asked. This being a class of 'A-level' students (i.e., bright and motivated), the room was a cacophony of suggestions. The obvious choice was 'Yellow Crane Tower', but 'First Bridge' – the first bridge to be built across the Yangtze River, completed in 1957 with help from the USSR – also received many votes. I naively inquired about the nature of this collaboration. Did the USSR send engineers? Labourers? The room was immediately quiet. Supplies? Moral support? The class monitor rescued me from further futility by stating, matter-of-factly: 'We do not wish to talk about politics.'

I emerged from this experience feeling guarded about engaging in any topics that, to my mind, bore even a tangential relation to politics. Thus, from the beginning of my

fieldwork, I was surprised by anti-government sentiments proffered by C*WoW* players in casual discourse, in testimonials, and in the gameworld, and I was unsure of how to handle them. Anti-government sentiment seemed to extend from the perception that the government (or, more accurately, various government-sponsored institutions) was attempting to induce players to stop playing *WoW* by means of the following three designs.

4.3.1. Government River-Crabbing in Azeroth

First, players were upset over what they perceived to be the government's constant and direct meddling – or 'river-crabbing' (*héxiè;* 河蟹) – in the gameworld itself. The term 'river crab' is a homophone of the *héxié* verb 'harmonise' (*héxié* 和谐; the two words have the same sound profiles but different tones), which is today a common euphemism for 'censure.' 'Harmonise' gained this euphemistic capacity from a 2004 speech given by Hu Jintao, then and now the President of the PRC, in which he announced a goal of creating a 'Harmonious Society' and briefly discussed the need to 'harmonise' vulgar or inappropriate online materials. That is to say, if government censors deem some online material to be inappropriate, that material will be 'harmonised' (i.e., removed). The term was quickly seized on by Chinese netizens,[98] who used the term in reference to anything that had been or might be censored ('*You had better rephrase that blog posting or it will be harmonised*'). Consequently, the term 'harmonise' itself became harmonised by censuring search filters (presumably the relevant authorities were

[98] 'Netizen' is a portmanteau of the English words 'Internet' and 'citizen' and is frequently used by various China-watch blogs in reference to persons involved in the activities of online communities, such as blogging and forum discussions.

not keen to have their censoring activities discussed so openly and casually). In response, netizens began to substitute 'river crab' for 'harmonise' as a verb for 'censure' ('*You had better rephrase that blog posting or it will be river-crabbed*') and also as a noun for censured, photoshopped, or otherwise altered media ('C*WoW is full of river crabs*').

In testimonials and in-game discussions, C*WoW* was often derided as full of river crabs that affect gameplay with various levels of seriousness. With respect to relatively innocuous instances of river-crabbing in C*WoW*, a famous example concerns the cosmetic makeover on player corpses introduced in 2007. In the normal version of the game, when a player dies his/her corpse remains sprawled on the ground at the point of death. If the player wishes to continue playing, he/she will be resurrected as a ghost at a nearby graveyard and must run back to the corpse and retrieve it. But if the player takes this 'death' as an occasion to log off, the corpse will remain on the spot where it fell, rotting through various stages of decay until it disappears entirely. In 2007, just after the Ministry of Culture approved the release of the expansion *The Burning Crusade* (*TBC*; see Appendix A.5), players logged in and discovered that in-game deaths no longer resulted in corpses, but rather in tidy graves complete with headstones.

The reason for the corpses-to-graves makeover was a mystery to most players. Because Chinese traditions advocate careful treatment and burial of the remains of the deceased, many players believed that this was another instance of the Ministry of Culture river-crabbing elements of popular culture that 'disrespected' Chinese traditions.[99] There was also some confusion as to who, exactly, ordered the change. Most players believed the Ministry of Culture was behind the makeover, though a few believed it was an overly

[99] The Ministry of Culture has also recently outlawed 'time travel' dramas on grounds of disrespect to cultural traditions (Barboza, 2011).

zealous act of self-censure made by The 9 Interactive Inc., the joint-venture firm in charge of Blizzard's operations in China at that time (Blizzard later switched to NetEase Inc.).

The corpses-to-graves makeover was just one of several cosmetic makeovers that, while infuriating to some players, did not have a serious impact on gameplay (corpses were equally retrievable whether lying on or below the surface). Much more serious instances of river-crabbing resulted from the Ministry of Culture's drawn-out refusal to allow Blizzard and The 9 to update the game. For most of my stay in China, C*WoW* was mired in what my informants referred to as *TBC* Hell. To grasp the frustrations players experienced with *TBC* Hell, consider that the *WoW* storyline and gameplay advance primarily through two means: major expansion packs, such as *TBC* and *Wrath of the Lich King* (*WotLK*), and regular 'patches.' The expansion packs, released about every two years, add new lands, quests, spells, abilities, objectives, gear, etc. to the gameworld, while the 'patches' and 'hotfixes,' administered about once a month, tweak and update various aspects of gameplay and remove any bugs or hacks (i.e., cheating devices) that have infiltrated the gameworld. Through these patches and hotfixes, Blizzard expends great efforts to ensure that gameplay, built atop a complex lexicon of class-specific spells, abilities, etc., will preserve a balance that ensures a fair experience for players.

Yet, because gameplay mechanics are highly complex and because the game is always changing with the introduction of these expansions, patches, and hotfixes, it is impossible for Blizzard to ensure a perfect balance at all times. The introduction of new content may have unintended consequences that render some classes 'overpowered' (or 'OP') vis-à-vis others. Or, if enough time passes without an update, players of one class

type will inevitably figure out some method that renders them OP relative to another class with respect to a certain objective. Additionally, bugs and hacks that wreak havoc on the game's balance structures will invariably creep into the game. In its normal course of operations, Blizzard quickly detects and removes these bugs, hacks, and imbalances by issuing patches and hotfixes that correct the problem (e.g., a patch may devalue, or 'nerf,' some aspect of paladins relative to warlocks), at least momentarily. Effecting balance in *WoW* is a Sisyphean task.

Returning to *TBC* Hell, *TBC* was launched to worldwide audiences in January 2007, with the Ministry of Culture finally approving it for release in China that September (with some modifications, such as the corpses-to-graves makeover). Blizzard released the next expansion pack, *WotLK*, in November 2008, but the relevant Chinese officials, citing 'gross violations' (Oreskovic, 2009) of their acceptable content criteria[100] refused to license its release in China. Throughout this time period, the relevant officials would not allow minor patch updates or hotfixes to the existing *TBC* content. During *TBC* Hell, which lasted roughly from September 2007 to August 2010 (not counting a span of several months in 2009 in which C*WoW*'s licence was revoked and the game was shut down entirely), bugs, hacks, and gameplay imbalances multiplied to such an extent that many aspects of gameplay became unsatisfying or outright unmanageable. For example, Warsong Gulch is a 'capture-the-flag' battleground that requires a team to seize a flag from the opposing team's base and then 'capture' it by advancing it across a lengthy battlefield and into their own base. This process usually takes at least two minutes, during

[100] Players tell me that *WoW* is not more violent than other games, even domestically produced games. Many players believed the government's motive here was to generate growth in domestic game industries by shackling Blizzard as much as possible.

which opposing team members will try to fell the flag carrier and retrieve their flag. During *TBC* Hell, some players had developed 'speed hacks' that allowed them to travel from base to base in ten seconds. Though Warsong Gulch was technically still playable, with defence strategies shifting from trying to return flags midfield to trying to prevent enemies from entering the team's base, it was robbed of much of the complexity and nuance that players fondly recalled.

Balance-destroying residues of *TBC* Hell – and these residues may also be termed 'river crabs' – were pervasive throughout the gameworld and reduced the joys of gameplay to such an extent that many players left. The *TBC* Hell situation even spawned some ugly, nationalistic exchanges with Taiwan, with Azeroth serving as a microcosm of real-world political tensions. For a while, the Taiwan *WoW* servers, which had been updated with *WotLK* and the latest patches, were accepting new accounts registered on the Chinese mainland. This created considerable animosity on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. In the Taiwan servers, the Taiwanese players apparently considered the mass influx of mainlanders an invasion of sorts, or at least another instance of the mainland trying to piggyback on the fruits of Taiwan's freedoms. The mainlanders, identifiable by their slang mannerisms and sometimes by not-so-subtle political biases voiced in chat channels, were frequently referred to as 'mainland dogs,' 'Chinese dogs,'[101] or 'plague'; were frequently spat upon; and were generally reviled in chat channels. Taiwanese *WoW* finally stopped accepting new accounts from the mainland, and many of those who returned to C*WoW* found themselves stigmatised by their old guildmates. Back in C*WoW*, many of the *TBC* Hell veterans felt spurned by these defections to Taiwanese servers and

[101] Taiwanese who consider Taiwan a part of China are more likely to refer to China as the 'mainland,' whereas those who reject any association with China refer to it as 'China.'

maintained a nationalistic stance that, for better or worse, C*WoW* was 'Chinese' *WoW* and to simultaneously be living in the mainland and playing on servers in another land was a traitorous desertion of sorts. Many returnees thus found themselves surrounded by river crabs and in want of new friends.

4.3.2. Anti-Net Game Propaganda – Thugs, Addicts, and Freaks

C*WoW* players were additionally frustrated by what they perceived as relentless anti-net game propaganda issued from state-run media mouthpieces, such as China Central Television (CCTV), China's largest television broadcasting network, as well as from state-sponsored, youth-oriented organisations such as the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL). In casual discussions, C*WoW* players maintained that these organisations had unfairly typecast net gamers generally, and *WoW* players especially, as (1) violent or pathological, (2) addicts, or (3) miscellaneous freaks, zombies, or robots that had been dehumanised or even driven insane by excessive gameplay.

Regarding (1), state-run news outlets were generally quick to report unusual and/or violent behaviours that could somehow be linked to Internet ('net') games. Golub and Lingley provide a snapshot of typical news stories:

> Bizarre and pathological behaviour created by the Internet and online games has featured prominently in the Chinese press since 2002: A boy murdered his uncle to steal money to play videogames (Xinhua News Agency, 2006); two children exhausted by gaming marathons fell asleep on railroad tracks and were killed (Watts, 2005); a man murdered another over the theft of a virtual sword in Mir II (Watts, 2005); a 13-year-old committed suicide after playing Warcraft III (Xinhua News Agency, 2006); four teenagers were seriously injured in a knife fight between 19 gamers at an Internet café over treasure dropped by a monster in a MMOG (Liaoshen Evening News, 2006); a 17-year-old killed himself after meeting his online sweetheart 'Flying Skirt' in real life, only to find she was a homely woman in her 30s (Xinhua News Agency, 2006); and a morbidly obese

> man died after a marathon gaming session ('Online Addict Dies,' 2007). (2008, p. 62)

While some informants admitted that player deaths resulting from exhaustion at the computer or from quarrels over virtual goods were newsworthy events, some also pointed out that these behaviours were far from representative of the net-gamer population and that state-run media never covered the more positive aspects of net gaming culture.

Regarding (2), in 2002 state-run media outlets began using the term 'addiction' (in its strict medical sense) in reference to excessive amounts of time spent online and taking efforts to link these behaviours to biological models of illness. In news and in medical journals, Internet games were portrayed as *drugs*, on a par with alcohol or marijuana and to be treated accordingly. 'Addicts' were often sent to clinics to be treated with various drug regimes (often antidepressants – one clinic director reported, 'We use these medicines to give them happiness, so they no longer need to go on the Internet to be happy;' Cha, 2007, p. A01). For a time, electroshock therapy was also used (Funk, 2007), but this was made illegal in 2009. Yet in that same year China, through the Chinese Ministry of Health, became the first country in the world to classify 'Internet addiction' as a clinical disorder.[102]

As a drug, net games are most often imagined in popular media as opium, thereby linking the games and players to opium's long association with encroachment by Western powers (e.g., the Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860) and with a wide range of domestic social problems (it is estimated that 120 million of China's 370 million

[102] Elsewhere in the world, other major medical and health organisations, including the American Medical Association in 2006 (Grohol, 2007), had examined and rejected the notion of 'internet addiction' as a viable category of illness.

residents were addicted to opium by 1881; Kossoff, 2010). Accordingly, by referring to net games as 'opium,' detractors seek to equate them with the foreigner-introduced drugs many Chinese believe were responsible for usurping the minds, fortune, and prestige of China.

On news and discussion programs, various 'anti-addiction experts' often trade in 'net games as opium' rhetoric. In gamer communities, the most reviled of these experts is Yang Yongxin, or 'Uncle Yang,' the director of an 'Internet addiction disorder recovery clinic' (IAD clinic) housed in a state-run mental hospital in Shandong Province. Uncle Yang is infamous in gamer communities for his liberal (and unqualified, as he is not a licensed psychotherapist) use of electroshock therapy, which is said to occur in the hospital's fabled 'Room #13.' According to Yang, 'Games such as *World of Warcraft, Legend* are the electronic opium that foreigners have brought to Chinese people. The Chinese government should act as they did when Lin Zexu (林则徐) burnt all the opium at Humen (虎门), and instigate a new Opium War' (Liu, 2009). Yang has further suggested that failure to stop foreign net games from possessing the minds of Chinese youth will result in the 'death of the party [CCP] and the nation,' rendering all of China 'without children and grandchildren.' This, he says, would make America's 1970s policy of 'victory without war' a reality (Bandurski, 2009). His book, *War with the Internet Demon* (战网魔) (Liu, 2008[103]), is occasionally cited as a manifesto in what one CCTV program has termed the 'Third Opium War.'

[103] This book discusses Yang's efforts and theories and is referenced both in popular press and by my Chinese informants as 'Yang's book.' However, it seems it was actually written by Liu Minglin. A similar situation obtains with Dr. Tao Hongkai's book below. In Tao's case, the books are written in the first person, as if events are seen through his eyes, and usually feature his photograph on the cover. Presumably my informants are simply overlooking the ghostwriting credentials and attributing credit to the focal personage.

The ‘opium’ label is perhaps so prevalent in government-run media because it is especially useful for the CCP, which is trying to walk a delicate line in its efforts to reap gains from the booming net games industry. On the one hand, Chinese technology companies and China’s economy benefit in the short term from relationships with technology companies like Blizzard. In order for Blizzard or any foreign company to operate in China, they must first partner with a domestic firm – in Blizzard’s case, The 9 and, subsequently, NetEase (Ernkvist & Strom, 2008). As part of this partnership, the foreign company must agree to transfer expertise and technology to the domestic company. In effect, Blizzard teaches The 9 and NetEase how to make successful games and how to grow what is projected to be a $68 billion dollar industry in 2012 (Androvich, 2008).

On the other hand, just as the CCP expelled Facebook and YouTube once the Chinese equivalents (Renren and Youku/Tudou respectively) were operational, the CCP likely has no intention of letting Blizzard or other foreign net game producers dominate its home market indefinitely. As the domestic net game producers grow their capacities under partnerships with foreign companies, the Ministry of Culture works with the former to produce and market to the public games that contain only ‘healthy’ content (Ernkvist & Strom, 2008, p. 105), politically motivated materials, and/or nationalistic game objectives, such as defending the mainland from Japanese invaders (Surette, 2005). Accordingly, the relevant government organs would seem to be positioning themselves to justify hours logged in front of domestically produced games (e.g., justifiable as good for the economy, for health, and for historical and political consciousness), while those logged in front of foreign games such as *WoW* may beget negative effects. The ‘opium’

label is well tailored to singling out for mistrust only those net games produced by foreign companies.

Regarding (3), throughout my fieldwork I encountered in popular media depictions of net gamers who were said to be suffering from maladies induced by net games that, in my opinion, and in the opinions of many of my informants, bordered on the fantastic. For example, Dr. Tao Hongkai is a well-known CCYL-sponsored psychologist who specialises in treating adolescents who are 'addicted' to net games. He appears frequently on TV and has authored best-selling books that detail his successes in treating young 'addicts.' Most of his books are divided into chapters that focus on a single case study. In one case (reported in Xi, 2005), Dr. Tao, answering a distraught plea for help in the *Wuhan Evening News*, visits the home of a high school girl named Qujing who has been skipping her classes to play net games. At first, Qujing refuses to talk. Dr. Tao says: 'I knew I needed to do something to gain her trust.' He then raises his left hand above his head and asks Qujing to do the same. Qujing, surprised, asks: 'Why?' Dr. Tao says: 'Just do it like I have done. You will not break your arm.' Qujing tries to raise her arm but discovers she cannot. Horrified, she asks Dr Tao: 'What's wrong with my arm?' Dr Tao explains: 'You cannot raise your left arm over your head because you have spent most of your time using it to do only simple movements with a computer mouse. It's called loss of neural control.' Qujing surmises: 'So, the Internet games made me like this?' She then begins to trust Dr. Tao, who convinces her to stop playing net games.

The idea that an otherwise healthy teenage girl could lose major functionality in an arm because of excessive time spent online struck me as implausible. I asked several of my informants about 'The Case of Qujing' and was told that 'experts' like Dr. Tao and

Uncle Yang were mere hucksters trying to capitalise on an anti-net game hysteria that had led unwitting parents to believe all manners of degeneration were possible when it came to net game addictions.

4.3.3. IAD Clinics

Players were also keen to tell stories about infamous IAD recovery clinics and their directors. IAD centres first appeared in 2004 when Tao Ran, a colonel and researcher in the People's Liberation Army, opened one in Beijing's Military General Hospital. Children and adolescents were checked into the clinics for extended stays (as one would be in a normal rehab centre) and received a fusion of counseling therapy, physical training, and medication (mostly antidepressants). Tao Ran's centre has reportedly had some success. As of August 2006, the centre had treated more than 5,000 'addicts,' most of them teens, and has received international acclaim and emulation (Sanderson, 2009). Many 'graduates' from the clinic have reported satisfaction with the treatment programme.

However, in 2006 parental concerns about Internet 'addiction' grew frenzied. As Stewart reports:

> In 2006, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League openly fretted about a 'severe social problem that could threaten the nation's future' and called Internet cafés 'hotbeds of juvenile crime and depravity.' Official figures claimed that the Internet was responsible for up to 80 percent of high school and college dropouts and most juvenile crimes. A show on state-run television described the fight against Internet addiction as the Third Opium War. It seemed as though almost anything could be blamed on the Internet. In September, the deputy director of China's volleyball administration said the weak performance of the women's national volleyball team was the result of 'too much time online.' (2010)

Even Tao Ran, who stood to profit from Internet 'addictions,' was concerned about the situation: 'There is a hypersensitivity to addiction now, and the climate is getting worse. . . . I get calls from parents who think their kids are addicted to the Internet just because they're in front of the computer' (Stewart, 2010).

A slew of IAD centres sprang up across the country in response to parental concerns, and fretful parents began sending kids to the camps at very conservative estimations of 'addiction.' Most of the camps were run by people with few or no credentials; and these camps quickly gained a reputation for subjecting inmates to intense physical exertions (one sent its young patients on a 528-mile trek through Inner Mongolia; Stewart, 2010) and corporal punishment. On rare occasions, patients were beaten to death.

Reports of stories like that of Deng Senshan's coloured the imaginations of many of my player colleagues. At age 11, Deng Senshan had been a fairly typical youth and maintained good grades in school. However, at age 13 he started playing net games, including *WoW*, and his grades began to slump. His concerned parents were enticed by a television advertisement for an IAD centre called the Qihang Salvation Training Camp located just outside Nanning, the capital city of Guangxi Province. In August 2009, Deng Senshan's parents went with him on a family vacation to the seashore near the clinic and, upon returning to the hotel that evening, informed him that they would be taking him to Qihang the next day. Once they had enrolled him, Deng Senshan's parents left. He refused to follow orders and was taken up to a 'confinement room,' where he was severely beaten. He was then instructed to run laps around the compound track. After running 30 laps, he collapsed and was subsequently beaten again. He was kept in

isolation until 3am, at which point he was taken to the hospital. Shortly afterwards, less than 24 hours from being admitted into Qihang, he was pronounced dead (Stewart, 2010).

(4.4) C*WoW* Players Under Pressure

In testimonials and in casual conversations, C*WoW* informants expressed various levels of frustration with these government-sponsored[104] measures that, in their opinion, had motivated many of their peers to stop playing *WoW*. Regarding the corpses-to-graves makeover, some players called the graves ridiculous and marveled at what they perceived to be extreme pettiness on the part of the Ministry of Culture. Other players, however, were livid about the graves. Several of these said they had been among the very large number who flooded the official C*WoW* website with criticisms and petitions threatening a boycott of the game. Yet other players were embarrassed when asked about the graves and seemed to take the entire incident as signaling Chinese 'backwardness' to the rest of the world.

Players' sentiments on *TBC* Hell ranged from a sense of helplessness, to outrage, to intense melancholy. Regarding the latter, the 'memory-centric' testimonials often feature long, mournful passages lamenting the loss of friends who have quit the game out of frustration with the *TBC* Hell situation (several of these are reported in Section 4.6). Otherwise, I most frequently encountered player grievances with *TBC* Hell when players passed on, usually via QQ[105] and with approving commentary, Youku and Tudou videos in which random C*WoW* players lashed out against the government or pleaded with it to

[104] Though Tao Ran's IAD centre had government support, the majority of IAD centres operated outside of or even in violation of government requirements. In 2010, following a number of incidents similar to the Deng Senshan incident, the government took steps to crack down on many of these centres.

allow The 9 to update the game[106]. Also passed around, discussed, and thoroughly enjoyed were the many *roman* à *clef* 'machinima'[107] videos in which different *WoW* characters were cast as real-life figures in the *TBC* Hell quagmire (e.g., Illidan, the arch-villain of the *TBC* storyline, might be cast as the leading officer of the Ministry of Culture). Most of these videos were humorous, short, quickly made, and crudely produced flicks that featured players beating up representatives from The 9, NetEase, the Ministry of Culture, the Green Dam (censuring software), or Uncle Yang. They had to be viewed quickly before they were 'harmonised.'

Other videos, however, were long, complex, carefully shot, and exquisitely finished comedy-dramas. The most famous of these comedy-dramas, *War of Internet Addiction*, won 'Best Video' in the 2010 Tudou Video Film Awards and was ranked by the *China Daily* newspaper as one of the top ten films of 2010, despite its being deleted from most websites 48 hours after being posted (the video persisted through various downloading sites). The hour-long film, which features a C*WoW* guild struggling through one hilarious circumstance after another against the aforementioned antagonists, contains a famous and rather solemn end-scene speech in which Kannimei, the film's protagonist, facing annihilation by Uncle Yang, angrily beseeches all C*WoW* players:

[106] These videos were usually forwarded with an approving commentary via QQ, a social media instant messaging service similar to Microsoft Instant Messenger.

[107] 'Machinima' films use real-time 3D computer graphics-rendering engines to create cinematic productions. By using cameras built into the computer, players can capture what appears on the computer screen in video form. These videos can then be edited into original video productions called 'machinima' films. One can find thousands of *WoW* machinima films on Youku, Tudou, and YouTube (at the time of writing, typing *World of Warcraft* (魔兽世界) into the Youku search bar produced over 32,000 results). Most of these machinima films belong to the following categories: (1) 'how to' guides for accomplishing game objectives; (2) comedic soap operas; and (3) tribute videos that combine a montage of in-game footage with subtitles and a theme song.

> First they came for YouTube, you didn't speak out because you are not a YouTuber. Then they came for Twitter, you didn't speak out because you are not a Twitterer. Then they came for Fanfou, you didn't speak out because you are not a member. Now, they are coming for *WoW* . . . for our souls' home [*WoW*], speak out with me: We are all *World of Warcraft* players! (Greatestyang, 2010)

My informants circulated videos such as *War of Internet Addiction* not only for their comedic value but also, I argue, as a safe means of protest and of effecting solidarity with other players. The phrase '*We are all World of Warcraft players*' was twice credited in the testimonials as having inspired and reaffirmed a player's resolve to keep playing despite the *TBC* Hell quagmire (e.g., '*I cannot help but ask myself why do I play this game? . . . And the most representative reason is the classic line: "We are all WoW" players*.' T23).

Players were also conscious of being branded crazies, national traitors, and addicts in state-run media outlets. In testimonials and conversations, some players had critical views of these labels and dismissed them as ludicrous. However, most players I encountered had accepted at least the addiction label and bore it with varying degrees of embarrassment, shame, and/or cognisance of the need for treatment (T86 was written, and is reproduced here, in poetic form):

> *Every Saturday I go online* [in *WoW*] *and lead activities. I feel satisfied when people laugh and chat and our 25-man team raids the Sunwell* [dungeon]. *And some professors* [the player uses derogatory term for professor] *might say that I need electricity treatment and I know I am too addicted and I hope I can learn to arrange my time reasonably. After all I'm a junior student and have one last year of my college life and I do not want to live in regret* [of having wasted a college education]. T82

> *I have been playing this game seriously*
> *I have been working hard in the game*
> *I believe I am devoted to this game*
> *I consider myself a strong player in this game*

> *But this is not what I am supposed to be happy about*
> *The thing that makes me happy is that I do not give up*
> *responsibility for real life because of this game…*
> *I am aware that over-enjoying the game is like taking drugs.* T86

In a similar vein, a few testimonials discuss how *WoW*, as a drug, has had a deleterious effect on their souls. Consider, for example, the following '*WoW* personified, feminised' testimonial:

> *In my life, which was not so exciting before WoW, it was your gracious breast that warmed up my frozen body. But now I am growing and I have begun to realise that your sweet milk is actually a drug. And* [it] *made me addicted. And* [it] *made me compromise. I do not want that any more. . . . I want to say you are not the pillar of my spirit and you cannot use my endless passion, you cannot squeeze out my strength and suck off my youth. And I only want to say you are merely a comfort when I am bored. When I get angry and I beat someone, you are there. You are only a plaything now. I'm not that addicted any more.* T28.

The testimonials and casual conversations with players made it clear that concerns about addiction and about *WoW* as some sort of drug have been effective in motivating some players to reinterpret their positive in-game experiences as somehow deleterious to health, to seek the necessary treatment, and to quit playing.

Finally, I never encountered any players who claimed to have spent time in an IAD centre, nor did I encounter anyone who claimed to know someone who had. Additionally, the few players I asked claimed that they had never experienced any fears that their parents might have sent them to such a place. However, all players were confident that most of the stories about IAD centres were true and seem to have taken to them as fascinating instances of macabre theatre and intimidating indices of the severity of the system that was against them. These centres have been discussed here because I believe

they occasionally loomed in my informants' lives as disheartening reminders of how they were sometimes perceived (i.e., as rehab degenerates) in the eyes of mainstream society.

(4.5) Pressure to Quit Playing *WoW* – Parents and the 4-2-1 Problem

At Jianghan University, many players reported being under significant pressure from their parents to quit playing *WoW*. In addition to parents' concerns about the health consequences of 'addictions,' many were concerned that playing *WoW* would interfere with the family's ability to function as an economic unit. On this matter and according to informants, many parents still subscribed at least loosely to the Confucian dictates of 'filial piety' (*xiao*; 孝), which maintain, among other things, that children should provide significant financial care for their parents as they age. It follows that many Chinese parents have a vested interest in seeing their children succeed not just for their children's sake but also because their own standard of living will, as they age, be closely tied to the child's success or lack thereof. In traditional Chinese culture, children should work extremely hard to position themselves in such a way that they will be able to provide exemplary care for their aged parents. Activities that steer a child towards non-productive ends – for example, *WoW* or opium – can create financial difficulties and may be considered extremely disrespectful.

For many children, the burdens of filial piety have increased since the CCP's implementation of the 'one-child policy' in 1979. At that time, in the wake of the economic stagnation of the Cultural Revolution, the PRC was home to a quarter of the world's population and just 7% of the world's arable land. The CCP saw strict population control as essential to economic reform and improved living standards. Accordingly, the

one-child policy was enacted. Exceptions to the policy are available in many circumstances, and only about a third of China's population is effectively subject to the policy. In cities, however, where the policy is generally strictly enforced, rising life expectancies and lack of adequate pension coverage have resulted in 70% of couples (Lu & Xing, 2005) maintaining financial dependency on their offspring. Many urban Chinese youth currently in high school and college will face the difficult task of, upon graduation, serving as the major breadwinner for four grandparents and two parents. The economic and social problems resulting from these generational asymmetries are commonly parcelled as the '4-2-1 problem.'

For those urban Chinese youth who are not born into wealthy families, a college education is usually essential to generating an income that will satisfy the economic demands of the 4-2-1 problem. To obtain a place at university, high school students must obtain favourable marks in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, more commonly known as the *gaokao* (高考; 'high test') and sometimes referred to as 'the most pressure-packed examination in the world' (Siegel, 2007). The *gaokao* is a two- or three-day test (procedures differ slightly by province) that all university aspirants must take and is by far the most important (most would say the only) admissions criterion. The most brilliant student with a sterling high school record can find himself/herself relegated to a low-tier university or ineligible altogether following a poor performance on the *gaokao*. Furthermore, with 10 million high school seniors applying for 5.7 million university places, competition is intense (one Chinese saying compares the exam to a stampede of 'thousands of soldiers and tens of thousands of horses trying to go across a single log bridge'). My Jianghan students informed me that in the year leading up to the *gaokao*,

students will normally study from 14 to 16 hours a day, taking one day off every three weeks. Girls may take contraceptives to avoid having periods during the exam. I was even told about instances of students going to hospitals to study, where students breathed from oxygen tanks to effect better concentration.

Students also explained the varying strategies their parents had used to motivate them to succeed in the *gaokao*. Several of my students were promised stupendous rewards – for example, new cars or extended vacations in Australia – for achieving certain scores. Others felt under threat of being labelled as 'failures' for underperforming. Many students I spoke with knew of someone who had failed the *gaokao* and was made to retake it the following year. Such a year was reported to be extremely trying for these students, as parents may insult and guilt them daily for their poor performance. Furthermore, for those students who had their sights set on top-tier universities, obtaining merely 'solid' scores might also render them 'failures.' One of my students whose parents felt her capable of obtaining a spot at a first-tier university told me that the moment when her parents first deposited her at the gates of Jianghan University was the most humiliating of her life.

On the other hand, I also had many students for whom admission to Jianghan had been a glorious coup. A student named Huqing from rural Hubei was the first in her family's known history to attend a university. As a polymer chemistry student, the salary she will earn after graduation will be many times what her parents make as farmers. Her admission to Jianghan was perhaps the single most important event to occur in her family's lineage for hundreds of years. Huqing told me that during her regular phone calls home, her father frequently choked up with tears of pride.

These examples should illustrate the enormous pressures students are under to succeed in school and, in particular, on the *gaokao*. Success in the education system can help lift several generations out of poverty. Alternatively, failure can result in poor living conditions for the youth's parents and grandparents and is condemnable by the full weight of the Confucian traditions. Accordingly, to set aside one's studies in order to play *WoW* is potentially to place oneself in opposition to the welfare of one's parents and to Confucian dictates of moral propriety.

(4.6) Defections from C*WoW* to Real Life are Costly for Remaining Players

Given that C*WoW* players are vulnerable to being perceived by their peers as addicts, crazies, traitors, and/or lacking in filial piety, many understandably felt under duress to quit playing the game. However, for dedicated C*WoW* players, losing friends, teammates, and especially guildmates is costly, for several reasons. First, a guild needs a large number of capable, well-equipped players to form raid and battleground teams, and defections cripple the guild's ability to meet these game objectives. Dungeons such as Molten Core and Blackwing Lair, for example, require 40-man teams. If a guild does not have 40 members who can come online at the appropriate time, it may have to acquire unknown players to fill the remaining spots. This is referred to as 'pugging' (拉人; *laren*; e.g., '*We pugged a warlock for the Molten Core run*'). Although pugging is not uncommon, guilds wish to avoid it if at all possible. Pugs often bring behaviours or attitudes that grate with the established guild ethic. Or, pugs may not know the intricacies of a dungeon or a boss and may commit mistakes that cost everyone time and resources. Finally, pugs will usually want a piece of the spoils for filling in, but guilds

usually have their own rules about distribution, and controversies may ensue (see also Williams et al. for discussion of difficulties concomitant to pugging; 2006, p. 349).

Second, losing guild members often takes an emotional toll on those who remain. In testimonials and in casual discussions players often lamented 'the sadness of O' and the sadness of friends who have 'gone grey' (i.e., left the game). Players are here referring to the game's 'social' tab, accessible in the game interface or via the hotkey 'O.' When a player presses 'O' and pulls up the social tab, the names of all his/her friends are displayed. The names of those who are currently online are presented in white, and the names of those who are offline are presented in grey. The 'sadness of O' refers to a circumstance in which most or all of one's friends are permanently grey.

Coma Divine guildmates frequently reminisced in guild chat about good friends who had gone grey, and many of the testimonials express sadness and regret at having too many grey friends. In the testimonials, sadness and regret are occasionally expressed through anecdotes:

> *Once there was an old hunter and a young hunter. The young said to the old, you have such good equipment, while I am grey* ['grey' equipment is the poorest-quality equipment in the game]. *And the old hunter said, "I have something grey as well". He opened his friends list; they were all grey.* T76

Or, more commonly, authors expressed sadness and regret through long, wistful remembrances of past experiences with friends who have gone grey:

> *I remember . . . hearing Moolina singing in the darkness. I remember when it was the Fireflame Festival and I was dancing with a group of blood elves in Darnassus and said goodbye to them at last. And I remember when my friends first took me to KLZ* [Karazhan, a dungeon] *and I was so excited I drank several bottles of* [medicine]*, and from that I got the name of 'Overdose'. . . .* [the author recounts many more remembrances] *. . . I also remember the first time I met*

> *Poledancer and he was pretending to be a girl, and finally I figured out his name and age. . . . I also remember a heart-breaking quarrel with a friend named Garbage, who I lent money to buy junk equipment. Even though we broke up, we are still brothers. I remember after I met Incredibull I discovered another kind of WoW, relaxing, shopping, fighting for materials and conducting business. I also remember my classmates, Hiro, Kissybear. I also remember my good brother, Equinox. Istabu, Brumley, Teacup, Soulfire, Misterpenguin, a lot of names, but now they are not here. I'm so lonely. I can't stand this loneliness.* T7

Many of the testimonials even feature messages for – or 'shout outs' (see Table 1.2) to – players who have gone grey. These also express great sadness and regret and sometimes endeavour to make amends for past disputes:

> *Whenever I wanted to run a dungeon or go questing, you were always there. And I felt to have a brother like you is such a great thing. And I also remember that day when we collected the* [unclear] *you told me 'My sister, I have a gift for you,' and then you traded the gift box to me and I opened it and it was a black dragon baby. I refused to take it but you also refused to take it back. And the result is of course my failure (i.e., I took the dragon). . . .* [the testimonial becomes quite confusing here; an argument over an epic piece of gear, a necklace, seems to have transpired] *. . . and then I was angry and didn't want to see you. You mailed me a lot of times saying it's my fault, my sister. And I didn't reply. . . .* [the author describes a lengthy process by which she decided to quit the guild to which she and her 'brother' belonged]. *. . . During this past year so many things have changed, including old loves and hatreds. When I clicked the mouse to quit the guild, I never thought this click would make you AFK* ['away from keyboard,' used in this sense it means to quit the game]. *. . . If you have time you can log on and see me once in awhile. . . . In my heart you are always my best brother.* T8

As these and other testimonials demonstrate, losing in-game companions could be emotionally traumatic.

Third, the virtual goods (e.g., gear, gold) that serve as rewards for completing game objectives take hits in value when friends leave the game. Recall that *WoW* players may dedicate large amounts of time towards acquiring a single piece of gear. On this matter, Rettberg, in an article entitled 'Corporate Ideology in *World of Warcraft*,' humorously

notes: 'While no one I know would be motivated to work more than a day or two by the prospect of purchasing a new pair of trousers, *World of Warcraft* players will happily put in dozens of hours of labour in order to acquire a particular pair of magic pants' (2008, p. 27). The pants in question here may have many types of value for the owner (e.g., functional value in combat); one type of value would be their *social* value, as was briefly discussed in Section 3.4.2. Much like the NA*WoW* players observed by Nardi (2010, p. 113), C*WoW* players love to celebrate acquisition of new gear with friends and show off their gear in guild gatherings and city trade centres. As one's friends go grey, therefore, one's pool of valued admirers shrinks and one loses social opportunities for celebration.

Finally, defections from C*WoW* to real life often inspired discussions about the importance of the game relative to real life, and such discussions could motivate subsequent defections. To illustrate, when a guildmate announces that he or she is quitting the game (players sometimes just leave the game unannounced, but more often they notify others either in-game, by QQ, or on the guild website of their intentions and reasons for quitting), the remaining guildmates often discuss and weigh the player's reasons for leaving (e.g., '*Deathbyme quit because she got a part-time job – is that a good reason for quitting?*'). These conversations yield opportunities to calibrate the value of *WoW* relative to real life, and during such conversations there is always the possibility that *WoW* and its prizes may be revealed *as a game* (as opposed to being 'more than a game,' see Table 1.2) filled with *make-believe stuff*. In post-defection discussions, players may reason that a part-time job *is* a better way to spend one's time, because such a job can put food on the table, and one cannot even really wear a pair of magical pants.

Others may come to agree and then reinterpret their time spent in the game as foolish or misguided.

In sum, defections to the real world spoiled the fun of *WoW* by making it more difficult for guilds to meet game objectives, by imbuing gameworld activities with a sense of forlorn nostalgia, by subtracting from the social value of the game's material rewards, and by potentially motivating additional defections.

(4.7) *WoW* as a Religion-Like Tool for Group Cohesion

In my interpretation, the aforementioned extinction threats and related concerns about losing guildmates played significant roles in the in-game production of spiritual experiences. When under duress, prominent Coma Divine members employed group-maintenance strategies commonly described in the anthropological record. It has been shown time and again that groups facing extinction threats will attempt to maintain in-group cohesion in part by (1) rallying around the group's defining characteristics, and (2) taking measures to cultivate group members' perceptions in ways that champion and maintain those defining characteristics. Regarding (1), endangered groups may take measures to strengthen the group by establishing coherence on the group's defining positive distinctions (Brown & Smith, 1989; Wohl, Branscombe & Reysen, 2009). Brewer (1999) has shown that groups will attempt to unify around defining characteristics of the in-group *relative to* the threatening out-group(s) (see also Brewer, 1991; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Specifically, in-group members will make efforts to unify around characteristics that emphasise *positive distinction* (Turner, 1975) for the in-group in relation to the threatening out-group. In theory, any in-group characteristic that creates a positive distinction with the out-group can be used. For

example, if State A has lower tax rates than State B, when State A is facing heavy competition from State B it may seek to unify its members around the practical benefits and ideological propriety of low taxes.

In practice, when an in-group faces extinction threats from out-groups it is often religious traditions that supply the elements of positive distinction. Sosis and Alcorta (2008) have noted that religions work especially well as *tools* for group cohesion in this regard. One reason is that religious traditions, which are often especially powerful conduits of moral rhetoric and experience, can be utilised for positive distinction in the form of moral superiority. Religious texts, like *WoW* narratives, often depict a world in which in-group members are protagonists effecting care, justice, purity, etc., in the world. Additionally, religious rituals, like *WoW* gameplay mechanisms, may yield 'pure' moral sentiments (see Section 3.5) that help establish especially strong social bonds. Another reason is that religions often advertise spectacular rewards obtainable only through service to the in-group. For example, religion traditions, like *WoW*, may yield *spiritual* experiences that are only obtainable through communion with an alternative reality (e.g., heaven, Azeroth) that is inaccessible to out-group members. As Sosis and Alcorta have noted (2008), a sense of moral superiority and the promise of otherworldly rewards are highly efficacious in keeping group members unified even in the face of severe extinction threats and are, usually, uniquely the province of religious traditions.

Regarding (2), when faced with extinction threats, group members may try to reduce intra-group variability on judgements about or interpretations of these defining characteristics of group membership (Brown & Smith, 1989; Rothgerber, 1997; see also the 'Black Sheep Effect,' Marques & Paez, 2011; see also in-group strengthening

behaviours through 'collective angst', Wohl, Branscombe & Reysen, 2010). To illustrate, low taxes could conceivably be interpreted as either (A) freedom from government tyranny or (B) a mechanism that ensures power remains in the hands of a small, privileged mercantile class. When under duress from out-groups, State A benefits by having its members unified into the ideological value of lower taxes. As Wohl et al. note: 'Solidarity with in-group values and traditions helps to fortify the group from perceived threat' (2010, p. 899). Lack of clarity on the key points of group identity may cause confusion, doubt, internal dissension, and ultimately defection from the group. Accordingly, leaders may stress clear interpretations of the key points of group identity and may punish or expel those whose behaviours suggest deviation from these key points.

Sosis and Alcorta touch on similar dynamics when they note that in religious groups fundamentalist dynamics, as measured by emphases on scriptural literalism and on costly religious demands (e.g., painful rituals, financial sacrifices), tend to increase in proportion to extinction threats levied against the in-group (Sosis & Alcorta, 2008, p. 111). The reason has to do with trustworthiness. As Sosis and Alcorta note with respect to besieged religious terrorist groups:

> Among the most significant challenges terrorists face is ensuring that fellow insurgents are trustworthy and will not defect from the cause (Berman, 2003). How can a prospective terrorist guarantee that he will not reveal the locations of hidden conspirators or the secret codes of communication, and that he will not turn aside when asked to carry out a risky or suicidal attack? (2008, p. 110)

Accordingly, by closely observing the group's positive distinctions as encoded in scriptural messages and by making costly sacrifices that indicate commitment to those distinctions, constituents 'enhance their credibility' (Henrich, 2009) as trustworthy group

members. 'Only those who are committed to the group will be willing to incur the time, energetic, and opportunity costs of religious belief and performance' (Sosis & Alcorta, p. 110).

In this section it is argued that, with respect to the C*WoW* sample discussed here, moral cognition and spiritual experiences have been selected from the game's sum total of cognitive affordances, cultivated, and produced at least in part because of these group-preservation strategies: in-group (1) designs to create a positive distinction in relation to an out-group and (2) measures taken to reduce interpretive variability regarding that positive distinction. Specifically, the positive distinctions selected – i.e., the game's special capacities for moral and spiritual experiences – qualify it as a 'religion-like tool' for group cohesion, while the attendant variability-reduction measures may be understood as analogues of 'fundamentalist' dynamics.

4.7.1. Establishing *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions

This dissertation has demonstrated that *WoW* is rich in opportunities for moral cognition and that these aspects of gameplay occasionally stimulate in players an enhanced awareness of their souls, essences, or some other force intimately connected to their ability to *live* in the world. Here it also should be pointed out that some testimonials that do not specifically mention *jingshen* or *linghun* do comment on *WoW*'s affordances for *life*:

> *In the end, the most important thing I want to say is what we are playing is not merely a game. …. In this world we find a feeling of existence we cannot find in the real world. This does not mean we are escaping, nor that we can only play games. People who say this are not real players …. Do not think playing games is a waste of time, because the game made up for something we lost.* T56

> *WoW is not only a game but a carnival of friends. We are not just playing, but living.* T30
>
> *I was unsatisfied with the second song in the video* [the author is referring to a Youku video he/she made in tribute to his/her *WoW* guild]. *In the end, after uploading the video I realised that 'Bring Me to Life' should be the song used in the video.* T58
>
> *I have thought about changing games*
> *After all a game is just a game everywhere*
> *But this is more than just a game*
> *The simple ID card* [the author is referring to the point cards purchasable with real money that are required to play the game] *in the game represents not a system of zeros and ones but also the shadow of ourselves*
> *This is life, this is the game*
> *It's more appropriate to say that I have found another self in a parallel world.* T78

These, then, were *WoW*'s positive distinctions vis-à-vis reality: moral experiences, spiritual experiences, and a perhaps related capacity for 'living.'

In testimonials and casual discourse, players employed two different strategies to justify, promote, and make salient these positive distinctions as *the* positive distinctions and *the* defining characteristics of what it means to be a 'real' *WoW* player. First, some players sought to validate these positive distinctions through teleological reasoning by citing what was in their view an obvious moral design, spirit, or *essence* inherent in the game:[108][109]

> *If the essence of WoW* [conceived of here as, among other things, promoting 'greater willingness to cooperate with others'] *can be communicated to players,*

[108] Aside from basic rules regarding use of foul or racist language in the gameworld, Blizzard has not issued a manifesto of gameplay as such. As a profit-driven corporate body that wants to attract as many subscribers as possible, Blizzard is likely uninterested in trying to impose a moral vision on players.

[109] This cooperative essence players discerned in the game was often discussed as a distinctive element of *WoW* vis-à-vis Chinese- and Korean-produced games, which players said placed too much emphasis on individual heroics.

> *and players can cultivate a proper evaluation of that essence, WoW will be a success. . . . Attitude is the key; cultivating players' attitudes is more important than designing big missions.* T49

Occasionally concomitant to instances of teleological justification were insistences that players should fall into line with the gameplay design because this was how Blizzard (or sometimes even the game itself) *wanted* players to play:

> *You cannot play the game for a whole lifetime, but we can be lifetime friends. And I think this is what Blizzard wants to tell us. After all, in the difficult battlefields the concept of friendship is cultivated.* T64

> *This game has her own style, her own aim. She teaches players to know the world, how to communicate with others, and how to evaluate one's surroundings. . . . What does WoW mean to me? To me it's obvious; it gives me friends and memories.* T53

Second, Coma Divine members had informally adopted a 'text' of sorts that essentialised and illustrated proper *WoW* gameplay in a way that advanced the positive distinctions mentioned above. When I asked my guildmates to elaborate on the game's 'essence,' a topic they had sometimes mentioned (usually when we encountered behaviours of which they disapproved), I was sent to view a popular machinima video called *Warcraft Wisdom* that had been posted on Youku. Several testimonials mention *Warcraft Wisdom*, and one quotes the video's script, presented below, almost verbatim. The film is a beautiful tribute machinima, expertly shot and edited by a Russian player named FalanorTheElf. It consists of just under nine minutes of sweeping panoramas of in-game activities and landscapes accompanied by a soundtrack and subtitles articulating

the eponymous wisdom.[110] Here, in the interests of brevity, I provide only a summary of the film's main points.

Warcraft Wisdom begins with a blood elf seated, thinking, on a throne. It proceeds on its visual tour through the Azerothian landscape (the text appears in segmented blocks as presented below):

> *Once upon a time…*
> *I questioned myself*
> *What is Warcraft for us?*
> *What are we trying to find here?*

The film discusses commonly proffered reasons for playing (e.g., questing, obtaining gear) and then argues that in-game activities amount to much more than simply manipulating 'numbers in a database.' Rather:

> *This is a game*
> *And like any game…*
> *It has a purpose*
> *To teach*
> *And improve a person*
> *Children play games*
> *To learn the world*
> *To get knowledge*
> *How to communicate*
> *How to look*
> *At things around* [them]
> *Maybe we seek this knowledge of something*
> *Because we couldn't find it in real life?*
> *Like scientists do*
> *They simplify things to see the very basis of process clearly*

[110] The subtitles have been translated into many languages, including Chinese.

The narrative then admits that the in-game raids, gear, and places are, ultimately, 'forgettable.' However, what is not forgettable are the feelings a player will generate through interactions with other players. These feelings are fully real:

And it is not a game
It is real
You feel
You talk
You see
You live
You learn how to feel people
And how people feel you
Depending on what you feel
You are becoming different
You change
This is the result of learning
All our memories are made of feelings
Depending on which feelings you put into your memories
Depends which person you will become

Part and parcel of this logic is that 'bad' people are simply people who have not, for whatever reason, had any good memories:

All people are beautiful
Those who we call 'bad'
Are not actually 'bad'
They simply have no good memories
And it's a pain
To be such a person

It follows that a defining feature of gameplay should be giving others 'good feelings.' In this way, both giver and receiver become better people and can partake in the benefits of 'radiant souls' and 'warm feelings':

Help them see the love
Show them frankly all your feelings

Don't be afraid
Give them great memories
And you will see…
You will see the radiance of their souls
You will be warmed in the light of their feelings



Figure 4.2. A still from the English version of *Warcraft Wisdom* (FalanorTheElf, 2010).

Finally, by maintaining this style of gameplay – by continuing to help produce better people in the gameworld – one's efforts will spill over into the real world. As players take their 'radiant' souls into the real world, they will effect positive change there too:

And you will see how the world will change
The real world
You will get the ability to see the very deep of people
And with this ability there will be no need for games
There will be no need for building beautiful illusions
Because the real world will always be better



Figure 4.3. A still from the English version of *Warcraft Wisdom* (FalanorTheElf, 2010).

The film concludes by answering the questions posed at the beginning with summary reasons for playing: friends and memories. Players should play the game to make friends, create good memories, and effect more radiant souls.

The key points of *Warcraft Wisdom* can thus be summarised as follows: (1) On the surface, *WoW* is really just a 'fantastic illusion' that consists only of 'numbers in a database.' (2) Yet it is also a pedagogical tool that works by simplifying reality 'like scientists do' – in this instance, by distilling reality into convenient opportunities to interact morally with other humans. (3) These opportunities allow players to give pleasant experiences and memories to other players. (4) A person's nature is determined by past experiences and memories of those experiences. Good memories create good people, and vice versa. Therefore, when players create positive experiences/memories for themselves and for other players they are, in fact, creating better people. (5) Gameplay

priorities should be focused on providing these positive memories/experiences; other aspects of gameplay are 'forgettable.' (6) By playing *WoW* in this manner, players are creating better people and a better society.

The key points of *Warcraft Wisdom* are remarkably consistent with the aforementioned positive distinctions in that they promote moral and spiritual development through positive feelings generated by in-game cooperative actions. It seems that *Warcraft Wisdom*, being so colourful, mellifluous, and competently made, has helped C*WoW* players institutionalise *WoW*'s positive affordances vis-à-vis the real world. *Warcraft Wisdom* is at once a brochure, advertising to players that there are praiseworthy reasons to play the game, and also a text – a sort of Apostles' Creed – to be referred to for guidance on how the game ought to be played.

4.7.2. Variations on *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions: The Materialistic Ethic

These positive distinctions had to be defended from other interpretations of gameplay that may impede the gameworld's capacity to yield moral and spiritual experiences. According to the testimonials, the biggest threats to a group's capacity to engage in activities that generate positive, collective moral sentiment come from those group members who observe a materialist, or utilitarian, ethic. By 'materialist ethic,' I mean priorities and behaviours that esteem the game's built-in material rewards and/or indices of progress (e.g., levels, titles, achievements) as the most desirable aspects of gameplay. Such a 'materialist ethic' has close analogues in the psychological types that characterise Bartle's 'achievement'-oriented players (Bartle, 1996) and Yee's 'achievement-

advancement' players (Yee, 2006).[111] To illustrate, Bartle suggests that player psychologies can be broken down into four types: achievers, explorers, socialisers, and killers. 'Achiever' gameplay, in this design, is motivated by desire for points, loot, equipment, and other concrete indices of success.

Player Type	Motivations for play
Achievers	Gain points, loot, equipment, and other concrete indices of success in a game
Explorers	Solve navigational puzzles, create maps, discover new areas, hidden places, and glitches
Socialisers	Interact with other players and/or intriguing NPCs
Killers	Compete with other players, effect destruction and carnage, exercise control over in-game markets

Table 4.1. Bartle's Player Types (Bartle, 1996)

Bartle's types are well known within game studies. However, Yee points out that they have not been empirically tested or verified as independent types. Yee, working from Bartle's types as well as his own extensive qualitative data on player motivations, conducted factor analyses that revealed ten motivation subcomponents grouped into three overarching components:

[111] To a more limited extent, C*WoW* materialists also resemble Taylor's ' power gamers' (2006, pp. 67-92). However, although these power gamers are highly focused on in-game achievements, they place a much greater value on cooperation and group-level successes than is usual for C*WoW* materialists, as described here.

Motivations for play		
Achievement	*Social*	*Immersion*
Advancement: Progress, power, accumulation, status	Socialising: Casual chat, helping others, making friends	Discovery: Exploration, lore, finding hidden things
Mechanics: Numbers, optimisation, templating, analysis	Relationship: Personal, self-disclosure, find and give support	Role-Playing: Story line, character history, roles, fantasy
Competition: Challenging others, provocation, domination	Teamwork: Collaboration, groups, group achievements	Customisation: Appearances, accessories, style, colour schemes
		Escapism: Relax, escape from real life, avoid real-life problems

Table 4.2. Yee's Player Types (Yee, 2006)

The C*WoW* materialists, as they are termed here, strongly resemble the 'achievers' and 'achievement-advancement' players described in these tables, and I see no reason why they cannot technically be referred to as such. However, the term 'materialist' will be used here for two reasons. First, my informants refer to such players as materialist or sometimes 'utilitarian,' by which they clearly mean something negative. The 'achiever' label, by contrast, has positive connotations. Second, the term 'achievement' does not have an intrinsic referent and could lead to confusion (e.g., spiritual experiences would surely be considered an 'achievement' by many players), whereas 'materialist' refers more obviously to tangible indices of success. The term 'materialist,' then, more readily fits with player discourse and maintains focus on the tangible indices of success.

Gear is one of the most coveted ends of gameplay for a materialist, and it rewards the player on a variety of levels. First, each piece of gear has 'statistics' or special abilities that impact the player's performance. A necklace, for instance, may grant its wearer +50

strength, meaning that when the player is wearing this necklace he/she can inflict greater damage on targets. Second, certain 'gear scores' or 'item level scores' (ilvl scores) are necessary to enter certain dungeons. To illustrate, each piece of gear a player owns will have an 'item level' that represents its relative power and desirability. A Level 85 mediocre dagger may have an ilvl of 285, while a Level 85 epic dagger may have an ilvl of 371. When players reach the endgame – the point at which level advancement is no longer the character's main objective – these ilvl scores become important. When a player first reaches endgame, he/she can only access a limited number of endgame dungeons based on his/her average ilvl score. Table 4.3 provides the average ilvl scores necessary to enter the *Cataclysm* five-man dungeons.

Average Item Level Required for Entry	**Cataclysm five-man Dungeons**
226	Throne of the Tides, Blackrock Caverns
272	The Stonecore, The Vortex Pinnacle
305	Lost City of Tol'vir, Grim Batol, Halls of Origination
329	Throne of the Tides (Heroic),[112] Blackrock Caverns (Heroic), The Stonecore (Heroic), The Vortex Pinnacle (Heroic), Lost City of Tol'vir (Heroic), Grim Batol (Heroic), Halls of Origination (Heroic), The Deadmines (Heroic), Shadowfang Keep (Heroic), Baradin Hold (Heroic)
342	The Bastion of Twilight, Throne of the Four Winds, Blackwing Descent
346	Zul'Aman, Zul'Gurub

Table 4.3. Average item level averages required for entry to Cataclysm five-man dungeons.

[112] 'Heroic' versions of dungeons contain most of the same content as the non-heroic versions, but the mobs and bosses have extra strengths and abilities that render them more difficult to beat.

In order to access new dungeons, in which new challenges and better gear await, one must collect enough quality gear such that one's ilvl average meets the new dungeon's requirements.

Third, gear scores may affect more than just dungeon-entry requirements. In C*WoW* (and NA*WoW*), poor gear scores may inspire hurtful commentary. At times, players may be called lazy or 'SB' (*shabi*; 'stupid'[113]) for crippling a group's prospects by using inadequate gear. Gear scores may also factor prominently in whether or not a player will be accepted into a guild or raid group. Regarding the latter, the ilvl requirements for dungeons are merely baseline prerequisites. When raid leaders are pugging groups for dungeon raids, they usually post the relevant openings in trade chat and ask interested players to message them with their class (e.g., mage), specialisation (e.g., fire), and ilvl. Players who just meet the basic requirements may be rejected in favour of a player – say, another fire mage – in possession of a higher ilvl. Often, a player will be accepted into a group and may even assist with the group's assembly for an hour or so, only to be unceremoniously ejected when a better-equipped player comes along. Though very common, this almost always creates an unpleasant situation. Therefore, in order to increase their desirability to group leaders and to avoid being on the wrong end of these situations, players are usually highly motivated to obtain the gear necessary to raise their ilvl scores.

Fourth and as discussed in Section 3.4.2, gear also connotes status and for many players, simply owning and displaying a high-end piece of gear is highly satisfying. Fifth, gear is valued because, technically speaking, a player can never be too geared. A

[113] Literally translates as 'stupid vagina.'

player can wear 19 pieces of gear at any one time – 19 pieces constitute a 'set' of gear. Getting just one piece of high-end gear may require days or even months of steady work, and putting together a high-end set of, for instance, balance druid PvP gear takes at least a month of hard effort. However, this set will only be well suited to one style of combat. As is discussed in detail in Appendix A.4, PvE gear does not work well in PvP environments and vice versa. If a player wishes to participate and be competitive in both, he/she must acquire a set of gear for each. Additionally, gear that would be appropriate for a balance druid would be ineffective for a feral druid or a restoration druid; if a player wishes to change specialisations, he/she will therefore need to acquire a new set. This druid character, then, would need six sets of gear to have competitive stats in all specialisations for both styles of combat. Finally, at any given time most players will only possess one or two quality sets of gear for their endgame character. It often happens that just when one is putting the finishing touches on a set, Blizzard releases the next major patch or expansion and, accordingly, new gear that makes the old gear obsolete. Given this setup, players are almost never satisfied with their current gear holdings.

So gear is desirable, yet player desires for gear may interfere with a group's capacity to generate positive interpersonal experiences. For example, in C*WoW* (and, surely, in *WoW* everywhere) gear distribution following a dungeon raid is always a potential source of debate and controversy. To illustrate, each dungeon will contain lots of 'trash mobs' (i.e., monsters/enemies who are not bosses and who are easily killable) and a small handful of 'bosses' (i.e., especially difficult monsters/enemies). As a team progresses through a dungeon, one or more desirable pieces of gear will 'drop' from each of the bosses the team fells. Usually, a boss will only drop one to four pieces of loot based on

the boss's 'drop table.' Drop tables are consultable on websites such as WoWWiki.com and list all the pieces of loot a boss can potentially drop and their attached probabilities of being dropped.

For example, Ragnaros the Firelord[114] could potentially drop one of 78 different items. Some of these items he drops regularly – for example, Ragnaros will drop plate armour leggings called [Judgement Legplates] 18% of the time. However, Ragnaros will drop the [Eye of Sulfuras], the key ingredient in the 'legendary'[115] and powerful [Sulfuras, Hand of Ragnaros] mace, only 3% of the time. Players interested in the [Eye of Sulfuras] may be in for a long wait. Ragnaros is the last boss of the Molten Core dungeon and most players will only see him a handful of times. Molten Core is a 40-man dungeon, meaning to get through it one must assemble 40 well-geared players, which is always difficult. Assuming that this team does get through Molten Core, it will take a few hours to reach Ragnaros. If Ragnaros is felled, there are potentially 39 other players who will want the item,[116] and only one can obtain it. Finally, if Ragnaros is felled, everyone in the raid group will be unable to attempt the dungeon again for one week (certain dungeons have 'lockout' timers to prohibit players from running them repeatedly to 'farm' items therein).

[114] Ragnaros appears in multiples places in Azeroth. The example given here is from the vanilla *WoW* dungeon, 'Molten Core.'

[115] 'Legendary' pieces are superior to epics but are extremely rare and difficult to obtain. The gear hierarchy is as follows: legendary (orange) > epic (purple) > rare (blue) > uncommon (green) > common (white) > poor (grey).

[116] Players are restricted in which types of gear they can use, so a large percentage of what ends up dropping will be irrelevant to any given player. For example, only players who could wield a two-hand mace would have a legitimate interest in obtaining the [Eye of Sulfuras]. Consequently, this may reduce the number of viable candidates from 39 to 10 or so.



Figure 4.4. [Thunderfury, Blessed Blade of the Windseeker] was one of the rarest weapons attainable in vanilla *WoW*.

The fact that some of the game's greatest treasures drop so rarely generates occasions for controversy over distribution. When a piece of gear that more than one person wants is dropped, the raid master must decide who gets it. Decisions are usually made by 'rolling:' interested players 'roll' for the item (typing '/roll' into the chat interface generates a random number between one and 99), and the highest roll wins. But who is eligible to roll on the item? Raid masters usually take two things into consideration: seniority and 'dragon kill points' (DKPs). Regarding seniority, outfitting a 40-man team, or even 10- and 25-man teams, is no easy task. Guilds may have strict raid schedules that

require 40 members to log into the game at certain times or risk being kicked out of the guild. This can be a hardship for players, since they must schedule real-life activities around the raid schedule. Players who have been with the guild a long time, faithfully attending raids week in and week out, sometimes get privileged access to rolls (indeed, it might spark outrage if the [Eye of Sulfuras] went to someone who had been in the guild for two weeks, rather than to a faithful long-time member). Second, guilds may award DKPs to members for completing raids. For example, the raid master may award all participating raid members 50 DKPs for a successful Molten Core run. Players can redeem these DKPs on rolls – for example, a player may spend 300 DKPs for the chance to roll on the [Eye of Sulfuras] should it drop.

Yet no matter how tidy and rigorous the system for distribution, there is often murmuring, complaining, begging, scapegoating, and sometimes coalition building after a major dungeon run. Perhaps a member widely believed to have hampered group performance with ineffective gameplay wins a piece coveted by a much more effective player. Perhaps a player will roll for a staff he does not really need as he/she already has an equivalent staff or is claiming this staff for a different specialisation that he/she may pursue in the future, keeping it from someone who has an immediate use for it. Perhaps someone did not have enough DKPs to roll but convinced the raid master to allow a roll by a promise to pay the difference in the future. Perhaps the raid master will disregard protocol entirely and simply hand the gear to a player of his/her choosing. The resultant disputes can become nasty, with players arguing in group chat, shouting at one another over voice chat, or 'flaming' (i.e., inciting hatred against) one another in forums and/or in trade chat. With respect to the latter, players sometimes adopted what Nardi has termed a

'town crier' strategy (2010, p. 196) by repetitively denouncing players in visible public spaces – for example, by repeatedly typing in trade chat: '*PANDANINJA IS A LYING CHEATER! DON'T LET HIM IN YOUR RAID GROUP!*' Finally, as discussed in Section 4.3.2, the Chinese media inform us that altercations over gear can become physical (although I did not personally witness any such events) and may occasionally result in the death of one of the participants.

In summary, the players that are here termed 'materialist' are those who esteem and prioritise their desires for the game's material rewards, of which gear is the most prominent example, over their interest in effecting positive moral sentiment. Materialists are often willing to start fights over gear, attempt rolls on gear to which they have no legitimate claim, condemn other rollers as unworthy of gear, belittle players who have unexceptional gear, and boast excessively about gear they do possess. Materialists are detrimental to a guild's ability to generate positive social interactions in three main ways. First, it is difficult to cooperate and generate positive feelings with players who are rude, bossy, slanderous, and/or excessively fame-seeking. Second, and as T8 touched on above, a large number of guild defections are due to particularly rancorous arguments over gear, and these defections cripple the guild's ability to outfit teams that can attempt the dungeons that provide the opportunities for moral cognition.

Third and at a more fundamental level, the materialist ethic wreaks havoc on guild membership by casting *WoW* and the real world in comparisons unfavourable to *WoW* in three ways. First, with respect to material goods, real life arguably has a positive distinction vis-à-vis *WoW*. The real world's goods, after all, are more available to the senses, can be used to satisfy basic life needs, the demands of filial piety, and so on.

Second, the materialist ethic plays directly into the mainstream criticisms levied against *WoW* by parents and anti-net game crusaders that playing *WoW* is folly because it is financially unproductive. Playing *WoW* may subtract from a player's ability to *earn* in the real world, and if it can be proven that a player's in-game pursuits are, in some sense, reducible to attempts to *earn stuff*, his/her efforts can easily be denounced as futile, rendering the player more vulnerable to anti-net game rhetoric. To this effect, in several of the 'negative' testimonials, former players forcefully denounce the game on the premise that its material rewards had no true currency value and/or condemned gameplay for usurping production:

> *Maybe some people say every day or every week we play and struggle with our friends in the game. And this gives us new goals and this feeling has become a part of our lives. But I think this is complete bullshit. . . . They* [college students] *do not know they* [college students' parents] *paid ten thousand* [RMB¥] *a year for the college fee only to play this net game. Is the game so important? The equipment, they are just pieces of shit. Waste our time. I can say firmly this game by Blizzard has ruined the new generation. . . . Even though a 30-yuan game card is not so much, we would spend that watching a movie, but we have five million loyal players in China, 30 * 5 million and this is the income of one week of the game. A foreign game can earn so much in China for only one week, and this money is majorly contributed by college students. And the money of college students was given to them by their parents. And foreigners earn the money that the parents gave to their children. I feel shameful for the students who play WoW. How can the students be so ignorant of their parents' hard work? . . . And I will say it once more. The virtual things are not real. They're shit.*[117] T18

Third, players felt that greed for loot had the effect of importing real-world evils into the gameworld. If one wanted to be cheated out of one's labour, looked down upon by

[117] Here anti-net game rhetoric mirrors the 'addiction' rhetoric in that it asks players to reinterpret the gameworld in materialist terms. Accordingly, the games are not conveyors of spirit but 'drugs.' The glittering, immaterial gear may appear beautiful but is actually 'just shit.'

higher-ups, and/or cast aside at the first opportunity for someone to make a fast dollar, players felt that real life would be more than accommodating in these regards.

In short, the materialist ethic cast *WoW* in a *negative* distinction vis-à-vis the real world, and guild memberships were likely to suffer wherever it proliferated. T61 provides an apt illustration of the materialist ethic's power to motivate defections:

> *After the end of the public testing and the level 60 was opened everybody began rushing to the next round. Gradually my understanding of the game has changed a lot and so did the people and the things around me. So many people and friends began to leave. And since then I began to think, 'What is the true meaning of the game? For equipment, honour* [honour points; see Section 3.4.3]*, or just some virtual gear?' Since then, WoW began to exist like the real world. WoW was full of hypocrites, cheaters, and frauds. Maybe it was that my evaluation was too dark. Or the understanding of the game is different. Friends became distant, and the things we chased after* [e.g., epic gear, achievements] *were glorified. Later on, I began to feel weird with WoW. Or I may say not used to seeing the real world in the net game. In the real society I have seen too much fraud and cheating between people and recklessness for money. And during the WoW period I had some problems with my relationships and felt disappointed about everything. I wanted to find a clean and a pure land in the game, find some real emotion, besides the equipment. That emotion is not only love, but also the true and sincere caring and helping between people. But I realised the world in WoW is so similar to the real world. Most people chasing after equipment, money, honour, power, it's getting away from my ideal WoW. . . . So eventually I chose to leave.* T61

4.7.3. Purity Regained – Reducing Variability in Perceptions of *WoW*'s Positive Distinctions

Many players were cognisant of the dangers the materialist ethic posed to the game's 'essence.' Some players cautioned against these dangers in the testimonials:

> *Here I want to tell people who emphasise so much on equipment. Do not lose the essence of the game because of one single piece of equipment, and the essence is the support and trust of your friends. Equipment just serves to make the game easier. You can deal with or without it. But only friends bring you endless happiness and this is the aim of the game. If every day you are alone playing WoW, do you think there's any necessity for you to keep playing? WoW has been*

> *harmonised* [i.e., in this sense 'made worse'] *by some Chinese. Please do not let it become the murder of our friendship. At last, I want to say something cheesy. My teammates, I do love you so much.* T55
>
> *Friends and friendship, a team will not last long if these are missing; a team will not last long if the people are gathered together with the same interests of winning equipment, for even though they went through the battlefield, they have not the emotional bonds between them. . . . We know many people can't leave, simply because of the names in the 'O' key. Friends are not measured by gold or equipment.* T51

Others lamented another aspect of in-game materialism – the so-called 'gold groups,' or 'G groups,' composed of players who make real-world money by producing *WoW* gold and selling it to other players through websites (a practice strictly forbidden by Blizzard but that nonetheless proliferates). Because making gold is the only objective of gameplay in G groups, group members will focus only on those objectives that yield the most gold per minute, and these may be rather dull and repetitive. There may be little excitement and camaraderie attendant to these repetitious tasks:

> *Why did we have such unknown excitement* [the author is referring to playing the beta version of *WoW*]*? Because the players were all supporting each other towards the same goal. Buying game cards using gold or the gold group at that simple and naive age, we would never have done such a thing. Five years ago we knew nothing but to support each other. Five years later in this ill-formed version of the game, the gold groups have invaded the entire China server like the Burning Crusade invaded Azeroth. A lot of people do not understand that the glory of the 'C'* [pressing 'C' pulls up a tab that displays the player's gear] *on the keyboard can never replace the sadness of 'O.' I feel bad when people say that what we get from WoW is only equipment. . . . Now the G groups are already overwhelming. The perceived benefits of playing have gone beyond spiritual friendship; now that they are making money it is all materialised. . . . This is a tragedy led by an ill-formed version of playing the game.* T41

But why did materialism become as rampant as these testimonials suggest? What happened to the idyllic, pure gameworld of 'five years ago'? Most players blamed *TBC*

Hell for the proliferation of the materialist ethic. During *TBC* Hell, the game went so long without updates that the gameworld was stripped of the challenges and contingencies that made the moral actions outlined in Chapter 3 so essential. Players had seen every dungeon boss so many times that they had fully intuited their complex artificial-intelligence algorithms and could anticipate their every move. In the battlegrounds, players knew the different team strategies and the possible combinations and permutations of each class type's skills and abilities so well that battles amounted to choreographed stage fights. Players could perform them on autopilot. The game had become easy, with less bleeding and suffering, less need for sacrifice, less need for leadership, less need for one another. As a result, players began to focus their gameplay on making real-world money and/or on obtaining legendaries. As T47 and T43 point out:

> *The endless TBC has made WoW utilitarian. There's no baptism of exploration for the fast food WoWer* [see Section 4.7.3 for an overview of 'fast food'], *and they* [the 'fast food' players] *will not understand the happiness of playing as a team. They do not get the spirit of the game. They only exercise their vanity by pursuing gold. Thus, they only make themselves distant from WoW by treating WoW as a fast food game!* T47

> *Now WoW has changed because the China mainland version was so slow to update. And for a long time now it has been a very lowly version of the game. And this has made the players utilitarian and has even made the game ethic decay. And the players are no longer enjoying the happiness of experiencing the game but just chase the equipment in the game and ignore the process of getting them. However, the process is what should be the most important thing. And I will no longer spend a lot of time in this* [game]. *And I will say 'The length of time is not important, no matter if the time is long or short, the most important thing is that you had once held each other. That's enough.'* [here the author uses a Chinese saying similar in meaning to 'It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all'] T43

Unfortunately for the 'beta' players (i.e., the players who started playing when C*WoW* was launched in 2005), *TBC* Hell's materialist effects extended beyond the

introduction of *WotLK*, as a cohort of players brought up in *TBC* Hell and preoccupied with pursuing legendaries mistook the materialist ethic as the only way to play the game. T41, for example, bemoans the fact that new players have not experienced the value of in-game contingencies:

> *New players, this is not your fault, but I am so regretful that you did not come earlier. . . . Once I was so naive I emailed The 9 and asked whether they could open some old version of the server, when level 60 was the highest level. At that time the levelling up was so slow* [i.e., difficult]. *The current version has given a chance for the storm of G groups that it should not have. My point was just to let the later TBC players experience the original happiness. I knew the possibility was almost zero. In fact, it is zero.* T41

With the introduction of *WotLK*, even though the gameworld was once again replete with intense, cooperation-demanding contingencies, many players were not accustomed to recognising these in and of themselves as more valuable than the material rewards to which they lead.

It should be noted that, in C*WoW*, the hard-line materialists seem never to have gained such numbers that they constituted a majority of players. They seem rather to have existed as highly conspicuous minorities. Furthermore, *WotLK* did infuse into the gameworld a wealth of contingencies that once again privileged cooperation. Consequently, the moral cognition and spiritual experiences that many players craved and that gave *WoW* a positive distinction vis-à-vis reality could once again produced as a regular aspect of gameplay. *Produced* is the operative word here, as ranking or prominent group members often took measures to mould players' perceptions into a unified vision of gameplay that *privileged contingencies*, that was *dismissive of material rewards*, and that *celebrated sacrifices* that indicated commitment to those contingencies. In my

experiences with Coma Divine and in the testimonials, I observed the following measures.

Devaluing material goods by making them free. Coma Divine leadership instituted a number of measures that devalued in-game materials by making them as readily available as possible – by 'flooding the market,' so to speak, with gold, epics, and other desirable materials. To illustrate, when I first joined Coma Divine I was given a rather large sum of gold (500G) and several pieces of epic gear. Recall from Section 3.4.2 that most epic gear must be earned in dungeons or as a result of accruing enough points or materials. However, there are some very desirable and hard-to-acquire epic pieces that can be sold, traded, or given to other players, and I was given several of these.

Regular members also tried to give me gear for those armour slots in which they thought Autumnal was lacking. I was embarrassed by these gifts from both the leadership and the regular members, as I suspected I was being given special treatment on account of being a foreigner in C*WoW*. However, my guildmates were insistent and I soon discovered that other people admitted to the guild received the same treatment. The only caveat was that to receive such gifts new members needed to have been known and vouched for by existing members in good standing (wholly unknown persons would not receive such treatment). The guild leadership worked extremely hard and at odd hours to generate the materials necessary to keep the guild bank tabs well stocked with such finances and gear, and I occasionally saw players freely withdraw what I considered to be spectacular sums of gold or epic pieces. These measures helped to keep a materialist ethic

at bay by narrowing the major gear gaps that may have existed between members, thereby reducing jealousy, visual indices of superiority/inferiority, and arguments.[118].

In C*WoW,* the spirit of free giving was apparently not limited to Coma Divine's open bank policies. As was mentioned in Section 3.4.1, Snowtree received a sizeable hand-out from a mage outside the Ban'ethil Barrow Den. Moreover, several testimonial authors commented with great admiration on acts of free giving they had witnessed in the gameworld:

> *When I was level 15 in the 9th district I met a 70 druid. He said nothing but gave me 200G and told me 'You will inherit the spirit of the Alliance.' At that time I thought I had won the lottery, but I did not understand the deep meaning of what he said. Nor do I remember his name. I want to say thank you. If I could go back* [in time] *I would never take this money. I would tell him stay with me and fight together!* T76

> *The guild master is a middle-aged man of 50 years old. I respect him. He doesn't allow any guild members to participate in G groups. He finished reading all the Warcraft novels and his equipment is the worst of all the hunters of our guild. He has led more than 200 people to experience the real WoW. And he said, the WoW will keep updating and the equipment will keep updating, in the end the only thing that will not be updated is friendship. And this is the only gift the game brought me.* T41

Judging by these testimonial quotes, it would seem that free giving not only served to devalue material goods by making them more available, but was also a way to purge oneself of distractions from friendship-building activities, or, as T41 terms it, '*the real WoW*.'

[118]Throughout my years in NA*WoW* I had not witnessed anything quite like Coma Divine's open-bank policies. On the contrary, most NA*WoW* guilds to which I have belonged have been very stingy with their (usually few) resources. It is perhaps because guild banks were so collectively broke that the *Cataclysm* expansion implemented a taxation system of sorts on guild members (when players loot corpses, a percentage of the funds that have been looted now automatically goes to the guild bank).

Preserving contingencies by forbidding contingency-eliminating practices. In Coma Divine and, I am sure, in most C*WoW* guilds, game hacks were strictly forbidden. As noted in Section 4.3.1, hacks eliminate contingencies by giving the hacker enormous advantages over other players. Like T41's guild, Coma Divine also prohibited participation in G groups, which were openly discussed as a bastardised version of gameplay. Players could be expelled from the guild for using hacks or G groups. Finally, while Coma Divine did not expressly forbid players from partaking in 'fast food' (*kuaican*; 快餐), this practice was strongly frowned upon.

Fast food is a levelling technique whereby a high-level character runs one or several lowbies through a low-level dungeon, killing everything in the lowbies' paths and yielding experience points in the process. To illustrate, when players start new characters they generally want to level them to endgame as quickly as possible, and running lower-level dungeons usually yields the most experience points per minute. Different lower-level dungeons are intended for different levels of characters. For example, the five-man dungeon Zul'Farrak is intended for characters between levels 46 and 49. Players below 39 cannot enter, while players above 49 can enter but this will result in fewer experience points for the rest of the group. For example, a Zul'Farrak team consisting entirely of members within the 46-49 range may generate 100 experience points[119] for each player for each trash mob killed, but if a 70 substitutes into the Zul'Farrak group each player may receive only 20 experience points per trash mob killed. However, in terms of experience per minute, this substitution still works in the lowbies' favour. The powerful 70 can simply run through the entire dungeon, enticing hordes of mobs to chase him/her,

[119] These figures are only estimations.

and then, once the mobs are clustered tightly around him/her, cast an 'area of effect' (AoE) spell – a spell that damages every target falling within a certain radius or line of trajectory. Within seconds, a level 70 character can AoE dozens of mobs, resulting in an avalanche of experience for the lowbies. In effect, a dungeon that should have taken one hour and yielded, say, 100K experience points, took only ten minutes and yielded 33K experience. Accordingly, within the hour the player could run the dungeon multiple times, generating more experience than could be generated in one run with like-levelled characters.

Fast food, though an expedient means of levelling, robs the levelling process of any challenges that require serious cooperation. There is nothing for the lowbies to do except wait for the 70 to finish dispatching the dungeon's mobs and bosses. Snowtree participated in several fast food groups, as I was eager to level him to endgame as soon as possible. On one occasion the complete lack of contingencies was underscored when my fellow lowbie teammates took off all their gear, thereby divesting themselves of any ability to function in combat, and jumped around naked at the dungeon entrance while the 70 ran it.

Players with high-level Coma Divine characters commonly rebuffed requests from lowbies to provide fast food and scorned others for engaging in it elsewhere (high-level characters will often sit outside dungeon entrances and try to sell fast food to passer-by lowbies). Players were explicitly encouraged to recognise the spirit or essence of the game and go assemble a group of like-levelled players if they wished to run a dungeon. The only exception I witnessed to this general contingency-preserving rule was that guild

leadership would occasionally help lowbies complete difficult, obscure quests for which it was especially hard to recruit like-levelled teammates.

Additionally, at Jianghan University I was several times invited by students who knew I played *WoW* to start a character on their server, with their guild. On two occasions I was advised as a concomitant to the invitation that fast food was not allowed (possibly because students knew I was rather pressed for time and perhaps suspected I would request fast food from their guildmate colleagues). By forbidding or stigmatising fast food, guild leaders kept guild members trained on '*the real WoW*': the contingency *stuff* of moral cognition.

Promoting *WoW*'s contingencies through costly sacrifices. Dungeon raids and battlegrounds, the gameworld's premier source of contingencies, were sometimes pitted against the real world's offerings in circumstances that required a player choose one or the other. Some guilds had strict 'dungeon-run' schedules that guild leaderships expected players to observe or face being kicked out. For example, a guild may have a dungeon calendar and each player may be required to sign up for one or two dungeon runs a week. Players are expected to show up for these runs even if significant real-world responsibilities, such as exams or family outings, arise. In fact, as T29 and T72 point out, there was often a glorification of or conspicuous displays of respect for players who made sacrifices in the real world to attend dungeon runs:

> *I overheard the* [guild] *captain blame someone with a very insulting tongue for not showing up* [for the dungeon run] *and the captain said 'I have class and I come.' And other people said, 'I have examinations and didn't take them, I just came here for the game.' That behaviour is so glorified and respectable.* T29

> *People who devote much of their time to the game must not regard it as just a game, but as the reflection of another world. . . . A team member should feel*

> *guilty for not participating in team activities. Sometimes a guild master like me when unable to come* [for a dungeon raid] *will always bear in mind how to make it up to the other members. Everybody should be responsible in the game!!* T72

Coma Divine did not have such a rigid dungeon run schedule, but I did witness guildmates being cheered in guild chat and over YY for choosing to participate in a dungeon raid or a battleground (I cannot recall anything else) in preference to real-world commitments – for example, by cancelling dinner plans with a girlfriend or putting off study till the next day.

Though I doubt there was a conscious design behind these sacrifices – I am confident, in other words, that players chose *WoW* over real-life commitments simply because they wanted to continue playing or to avoid upsetting friends – these highly visible, ballyhooed sacrifices served to socially enshrine *WoW*'s positive distinctions vis-à-vis real-world responsibilities. In CSR terms, these were 'costly signals,' since a failed exam can be costly to one's grade, to one's relationship with parents, and so on (Sosis & Alcorta, 2008, p. 113). Such signals indicate a commitment to the in-game activities that generate moral cognition and spiritual experiences. Subsequent celebrations made these positive distinctions still more salient.

(4.8) Conclusion

While Chapter 3 sought to illustrate some of *WoW*'s capacities for cross-cultural appeal, this chapter has endeavored to show why those particular capacities were actively cultivated by a sample of C*WoW* players as defining characteristics of gameplay. Following Steinkuehler (2006), I have found it helpful to look beyond the game artefact and into the 'mangle' of social, economic, and technological concomitants players bring

with them to the gameworld in order to better understand experiences pursued in the gameworld. The mangle articulated here – i.e., extinction threats extending from government mouthpieces, parents, and the Chinese national education system – motivated players to pursue gameplay experiences that effected group cohesion in lieu of, or as superordinate to, experiences informative of individual accomplishment. Specifically, the mangle articulated here motivated players to focus on the aspects of gameplay outlined in Chapter 3, as these yielded the moral sentiment necessary for greater cohesion. These also yielded Azeroth positive distinctions vis-à-vis contemporary society in the forms of (a sense of) moral accomplishment and related spiritual experiences. This chapter has illustrated how cultivating gameplay in this manner qualifies the game as a 'religion-like tool' for group cohesion. In addition, the mangle motivated players to engage in 'fundamentalist' dynamics that served to reduce variability in perceptions of those positive distinctions and to champion costly sacrifices that upheld those positive distinctions. These fundamentalist dynamics kept players' focus trained tightly on those aspects of gameplay that would yield the experiences necessary to preserve *WoW*'s positive distinction and, accordingly, help maintain the continuity of in-game player associations.

These findings are tentative. Additional research would be necessary, for example, to establish an unequivocal causal link between defection pressures experienced and measures taken to cultivate in-game spirituality. Nevertheless, the data presented here are instructive on this dissertation's overarching concern, articulated in Section 1.8.1, to illuminate factors that contribute to the emergence of cross-culturally recurrent behaviours commonly identified as 'religious.' As is demonstrated here, extinction

threats emanating from out-groups may motivate group members to cultivate a concept or artefact rich in evolutionarily salient opportunities for moral cognition for especially pure instances of moral sentiment that effect greater group cohesion and that yield positive distinctions in the forms of (a sense of) moral superiority and spiritual rewards. These findings will be revisited and fit to a Durkheimian framework in Chapter 6.

The next chapter, however, turns to an examination of the merger experiences introduced in Section 4.2. As was shown in Section 4.1, there are interpretive precedents in Chinese literatures that may motivate an identification of moral sentiment with spiritual significance. But the merger experiences indicate that something more than just moral sentiment is operant in some in-game spiritual experiences. What are these merger experiences, and how can they be accounted for at the cognitive level? To gain a fuller understanding of how spirituality emerges from secular artefacts, the next chapter examines these questions.

Chapter 5 – *WoW* as a Platform for Collective Effervescence as Moral Flow

This chapter examines relationships between gameplay mechanisms and cognitive processes that may inform the soul merger experiences outlined in Section 4.2. T79 provides the best example of these soul merger experiences:

> *I always think that playing a character in the game is playing the soul of a person. When you are playing the game with your heart the departing and reunion of your soul will have bound with the soul of the character and you will realise the nature and the character of human beings.* T79

Reports such as T79's beg several questions relevant to this dissertation's superordinate aim to understand how 'religious' phenomena emerge from secular materials. Were players actually experiencing something roughly analogous to the soul transfers/migrations commonly reported in Africa and parts of South America (Cohen, 2007)? If so, how common were these experiences? They are only rarely suggested in the testimonials, and to my knowledge Coma Divine guildmates never discoursed on soul transfers. On the other hand, the testimonial prompt hadn't specifically asked players whether or not they had experienced such things; and discussions in the Coma Divine guild chat rarely drifted into introspective monologues on any subject. Supposing a number of players were in fact experiencing a sense of merger with the gameworld, how could these experiences be conceptualised at the cognitive level? Since the merger descriptions were always attended by discourse on cooperation and friendship, moral cognition would seem to be implicated at one level – but what else? Specifically, how is it possible that one's sense of self may be experienced as dissolved into its surroundings?

And what properties of the *WoW* artefact make it a competent platform for these merger experiences? Answers to these questions will help further illuminate how cross-culturally recurrent 'religious' phenomena may emerge from a secular game artefact.

This chapter addresses these matters as follows. First, Section 5.1 identifies the soul merger reports as examples of a cross-culturally recurrent phenomena described by Durkheim as 'collective effervescence.' This section illustrates that the soul merger descriptions resemble Durkheim's descriptions of collective effervescence. It is also pointed out that certain emotional concomitants to Durkheim's collective effervescence – for example, a reassuring sense of moral certainty and a comforting sense of being a part of something larger than oneself – are desired by Chinese urban youth coming up through the national education system. Consequently, in-game experiences look like collective effervescence and, by Durkheim's reasoning, one would expect the Chinese urban youth sampled here to be (especially) motivated to seek collective effervescence.

By identifying these in-game phenomena as collective effervescence, the relevant mind science literatures can be consulted for insights into why *WoW* may be a competent platform for these experiences. Section 5.2 reviews one prominent cognitive explanation for collective effervescence – Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' (1980). The flow concept outlines a mechanism that can account for merger experiences and enhanced awareness of one's soul, spirit, and so on. It is pointed out that videogames are well suited to facilitating flow experiences, hence flow may provide a partial cognitive explanation for reports like T79's. However, flow cannot be a comprehensive explanation of collective effervescence or of T79's experience if for no other reason than that flow experiences do not necessarily entail moral concomitants (e.g., one can flow while assembling a model

aeroplane or even while 'flaming' or 'griefing' others in *WoW*). Therefore, the flow concept is here modified slightly by proposing that what is occurring in C*WoW* soul mergers, and perhaps in collective effervescence generally, is what will be termed here *moral flow* – or, a flow state that is infused with positive affective outputs from the moral foundations. Accordingly, tasks – such as Durkheimian rituals, or tanking in C*WoW* – that catalyse a flow state *and* moral cognition perhaps result in moral flow, or collective effervescence.

Section 5.3 presents survey findings that support the hypothesis that moral flow is evident within C*WoW* and that these experiences are identified as *spiritual* experiences. In effect, this survey supports the argument made here that in-game merger experiences are collective effervescence equivalents (or close analogues) and advances moral flow for future empirical attention. Finally, Section 5.4 summarises these findings and discusses how they are relevant to dissertation's superordinate aims.

(5.1) Collective Effervescence and In-game Soul Mergers – Descriptive and Functional Similarities

Recall from Section 2.3 that for Durkheim a society's religious concepts represent the sum total of that society's moral values. Recall also that Durkheim argues that societies maintain their internal stability and coherence through religious rituals, wherein ritual participants act out those moral values through exertions that generate emotions and moral feelings. These feelings 'spread to all the other mental states that occupy the mind' (Durkheim, 1995 [1912], p. 327); they invigorate and subsume the participant, who emerges from the ritual with a renewed reverence for the social values that order his/her society. Specifically, these emotions accomplish this function by taking on 'spiritual'

significance. Durkheim outlined a connection between experience of moral sentiment and spiritual awareness ('Our moral consciousness is like a nucleus about which the idea of the soul forms itself,' Durkheim, 1915, p. 245) that has functional implications:

> For society, this unique source of all that is sacred, does not limit itself to moving us from without and affecting us for the moment; it establishes itself within us in a durable manner. It arouses within us a whole world of ideas and sentiments which express it but which, at the same time, form an integral part of ourselves. When the Australian goes away from a religious ceremony, the representations which this communal life has aroused or re-aroused with him are not obliterated for a second. . . . In this voice which makes itself heard only to give us orders and establish prohibitions, we cannot recognise our own voices; the very tone in which it speaks to us warns us that it expresses something within us that is not of ourselves. This is the objective foundation of the idea of the soul. (1995 [1912], p. 262)

Durkheim argues then that societal order is maintained through periodic cultivation of moral emotions that charge one's soul with a renewed reverence for societal values.

Occasionally, such rituals may result in what Durkheim has termed 'collective effervescence,' which can be read as a religious ritual *par excellence* and which he captures in the following passage:

> The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them into an extraordinary height of exaltation. Every emotion expressed resonates without interference in consciousnesses that are wide open to external impressions, each one echoing the others. The initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along. And since passions so heated and so free from all control cannot help but spill over, from every side there are nothing but wild movements, shouts, downright howls, and deafening noises of all kinds that further intensify the state they are expressing. (1995 [1912], p. 217)

Though Durkheim's collective effervescence has been criticised for referring imprecisely to a broad range of phenomena (Olaveson, 2001), most would agree that the concept

refers to a state of mind that (1) is characterised by strong, usually pleasurable emotions, (2) helps reaffirm, revitalise, or lend experiential vivacity to a social group's moral values, (3) is interpreted as having 'spiritual' significance, and (4) involves a certain loss of sense of self and/or a sense of merger with the community. These are basic descriptors. However, they are roughly consistent with the soul mergers outlined in Section 4.2. The C*WoW* soul mergers are likewise characterised by high levels of moral sentiment; they too seem to reaffirm a sense of moral propriety and spiritual significance; and sometimes they result in a sense of merger with other players or the environment.

The hypothesis of a parallel between in-game soul mergers and collective effervescence is strengthened by the fact that both phenomena seem to yield similar psychological benefits. To illustrate, Durkheim conceived of collective effervescence not just as emotional ballast ensuring the continuity of a social structure, but also as a vaccine of sorts that increased one's 'immunity' (Durkheim's word) to suicide. On this matter, Durkheim was concerned about four social conditions that he believed caused increases in suicide rates. At least two of these conditions inhere in the milieus that characterise my informants' daily lives. But before these conditions can be explicated, it must be mentioned that Durkheim conceived of human beings as possessing two *consciousnesses*: an individual (*egoistic*) self, associated with perceptions and hedonistic appetites; and a social (*altruistic*) self[120], characterised by self-disinterest and a desire for attachment to something greater than oneself. This latter self has a pervasive need to belong to a well-defined social tradition that transcends the self. If this need is blocked, a despondency or existential dread that leads to suicidal tendencies may ensue.

[120] Douglas (1996 [1970]) articulates similar 'individual vs. group' natural propensities in the 'grid vs. group' framework.

Durkheim articulates two social conditions that can deny the altruistic self its need for integration with a transcendent social body and so lead to despondency. First, he writes about 'fatalistic' suicide pressures. Fatalistic suicide occurs when a society contains a surplus of highly restrictive social regulations that may be physically or geospatially prohibitive of people aggregating for the collectivist ritual actions that generate shared group sentiment and reaffirm a sense of integration with the social unit. For example, slaves, prisoners, or citizens in societies ruled by repressive regimes may by virtue of their confinement have fewer opportunities for collectivist actions and may therefore be at increased risk for suicide.

Second, Durkheim wrote about 'anomic' suicide brought about by a condition of 'anomie,' or moral confusion, said to inhere in societies undergoing rapid change. First introduced in *Division of Labour*, 'anomie' is given extended treatment in *Suicide* (1951, [1897]), wherein the term is (1) defined as a decline in those powers of society that regulate social needs and wants, and (2) implicated in a sense of purposelessness and a corresponding tendency towards suicide. To illustrate, Durkheim argues that every society has 'regulatory powers' (usually religions, but also including families and political organisations) that define societal values in clear-cut terms. The regulatory powers set restraints on the appetites of the egoistic self by justifying power structures (e.g., class structures) and the distribution of resources, and by linking social desires to the available means for attaining those desires (e.g., by teaching that hard work, not theft, is the path to prosperity). The regulatory powers illustrate right and wrong in a clear-cut manner that puts checks on the appetites of the egoistic self.

In times of great change, however, the regulatory powers suffer. According to Durkheim, regulatory powers suffer especially during industrialisation as economic power relations begin to supplant those of religion and the latter's moral codes fall into decay. When this happens, people's 'immunities' to suicide decrease, for several reasons. The reason most relevant to this discourse is that people may now be unclear as to *what counts as moral.* Without a clear-cut menu of societal values, it is impossible for people to gather in reaffirmation of those values and generate shared moral sentiment. Consequently, people's altruistic selves, lacking opportunities for ritual actions, may become dangerously removed from a sense of integration with a transcendent social body.

Yet both the fatalistic and the anomic pressures point to a shared underlying cause of suicide: a lack of shared moral sentiment that implies inclusion in a transcendent social order. Bereft of shared moral sentiment, the altruistic self suffers despondency. By Durkheim's reasoning, in these circumstances people should be highly motivated to seize the opportunity for collective effervescence (should one present itself) in order to generate moral sentiment and to merge into the collective. In the following passages, it will be argued that both of these pressures are present in contemporary China. Though the data presented say nothing about suicide *per se*[121], a general moral confusion and/or misery stemming from a lack of shared moral sentiment is discernible.

[121] Some of the testimonials presented in chapters 2 and 3 promote *WoW* as an antidote for loneliness and moral confusion in ways that seem to confirm Durkheim's recognition of these negative experience states as casual factors leading to suicide. For example, T30's statement '*We are not just playing, but living*' implies that without the game, there may be no life. Nevertheless, this dissertation does not intend to suggest that playing *WoW* has or could decrease Chinese suicide rates. This section aims to illustrate that the ethnographic data here are symptomatic of social dynamics identified by Durkheim as motivating a need for collective effervescence. Whether *not* experiencing collective effervescence obtained in *WoW* or elsewhere, would motivate actual suicides is beyond the point.

The fatalistic pressures levied on Chinese high school students are considerable. Students often arrive at school at 6:45am, leave at 9:15pm, and then continue to study at home till midnight or 1am. Every student except one[122] whom I interviewed on the subject described intense feelings of loneliness and isolation in high school. For example, Interviewee 6, a good student, talks about his senior year (the interviewee is speaking in English).

> *[It is] Torture. Especially last year because many students who work hard can work much harder. . . . From morning to 6 o'clock until 10 o'clock maybe you are always studying. Day after day we have to do tests and homework. . . . I hated it but I had no choice.* I6

And the testimonials also touched on the fatalistic pressures of the school system:

> *Being different from other countries, the situation in China makes the adolescents here have greater longing to communicate with others. They do not have enough leisure time or various recreations like the foreigners. What they have is the pressure to study. They rarely communicate with their classmates and some of them hardly talk to their parents. . . . It is horrible for someone who cannot communicate; it will cause extreme anxiety or even horror. But the highly social aspects of the game made them feel that they are still in this world and not isolated*. T84

Students are so busy in high school that, during the year leading up to the *gaokao,* they may be discouraged even from playing basketball in break times, which are instead spent napping (some bring pillows to class) in order to restore their strength for additional study.

Societal trends and considerable ethnographic evidence also suggest anomic pressures are present in the lives of Chinese urban youth. Regarding trends, there is China's rapid

[122] This lone student who liked high school had gone to an experimental school for gifted students that adjourned classes at 4pm.

economic growth, which by Durkheim's reasoning should betoken significant change in traditional 'regulatory' powers. There are the CCP's strong-armed yet ultimately reversed moral stances on issues ranging from the 'exploitation' of capitalism to the 'backwardness' of Confucianism to the 'vulgarity' of pornography. And there is the One-Child Policy, which has produced a generation of single children in China's urban centres that lacks siblings with whom to rehearse those domestic models of moral propriety which are, following the Confucian traditions, supposed to be the bedrock of moral order in the nation-state.

Regarding ethnographic work, one can find moral confusion in contemporary China in Phillips' work on how the availability of 'a wide palette of paradigms for social behaviour' (1993, p. 277) is impacting parental strategies for dealing with children suffering from schizophrenia; in Rofel's work on 'political and social-soul searching about which kinds of desires count as "moral"' (2007, p. 35); in Yan's work about the propriety (or lack thereof) of marrying for love (Yan, 2003); in Potter and Potter's work on the 'magical failures' of Maoist-Marxism (1990, p. 74); and in the work of Jing (2000) on reversals of cultural transmission, wherein Chinese children (referred to as 'China's Little Emperors' in Jing's title) *instruct their parents* on the proper ways to consume food, technology, medicine, to name a few. Here it might also be instructive to repeat (from Section 3.2) T11's ideas on the value of *WoW* vis-à-vis contemporary Chinese society:

> *Maybe the reason why so many people are addicted to this game is because of some deeper morality and spiritual issues in real society. At this age, which is impetuous, the digital world might help people become clearer about friendship and brotherhood.* T11

The Chinese student suffering from these fatalistic and anomic pressures would, by Durkheim's reasoning, be ready to respond to a world separate unto itself, easily accessible via computer and coded with opportunities to gather and exercise moral cognition. By these lights, the mergers discussed in Section 4.2 make additional sense *as collective effervescence*. Simply put, if by Durkheim's reasoning one would expect Chinese students, or at least the subset experiencing fatalistic or anomic pressures, to be in want of collective effervescence, and if the in-game merger experiences bear resemblance to collective effervescence in form and function, then the collective effervescence concept is a suitable candidate for the exploration of those in-game merger experiences.

(5.2) Collective Effervescence at the Cognitive Level

By identifying these in-game phenomena as collective effervescence, the relevant psychological literatures can be consulted for insights into why *WoW* may be a competent platform for these experiences. Collective effervescence has generated interest in evolutionary psychology as an experience that may enhance adaptive fitness at the group level. In an article titled 'Hive Psychology, Happiness, and Public Policy,' Haidt, Seder and Kesebir (2008) revisit the general consensus that human beings evolved by multi-level selection, including group-level selection processes, and suggest that it is useful to see people as being hive creatures (e.g., like bees). By their reasoning, experiences like collective effervescence effect partial solutions to the free-rider problem outlined in Section 2.3.2 (i.e., by imbuing activities that effect group integration with experiential palatability) and help group members to cohere, like bees, into a cooperative

'superorganism' (p. S138). Consequently, evolutionary logic, wielded by Haidt and colleagues, supports the existence of something like collective effervescence.

Within psychology, Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' concept has been described as a possible cognitive mechanism for collective effervescence (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and also for Turner's 'communitas' (Olaveson, 2001). Flow refers to a state of intense, enjoyable concentration wherein people are so wholly absorbed in a task that they don't seem to notice anything else. Flow experiences are said to reduce anxiety, create confidence, and give one a sense of greater connectivity to one's environment. To this latter point, people who experience flow commonly report a sense of merger or of 'becoming one' with their task. A rock climber may feel as though he is 'one with' the mountain, or a biker may feel as though he is one with the pack:

> But if the Run begins to go well, all of us, all of us feel for the others. How can I say this? . . . When our minds become one. At such a time, it's a real pleasure. . . . When all of us become one, I understand something . . . all of a sudden I realise, 'Oh, we're one' and think, 'if we speed as fast as we can, it will become a real Run.' . . . When we realise that we become one flesh, it's supreme.' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 63)

This sense of merger is hypothesised to occur when the mind's working memory becomes so focused on a single task that there is no remaining processing power for bits of information that inform a sense of 'self.' To illustrate, Csikszentmihalyi argues that working memory can process 126 bits of information per second (it takes approximately 40 bits per second to understand what someone is saying in a casual conversation; 1990, p. 29). A small part of this 126 bits is normally dedicated to supplying consciousness with feeling tones that indicate a sense of 'being' in the world. Consider hunger: someone may become so focused on reading a novel that working memory will dedicate all its

processing power to the text and cease to process 'hunger' inputs from the relevant systems. Consequently, the reader may go for hours without feeling hunger, only to finally emerge from the flow state and discover that he/she is famished. During flow experiences, working memory ceases to process those parts of 'self' that are extraneous to the task at hand. When this happens, self-other boundaries may be experienced as more permeable (e.g., the reader may feel as though he is *in* the story), or the disappearance and sudden reappearance of self may motivate in one an increased awareness of self (or of soul, inner spirit, etc.). Flow, then, may underlie the merging aspect of collective effervescence.

The most important perquisites for flow experiences are conditions that facilitate intense concentration. Csikszentmihalyi outlines these conditions in detail, which include among other things 'a challenging activity that requires skills,' 'clear goals and feedback,' and the 'paradox of control' (not necessarily a sense of being in control, but a sense that exercising control is possible). As Csikszentmihalyi and others (McGonigal, 2011; Taylor, 2006) have noted, videogames[123] are replete with these conditions and are often referenced by participants as sources of flow experiences. McGonigal, for example, reviewing the intense flow experiences sociologist David Sudow obtained in 1983 playing the Atari game *Breakout* (similar to Atari classic *Pong*), notes:

> In the past, the deepest experiences of flow had required years of practice to achieve, or extraordinary settings. When Csikszentmilhalyi first wrote about it, he was studying *expert* players of chess, or basketball, or rock climbing, or partner dancing. . . . But, as Sudnow and millions of other early gamers discovered, videogames made it possible to experience flow almost immediately. Videogames took the traditional properties of potentially flow-inducing activities – a goal,

[123] Rituals are also commonly replete with these conditions (e.g., see 'concentration' in Boyer & Lienard, 2006).

> obstacles, increasing challenge, and voluntary participation – and then used a combination of direct physical input (the joystick), flexible difficulty adjustment (the computer algorithms), and instant visual feedback (the video graphics) to tighten the feedback loop of games dramatically. (2011, pp. 40-41)
>
> [McGonigal's italics]

Certainly *WoW*, which McGonigal has termed 'the best designed reality of all time' (2008), is likewise conducive to flow experiences. Consequently, flow is a reasonable candidate for the merger experiences reported in the testimonials.

Despite these experiential similarities, however, flow cannot be the same thing as collective effervescence for at least one important reason: the flow concept, in and of itself, does not contain any moral concomitants. Flow activities may include things such as reading a book, mountain climbing, or even working on an assembly line. These activities are frequently done in isolation and do not necessarily intersect with moral cognition. For example, solo climbing a mountain may be construable in moralistic terms – for example, as rugged individualism or as a patriotic endeavour. Yet these are meta-narratives that must be grafted onto actions – in this case, repetitive instances of pulling oneself up a rocky cliff – that, unlike, say, repetitive instances of caressing a newborn's head, do not afford inputs that will be 'relevant' (following Sperber & Wilson, 1986) to Haidt and Joseph's moral foundations. The flow concept, by itself, can potentially account for the sense of merger attendant to collective effervescence, but not the moral sentiment so crucial to the collective effervescence concept.

Yet the tasks in Durkheimian rituals are, like many of the tasks in *WoW*, centred on phenomena that intersect with MF imperatives. In *WoW*, for example, those very tasks that may swamp working memory and effect flow also require that one heal others, obey commands, etc. Accordingly, there is reason to believe that when players focus intensely

on C*WoW* game objectives, the resultant experience of flow may be suffused with moral sentiments extending from the moral foundations. Here an experience consisting of 'flow' + 'MF feeling outputs' is termed *moral flow*. To reiterate, this chapter suggests that moral flow is highly similar in experience and function to Durkheim's collective effervescence.

Is moral flow, as it has been described here, present or even common in C*WoW*? At first glance, the testimonials would seem to suggest as much. The moral flow concept may also serve to clarify further why in-game spirituality would have suffered during *TBC* Hell. If the gameworld is robbed of its contingencies, then not only is there less of a need for moral cognition, but the challenges necessary to catalyse the flow experiences are also lacking, thereby removing the sense of merger from gameplay. To test these ideas and to address the questions posed in the introduction, the following survey was undertaken.

(5.3) Survey Overview, Methods, and Results

Here again is the hypothesis: players *sometimes* have experiences in C*WoW* that (1) motivate awareness of an inner soul, essence, spirit, or life-force and (2) coincide with 'moral flow' cognitive processes (i.e., flow experiences conjoined with inference *qua* feeling outputs from the moral foundations). The null hypothesis is that players *never* have such experiences. Consequently, in this reconnaissance survey a single answer that indicates an in-game experience that (1) motivates spiritual awareness and (2) coincides

with 'moral flow' cognitive processes, will be sufficient to reject the null hypothesis and to advance the hypothesis for future analyses[124].

To test the hypothesis, the survey asked players whether they recalled any of the following from their time in C*WoW*: spiritual experiences, flow experiences, and/or experiences of moral sentiment (e.g., feelings of care, belonging, etc.). Players who reported experiencing at least two of these three categories of experience were advanced to a page that asked them to select a picture that best captured the relationship between these experiences. A picture-answer choice wherein all three experiences were superimposed was used to assess support for the hypothesis.

The survey to date has gathered only 37 completed responses, as these were what could be obtained from Oxford (following fieldwork) by asking Chinese colleagues (via the instant messaging service QQ) to forward the link to their C*WoW*-playing colleagues. Also, the representativeness of the sample is unclear. It follows that the survey results, which support the hypothesis, are not to be read as in any way conclusive. The following sub-sections outline the survey, giving special attention to its presentation of the experiential categories and the logic by which it tried to ascertain the presence or absence of soul mergers *qua* moral flow.

5.3.1. Introduction and Basic Information

The survey link transported participants to a page that welcomed them and presented a brief overview of the survey's design. Players were told that this was a survey for past

[124] This null hypothesis may seem easily falsifiable. However, it accurately reflects our pre-fieldwork understanding of *WoW* gameplay as, to my knowledge, no previous work has identified anything like spiritual moral flow experiences in *WoW*. Moreover, as pointed out in sections 1.4 and 4.1, colleagues have expressed great surprise at the possibility of these in-game experiences. Consequently, there is a need to establish basic indices of the existence of these in-game experiences.

and present C*WoW* players and that the questions were derived from previous rounds of research wherein players were asked to write testimonials describing their feelings about the game. In the survey, participants would sometimes be asked whether or not they agreed with statements that had been made by these previous participants. Players were told that this was part of a graduate student research project being conducted at the University of Oxford Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology. They were asked to click in a box if they wished to participate.

Participants who chose to participate were then advanced to the survey's first page, which asked them to provide their sex, age, location (country and city); to indicate whether they were students (and at which level) or in the workforce (a write-in box asked participants to list the profession); to name the month and year they started playing *WoW*; to list the number of level 80+ characters they possessed; to list the race, class, and role (DPS, etc.) of their primary and secondary characters; to list the number of hours they played on average (or, for past players, the number of hours they recalled playing) per week; to list the number of friends they had in-game with whom they also spent time in the real world; to indicate how many of these in-game/real-world friends they had known *first* in the real world; and to indicate where they normally accessed the game (home, Internet café, work/dorm, or other).

5.3.2. Spiritual Experiences

Participants were then advanced to a page that asked them whether they had ever had 'spiritual experiences' in the gameworld. To clarify what was meant by 'spiritual experiences,' the following examples taken directly from the testimonials were given:

Some players said they had spiritual experiences in *WoW*. For example:

A. *WoW has given me a spiritual feast.*
B. *WoW to me is a long spiritual odyssey. I have to keep walking and I should keep walking.*
C. *WoW has gradually become the spiritual thing that I rely on.*
D. *This is my spiritual home*
E. *I always think that playing a character in the game is playing the soul of a person. When you are playing the game with your heart the departing and reunion of your soul will have bound with the soul of the character and you will realise the nature and the character of human beings.*

The following question ensued:

1. Would you say that your soul is activated or invigorated by the game? Or have you ever had spiritual experiences in the game?
   a) Frequently
   b) Sometimes
   c) Rarely
   d) Never

Figure 5.1 shows the prompt as it appeared to the participants in Chinese. Note the circle to the right that reads (in Chinese) 'spiritual experiences.' Circles of different colours attended the prompts for each of the three categories of experience. In the final section, participants were asked to indicate whether their experiences overlapped. These circles were intended to help participants remember and organise the experiences being discussed.[125]

[125] Circle colours were randomly assigned. To my knowledge, there is no reason to believe that the colours presented would have an adverse affect on the survey design.

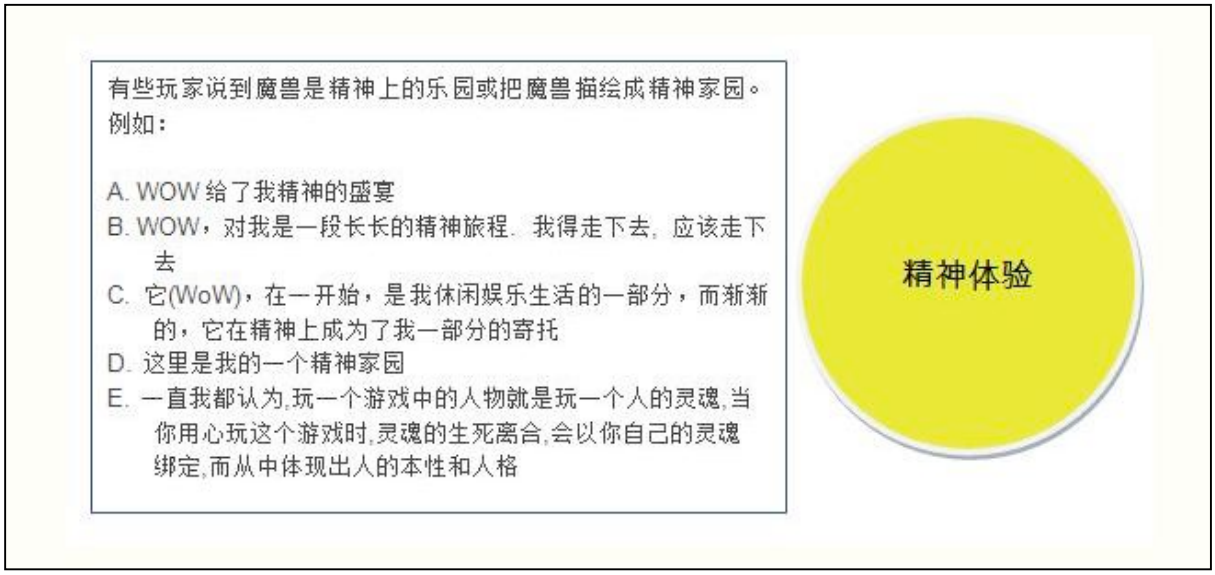


Figure 5.1. Spiritual experiences prompt.

5.3.3. Flow Experiences

Next to be ascertained was whether or not flow experiences were a regular feature of participants' gameplay. In order to test for the presence and frequency of flow experiences, a diagnostic question was derived from prompts used in previous flow surveys (Rettie, 2001; Delle Fave & Massimini, 1988). In these studies, researchers gave participants the following three descriptions of flow taken from Csikszentmihalyi's research (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982):

> 1. 'My mind isn't wandering. I am not thinking of something else. I am totally involved in what I am doing. My body feels good. I don't seem to hear anything. The world seems to be cut off from me. I am less aware of myself and my problems.'
>
> 2. 'My concentration is like breathing. I never think of it. I am really oblivious to my surroundings after I really get going. I think that the phone could ring, and the doorbell could ring, or the house burn down or something like that. When I start, I really do shut out the whole world. Once I stop, I can let it back in again.'

3. ‘I am so involved in what I am doing; I don’t see myself as separate from what I am doing.’

In these previous studies, participants were then asked whether they could recall having similar experiences when doing certain tasks. When designing this survey, however, I was concerned that presenting all three questions might contribute unnecessary reading strain to a survey that already required considerable cognitive effort. It also seemed possible that players might be confused by the presence of three questions indicating one experience (i.e., perhaps they would think each description was intended to demonstrate a different experience). Finally, the merger aspect of the descriptions needed to be salient and not overcrowded by dialogue. The solution to these concerns was to combine elements of these three descriptions into one truncated description. Here is the English version of what participants viewed:

> Sometimes people become so focused on a task (for example, reading a book or climbing a mountain) that they become completely absorbed in the task and might even feel as though they are one with the object they are working with (for example, a mountain climber may feel as though he is actually part of the mountain). In Western psychology, we call these ‘flow’ experiences because people report that they seem to ‘flow’ into their activity or task. Here is an example of someone reporting a ‘flow’ experience.
>
> A. My concentration is like breathing. I am so focused that I think the phone could ring, or the doorbell could ring, and I wouldn’t even notice. I am so involved in what I am doing that I don’t see myself as separate from what I am doing.

The following questions ensued:

1. Have you ever felt like this when playing *WoW*?
    a) Yes, very frequently
    b) Yes, sometimes
    c) Yes, just once or twice

d) Never

2. If yes, can you provide a brief example of what you might be doing in the game when you have one of these 'flow' experiences (for example, exploring or raiding)?

The second question was included to test Csikszentmihalyi's point that challenging activities are implicated in flow experiences. The survey here provides participants with two examples – exploring and raiding – indicative of two different levels of difficulty (most players would agree that exploring is usually rather easy, while raiding is usually quite difficult). Figure 5.2 shows the question prompt as it appeared to participants in Chinese.



Figure 5.2. Flow experience prompt.

5.3.4. Experiences of Moral Emotions

On the penultimate page, participants were asked whether or not they thought the game was good for moral development and in what capacities. Participants were also asked whether or not they experienced moral sentiment during gameplay:

1. Some players said they believed *WoW* was good for moral development. Do you agree?
    a) Strongly Agree
    b) Somewhat Agree
    c) Somewhat Disagree
    d) Strongly Disagree
2. If you agree, then please rate *WoW*'s value on the following aspects of moral development (just skip this question if you disagreed):
    a) Opportunities: the game gives me opportunities that I don't have in real life to perform moral actions.
    b) Clarity: the game helps me understand what it means to be a good person.
    c) Purpose: the game has helped me to find a sense of purpose in my life.
3. Do you ever experience any of the following feelings when playing the game?
    a) Feelings of 'caring' (for example, through caring for others or being cared for by others)
    b) Feelings of group pride or a sense of 'belonging' to a group (for example, to your guild or faction)
    c) Feelings of respect or admiration for a leader (for example, for an excellent player or a guild master)
    d) Feelings of satisfaction from seeing instances of 'fairness' or 'justice' (for example, through observing acts of honesty or through seeing good triumph over evil)
    e) Feelings of cleanliness or purity (for example, many players said *WoW* was a 'pure' and 'clean' land).

This page did not feature a prompt (participants were simply asked the questions above) but did still feature a coloured circle. The following circle, which reads 'experiences of morality emotions,' was positioned at the top of the page.



Figure 5.3. Experiences of morality emotions.

5.3.5. Mapping Players' Experiences

The final survey page, titled 'Mapping Your Experiences,' was designed to ascertain whether the aforementioned experiences overlapped in such a way that soul mergers *qua* moral flow would seem to be occurring in the gameworld. Participants who reported having two of the following three experiences at any frequency were advanced to this page, where they viewed the following:

> Your answers indicate that when playing *WoW* you have had at least two of the following experiences:
>
> - Spiritual experiences
> - Flow experiences
> - Experiences of morality emotions – i.e., feelings of caring, belonging, admiration, justice, and/or purity.
>
> We are trying to understand if any relationships exist between these three experiences, as they are experienced in C*WoW*. Are these experiences usually separate and unrelated (i.e., is a spiritual experience wholly different from a flow experience)? Or are they different aspects of the same thing (for example, are spiritual experiences and flow experiences usually experienced at

the same time as a single, holistic experience)? What do you think? Please select the answer below that best captures your experiences (please pick just one answer).

1. Do any of these experiences ever overlap (i.e., occur at the same time)?
   a) Spiritual experiences and flow experiences usually overlap – they are basically the same thing.
   b) Spiritual experiences and experiences of morality emotions usually overlap – they are basically the same thing.
   c) Flow experiences and experiences of morality emotions usually overlap – they are basically the same thing.
   d) All three experiences – spiritual experiences, flow experiences, and experiences of morality emotions – usually overlap. They are basically the same thing.
   e) These experiences are all separate things. There is no relationship between them.

Because the cognitive load of trying to conceptualise the temporal arrangements of past experiences was no doubt considerable, the actual question used the coloured circles that had appeared in the previous questions to assist participants in their reasoning. For example, figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 show the answer choices for C, D, and E respectively.

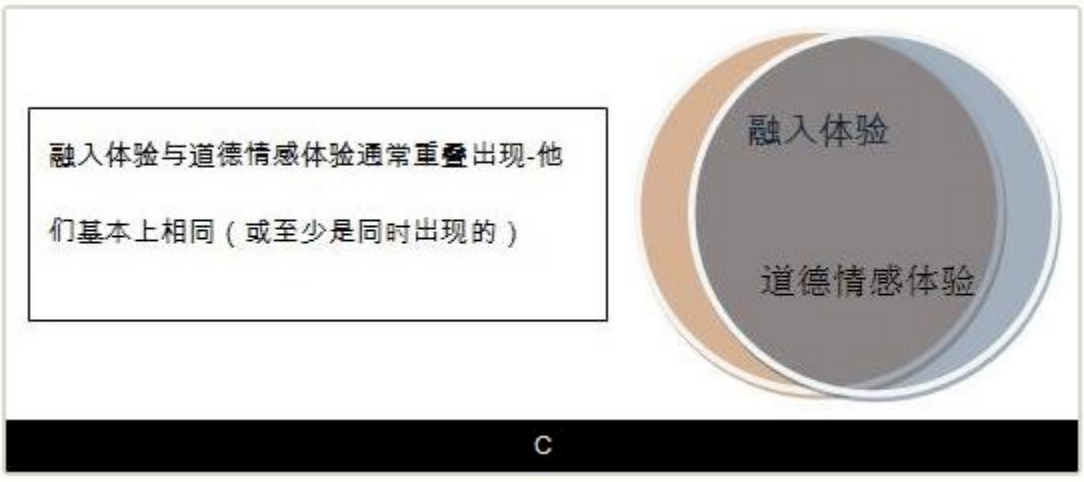


Figure 5.4. Answer C

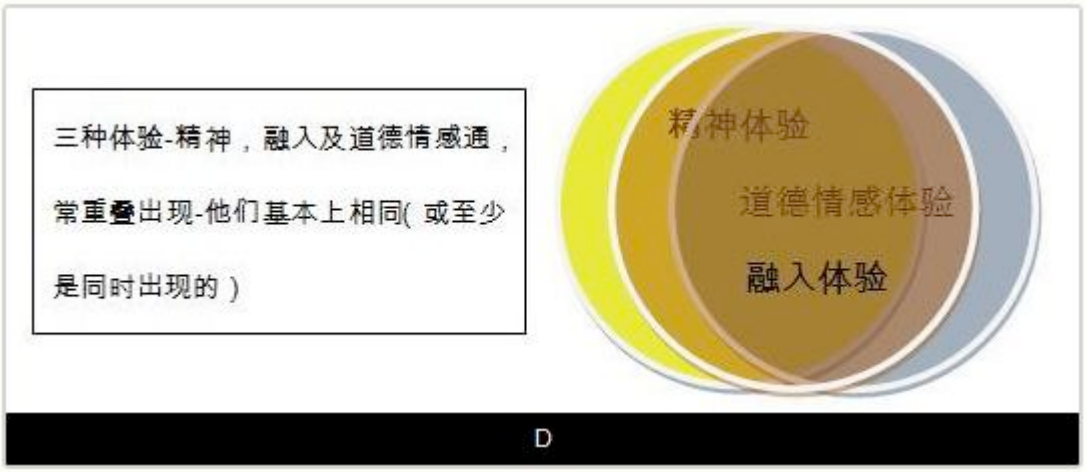


Figure 5.5. Answer D

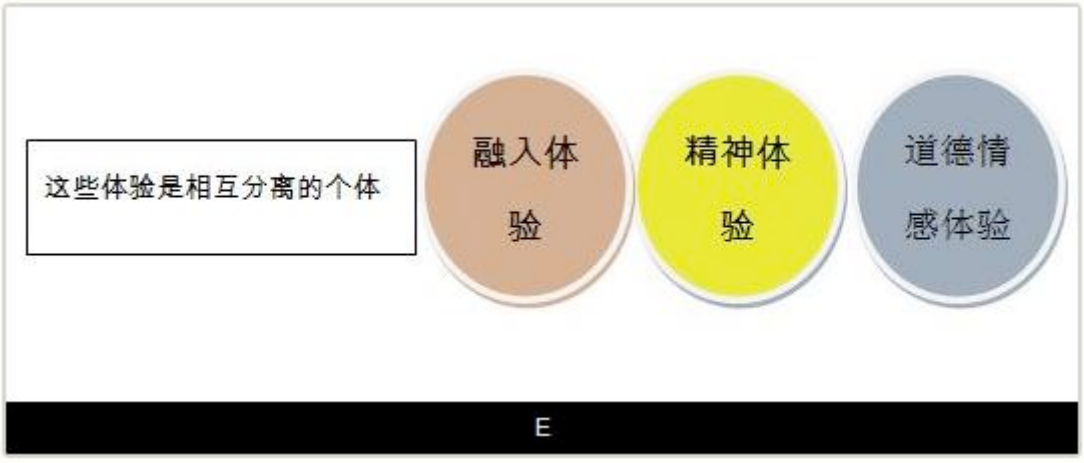


Figure 5.6. Answer E

Finally, here is a breakdown of what each answer choice indicates with respect to the hypothesis stated above.

(A) Does not support the hypothesis. Participants who select (A) indicate that they have had spiritual experiences and flow experiences, but moral sentiment does not figure in these.

(B) Does not support the hypothesis. Participants who select (B) indicate that they have had in-game spiritual experiences *qua* moral sentiment. However, because these lack the flow aspect, they do not support the hypothesis.

(C) Does not support the hypothesis. Participants who select (C) indicate that they have in-game moral flow experiences but do not recognise these as 'spiritual' experiences.

(D) Supports the hypothesis. Participants who select (D) indicate that they have in-game spiritual experiences and that these overlap with flow experiences and experiences of moral sentiment.

(E) Does not support the hypothesis. Participants who select (E) indicate that there is no connection between in-game spiritual experiences, flow experiences, or experiences of moral sentiment.

Answer Choice	**Does not support hypothesis**	**Supports hypothesis**
A	☑	
B	☑	
C	☑	
D		☑
E	☑	

Table 5.1. Breakdown of relationships between answer choices and hypothesis.

5.3.6. Results

Because only 37 responses have been gathered, the survey does not yet possess the statistical power necessary to test for interesting correlations between age brackets, class

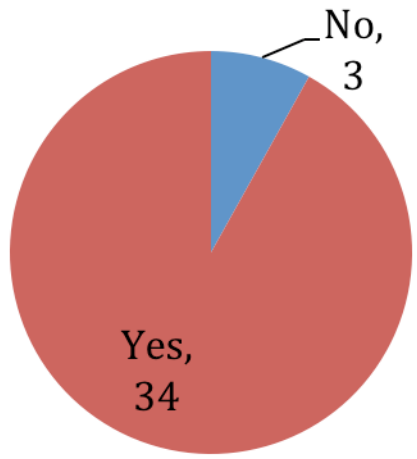
types, etc., and experiences. However, analyses here are only concerned with whether or not the spiritual *qua* moral flow experiences – represented by answer (D) in the answer choices – are being had in the gameworld *to any extent*. The data presented here are quite straightforward.

Table 5.2 gives a summary of the basic information data.

Basic Information Data at a Glance		
Category	Modal or (Average) Value	# / % of Respondents
Sex	Male	35 / 94.6%
Age	23 years old	14 / 37.8%
Country	China	37 / 100%
City	Wuhan	20 / 54.1%
Occupation	College student	22 / 59.5%
Year started playing	2005 (beta)	18 / 48.6%
# Characters level 80 or higher	1	10 / 27%
Race (main character)	Human	8 / 21.6%
Class (main character)	Paladin	9 / 24.3%
Role (main character)	DPS	21 / 56.8%
Race (secondary)	Night Elf	8 / 21.6%
Class (secondary)	Death Knight	7 / 18.9%
Role (secondary)	DPS/Heals	14 / 37.8% (for each)
Access the game at	Home	20 / 54.1%
Hours per week online	30 (average)	
Number of in-game/real-world friends	9.8 (average)	
Number of in-game/real-world friends met first in real world	7.25 (average)	
Table 5.2. Basic information.		

Figure 5.7 shows the number of players who claimed their souls were activated or invigorated by the game and the frequency with which these experiences occurred.

Would you say that your soul is activated or invigorated by the game? Or have you ever had spiritual experiences in the game?



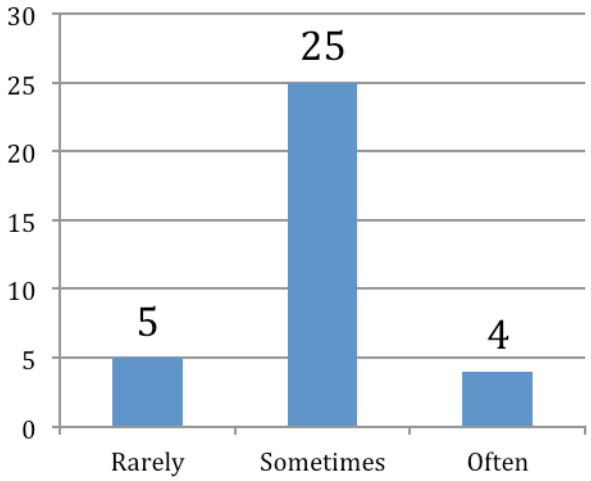
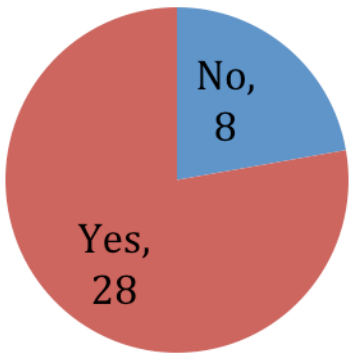


Figure 5.7. Number of players who report having in-game spiritual experiences and frequency of occurrence.

From these figures it can be seen that the vast majority of players could identify with the testimonial descriptions given in the 'spiritual' prompt and that most reported having these experiences 'sometimes.' These data suggest that *jingshen* and *linghun*-related experiences are common in C*WoW*.

Moving on to flow experiences, Figure 5.8 lists the number of players who reported having flow experiences and the frequencies with which these experiences occurred.

Have you ever felt like this [i.e., had experiences similar to the flow experience described in the example] when playing WoW?



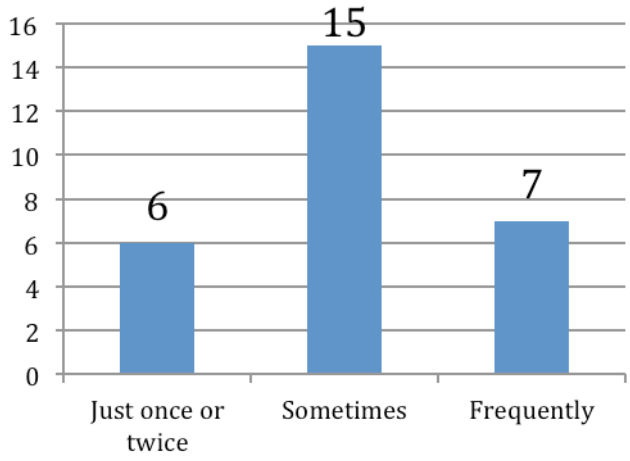


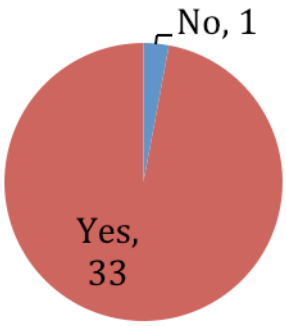
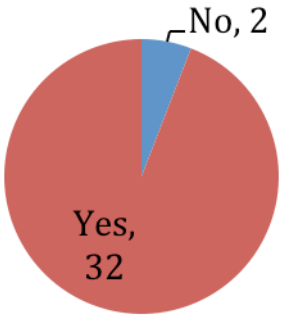
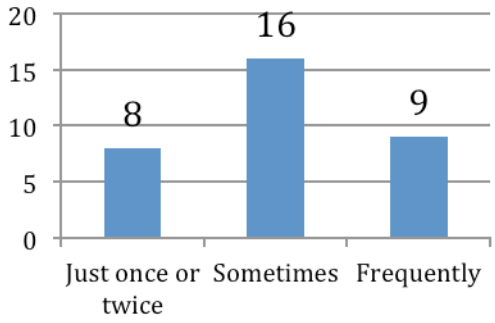
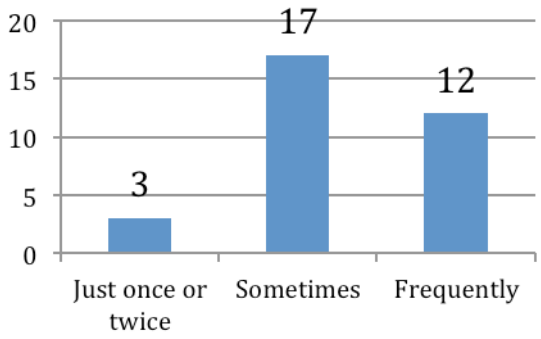
Figure 5.8. Number of players who report having in-game flow experiences and frequency of occurrence.

These figures show that flow experiences also seem to occur regularly in the gameworld. Furthermore and as Csikszentmihalyi would expect, those players who ventured to comment on what they were doing when having the flow experiences almost all listed high contingency aspects of gameplay (e.g., battlegrounds or dungeon raids). For example:

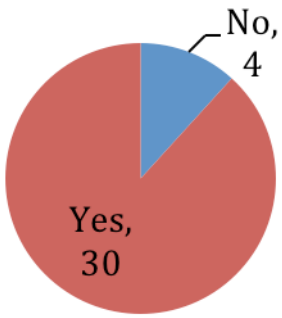
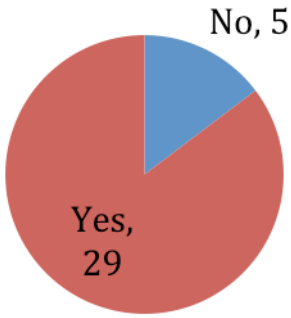
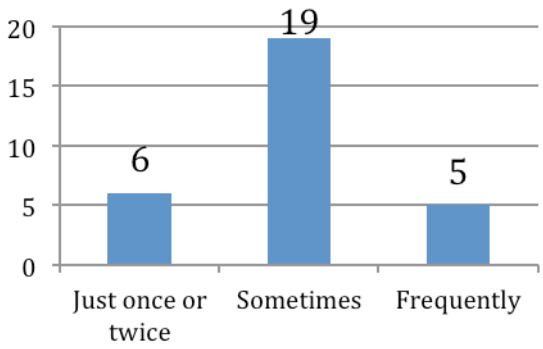
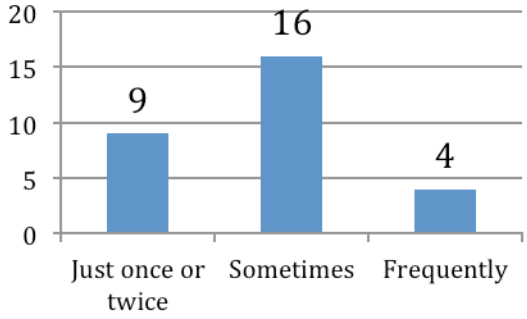
> *Being attacked or attacking other people on the battle field (it was long time ago, back when I was around level 60), or fighting those very tough bosses.*

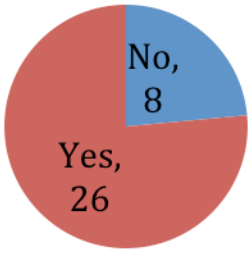
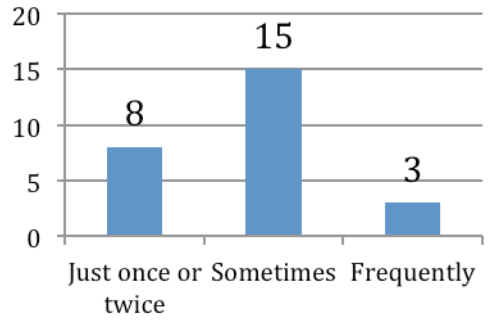
Regarding in-game experiences of moral sentiment, figures 5.9, 5.10, and 5.11 provide the relevant data.

Do you ever experience any of the following feelings when playing the game?

Feelings of caring	**Feelings of belonging**
	
	

5.9. Number of players who report having in-game feelings of caring / belonging and frequency of occurrence.

Do you ever experience any of the following feelings when playing the game?	
Feelings of respect/admiration	**Satisfaction from instances of fairness or justice**
	
	
5.10. Number of players who report having in-game feelings of respect / justice and frequency of occurrence.	

Do you ever experience feelings of cleanliness or purity when playing the game?	
	
5.11. Number of players who report having in-game feelings of cleanliness or purity and frequency of occurrence.	

As with spiritual and flow experiences, players would seem to regularly experience moral sentiments extending from the MFs. Given the testimonials presented in chapters 3 and 4, this is of course not surprising.

All three categories of experience, then, would seem to occur regularly in the gameworld. But how did players juxtapose these experiences relative to one another? Only 30 participants attempted the question, meaning that of the 37 who completed the survey, only 30 selected at least two of the above experiences *and* ventured an answer on the final question.[126] Figure 5.12 illustrates the breakdown of answer selections.

Do any of these experiences ever overlap (i.e., occur at the same time)?

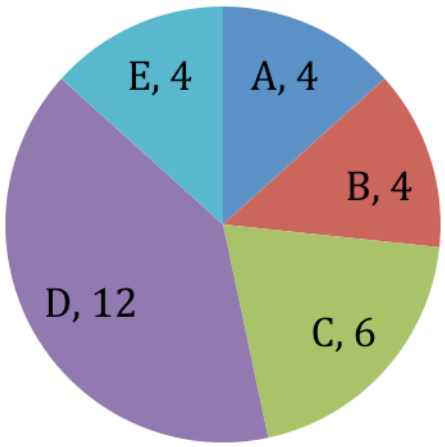


Figure 5.12. 'Mapping your experiences' answer selections.

[126] Only the basic information was required. Players could, if they so desired, progress through the survey without answering all the questions.

As can be seen here, the most popular answer, accounting for 40% of the responses, is D – the answer that supports the hypothesis by indicating that players had spiritual experiences that coincided with moral flow. C, which indicates that a player experienced moral flow but did not identify this experience as 'spiritual,' is the next most popular answer, accounting for 20% of the respondents. The remaining answers each accounted for 13.3% of the respondents.

Finally, 47.3% of respondents agreed in varying degrees that *WoW* was good for moral development. Table 5.3 gives a breakdown of participants' perceptions of *WoW*'s moral developmental capacities (per the categories provided).[127]

Aspects of Moral Development	**Definitely not**	**Not Really**	**Somewhat**	**Definitely**
Opportunities: The game gives me opportunities that I don't have in real life to perform moral actions.	6 (20.7%)	6 (20.7%)	15 (51.7%)	2 (6.9%)
Clarity: The game helps me understand what it means to be a good person.	4 (13.8%)	10 (34.5%)	11 (37.9%)	4 (13.8%)
Purpose: The game has helped me to find a sense of purpose in my life.	8 (27.6%)	7 (24.1%)	8 (27.6%)	6 (20.7%)

Table 5.3. Perceptions of *WoW*'s moral developmental capacities.

(5.4) Discussion

What do these data tell us? It should be reiterated that because the survey is statistically underpowered and of uncertain representativeness, these data amount only to suggestive reconnaissance. Nevertheless, they are suggestive on three interesting counts. First and least surprisingly, these data suggest that Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow and Haidt and Joseph's MFs are relevant to the investigation of in-game spiritual

[127] As noted above, the first moral development question asked that players skip the 'opportunities/clarity/purpose' question if they did not believe *WoW* was good for moral development. Nonetheless, although 19 people indicated *WoW* was not good for moral development, 29 people attempted this question. This may have skewed answers towards the negative values.

experiences. Players who claimed to have in-game spiritual experiences often identified these with a modified version of Csikszentmihalyi's flow prompt and/or with feelings associated with Haidt and Joseph's MFs. Second, these data suggest that the soul mergers described in Section 4.2, or something similar, are not idiosyncratic but, rather, exist with some frequency for at least a subset of players. Sixteen (53.3% of) participants who responded to the final question claimed to have in-game spiritual experiences that overlapped with merger experiences.

Third, the data are sufficient to reject the null hypothesis. Twelve (40% of) participants who responded to the final question claimed to have in-game experiences that (1) motivate spiritual awareness and (2) coincide with 'moral flow' cognitive processes. Furthermore, the 'moral development' data in Table 5.3 suggest that these spiritual, moral-flow experiences can be interpreted as instances of collective effervescence with the normal Durkheimian concomitants. Though these Table 5.3 data do not quite match the level of moral approval expressed in some of the testimonials, they are still impressive: 51.7% of respondents agreed that *WoW* to some degree taught them what it means to be a good person and 48.3% credited the game with helping them find a sense of purpose in life. In effect, these data lead to a reasonable conclusion that collective effervescence, or some close analogue, is occurring in C*WoW*.

One provocative question that remains unanswered is: why is moral cognition seemingly necessary for an experience to be cognised as *spiritual*? The prevalence of moral sentiment in spiritual experiences is somewhat surprising given that the flow concept outlines in clear terms an ontological basis for enhanced spiritual awareness. What does moral cognition add to further enhance that spiritual awareness such that 16

out of 20 who attempted the final question identified the spiritual experience with moral sentiment? Within the present contexts, it would be easy to justify moral cognition as incidental to spiritual experiences given that in *WoW* flow experiences are commonly obtained through tasks that also generate moral sentiment. However, that a moral-spiritual association is clearly evident in the world's major religious traditions (and, of course, the testimonials featured in previous chapters) suggests the relationship is not incidental.

The concepts presented in this dissertation may ultimately yield answers. It is possible, for example, that the thermal sensations (e.g., warmth[128]) or other embodied concomitants to emotional processing outlined in Chapter 2 and touched upon in Section 4.2 may be necessary to fully activate spiritual awareness. Another possibility is that the inferential outputs from the MFs are somehow especially commandeering of working memory and are themselves occupying memory to such an extent that flow ensues. In other words, in-game activities may occasionally reach sufficient intensity to push working memory to the flow threshold and, consequently, spiritual awareness (as evidenced perhaps by the four respondents who identified spiritual experiences with flow but not with moral sentiment). More regularly, however, it may be the case that inferential outputs from the MFs are necessary to push working memory to the flow threshold. Future research will hopefully be instructive in these regards.

In summary, considered within the wider context of this dissertation's aim to illuminate factors that contribute to the emergence of cross-culturally recurrent behaviours commonly identified as 'religious,' this chapter's findings further illustrate

[128] See, for example, T53 in Section 4.2 and the discussion of oxytocin in Section 2.3.1.

why the *WoW* artefact may be especially suitable to the production of experiences cognised as having spiritual significance. In addition to yielding 'pure' moral sentiment, the game is highly competent at facilitating flow experiences that enable experiences of merger with relevant parts of the game environment (e.g., other players). Thus, on the strength of the game's unusual, religion-like competence in effecting these two experiences which when combined resemble collective effervescence, players occasionally engage this secular artefact for transcendent experiences. These findings will be contextualised with findings from chapters 3 and 4 in the next chapter in a summary assessment of gameplay as Durkheimian ritual.

Finally, in a previous review concerns were raised that the survey design might bias participants towards the types of answers that would affirm the central hypothesis. It may be possible that the design directs players' attentions to experiences of moral feelings, or flow, or spiritual impressions that they might not otherwise think about, and in this way the design could bias players toward affirming the existence of such experiences. Nevertheless, the testimonials strongly suggest that such experiences are present in C*WoW* and there is little reason to think the survey unfairly biases players to falsely recall that these three experiences were co-occurring. In the 'mapping your experiences' section, four out of five answer choices *do not* support the hypothesis that the three experiences co-occur. Here, the design introduces just as much bias that the three are experienced independently or only pairwise.

In the same review it was also pointed out that a true collective effervescence likely requires some 'critical mass' of engaged participants. Therefore, how can one have collective effervescence if only 40-50% of participants are joined in? The logic of this

concern is surely valid, but it should be pointed out that the figures presented above almost certainly do not correspond to a specific in-game guild or player association. It is possible or likely that some participants knew one another and played *WoW* together, given that participants were recruited through friends of friends. Yet the survey was initially distributed to a variety of acquaintances, most of whom were unlikely to know one another. Consequently, it is more likely that the participant body is constituted of small pockets of friends. Hence the 12 players who recognise spiritual experiences as moral flow may be friends who play exclusively with one another, thereby ensuring fertile participatory grounds for collective effervescence. Or, these 12 may be wholly unknown to one another. Unfortunately, there is no way to discern player associations from the data collected. Consequently, while the 'critical mass' question is an intriguing one that should be considered in future project designs, it cannot be addressed by the present survey.

Chapter 6 – *WoW*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Ritual

Here it is a complete social system. A complete morality. . . . This [*WoW*] *is what the real world should become.* T35

As stated in Chapter 1, this project was launched in pursuit of answers to two broad questions. The first question sought a partial explanation for the game's tremendous cross-cultural success: What aspects of *WoW* are particularly 'relevant' (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) to human minds? The second question was inspired by the central game studies aim to illuminate the roles games play in our lives: How do extra-game contexts influence the types of experiences players seek in the game? The data obtained during fieldwork indicated that C*WoW* players were utilising the game for experiences (e.g., spiritual experiences) and social functions (e.g., group cohesion) that resembled cross-culturally recurrent 'religious' phenomena. In consequence, the original objectives were pursued with the added objective of illuminating in-game capacities and extra-game contexts that motivate the emergence of these 'religious' phenomena from a secular object. To these combined ends, this dissertation has made three main arguments. First, Chapter 3 argued that one way to account for the popularity of C*WoW* is to view it as an environment rich in moral inferential potential. Second, Chapter 4 argued that, due largely to extinction threats emanating from government mouthpieces and concerned parents, C*WoW* players used the gameworld as a 'religion-like tool' for group cohesion. Third, Chapter 5 argued that reports of soul merger experiences obtained in C*WoW* can

be understood at the cognitive and functional level as instances of collective effervescence *qua* moral flow.

These three points lead to a reasonable conclusion that in the contexts sampled here, high-contingency aspects of gameplay may be viewed as Durkheimian rituals. Like Durkheimian rituals, in the contexts sampled here an intense dungeon raid or battleground contest: (1) Generates 'pure' moral sentiment from all the facilities for moral cognition hypothesised by Haidt and Joseph to exist in human minds; (2) Is at the centre of the group's capacity to survive external and internal extinction threats; (3) Helps to effect in participants a sense of togetherness, moral clarity, and purpose; and (4) Can motivate a sense of integration with a transcendent social order. The testimonials show players believe that these raids and battle contests can be used to regenerate their social order anew – to re-calibrate their lives and even contemporary Chinese society (generally) towards those pure forms of human interaction that exist only in the gameworld. Once again, in the social contexts and high-contingency in-game circumstances outlined in previous chapters, C*WoW* gameplay approximates in experience and social function a Durkheimian ritual.

The preliminary implications of this assessment for those disciplines listed in Section 1.8 are spelled out in these final sections.

(6.1) CSR and the Naturalness Theory of Religious Cognition

This conclusion supports the 'naturalness theory of religious cognition' (Boyer, 1994) by demonstrating that human minds will find a way, even in the absence of extant religious traditions, to generate the types of concepts and partake in the types of experiences that in Western academies have traditionally fallen within the cultural

jurisdiction of 'religion.' Regarding the Chinese context examined here, extant religious traditions were seemingly either not prevalent in university environs or else not widely observed by the researcher's student colleagues, as evidenced by the low identification and participation rates in the survey results presented in Section 1.7.8. Additionally, many Chinese students, especially high school students, were required to spend the vast majority of their waking hours in school environs that were largely prohibitive of extra-curricular activities. Yet despite these restrictions, the players discussed in this dissertation found a way to create a Durkheimian ritual within a game artefact that contained the necessary cognitive affordances.

This dissertation also speaks to CSR interests in understanding how religious phenomena may have emerged in our ancestral past by identifying factors that seemed to motivate this emergence of Durkheimian rituals from a secular artefact. The previous chapters suggest the following factors are implicated: (1) A wider environment characterised by 'anomic' and 'fatalistic' suicide pressures; (2) A collection of concepts that is replete with evolutionarily salient opportunities for moral cognition; (3) A platform that enables group constituents to enact those concepts in such a way that powerful levels of moral sentiment and (3a) flow experiences are generated; and (4) Out-group extinction threats that motivate constituents to focus on that collection of concepts. This dissertation leads to a reasonable, if tentative, hypothesis that where these conditions obtain, Durkheimian rituals may emerge from secular materials.

(6.2) Mediatisation of Religion

The preceding chapters outline one plausible reason for why the 'mediatisation of religion' is occurring. Simply put, games such as *WoW* may be competent in serving

experiences and social functions that have historically fallen within the jurisdiction of religious traditions. While religious traditions themselves may suffer with advances in industrialisation, moral pluralism, modernity, and so on, the naturalness theory of religious cognition and the testimonial data presented here advise that humans will still seek the spiritual experiences and means to cooperation (historically) obtainable in cross-culturally recurrent forms of religiosity. Accordingly, games such as *WoW* may cater to these human propensities where religious traditions are either absent, inconvenient, or lacking the necessary cognitive affordances.

Within the wider context of media studies, the mediatisation of religion and this project in particular point to the need to reconsider our approach to examining the roles popular media, and games in particular, play in moral development in adolescence. The findings outlined here suggest that, as a complement to studies that seek to determine whether a game *causes* certain behaviours, researchers should also be examining how and why players *cultivate* the game in the ways they do and whether or not popular games that have been shown to motivate undesirable effects in some circumstances might, in other circumstances, motivate positive effects. As this dissertation has shown, a popular MMOG that has been decried for, as Vito put it, '*turning people into assholes*' (Vito, 2009; Section 1.4) can also, as T46 put it, teach '*the details of being a good person*' (Section 3.2). Recognising this dual capacity in *WoW* could yield a wealth of practical applications. For example, parents, rather than banning popular but violent games such as *WoW* from the household, could be instructed on how to assist their children in cultivating the game in a way that emphasises in-game moral cognition to the satisfaction of some standard of development. In summary, future research would do well to attend to

ways in which popular games that may yield negative effects *can also* can be cultivated in ways that yield positive effects.

(6.3) Game Studies

This dissertation makes two primary contributions to game studies. First, in support of Steinkuehler (2006), analyses presented here suggest that in order to better 'explain the role of games in our lives' (Consalvo, 2009, p. 409) researchers must look beyond the game and into the 'mangle' of extra-game agencies that ultimately inform in-game experiences. This dissertation has argued that extinction pressures extending from *beyond* the game affected the types of activities that players pursued *in* the game. This point can be seen as a reiteration of the point made in Section 6.2 above that gameworld stimuli and mechanics are not the only agencies determining player experiences.

Second, while game stimuli/mechanics may not be the only agencies determining player experiences, they do have causal powers. This dissertation has illustrated that one way to give a casual account for the cross-cultural popularity of certain videogames is to connect aspects of gameplay to cognitive mechanisms designed by evolution to effect fitness-enhancing behaviours. In this project, player testimonials reveal an Azeroth replete with evolutionarily salient opportunities for moral cognition, as defined by Haidt and Joseph (2004; 2007). Considered in the light of Sperber and Wilson's (1986) 'relevance' concept, these observations demonstrate one particular capacity for cross-cultural appeal that may help explain the game's worldwide success. Finally, analyses presented here complement Nardi's (2010) take on *WoW*'s cross-cultural popularity, outlined in Section 1.8.3, by offering a more detailed treatment of the sources, ontologies, and motivational dynamics that may inform player experiences.

(6.4) Conclusion

In summary, this dissertation has produced defensible claims regarding the game's moral 'relevance,' its utilities for effecting group cohesion, and its competence as a platform for collective effervescence *qua* moral flow. This chapter in particular has sought to illustrate how these claims may be relevant to the aforementioned disciplines. By my reasoning, these findings suggest exciting new avenues of research. For example, can the causal factors outlined in Section 6.1 be validated in subsequent studies? If so, which factors are primary? Could these primary factors be refined and installed in international gaming platforms, wherein North Americans, Europeans, Asians, and so on could experience collective effervescence together? Regarding the mediatisation of religion, can popular games such as *WoW* be used to supplement religious instruction on moral propriety? For example, would parental emphasis on the importance of in-game healing activities result in players' increased scores on tasks measuring generosity (e.g., ultimatum game) or trust (e.g., risky investment game)? Regarding game studies, for what other cognitive mechanisms are aspects of gameplay 'relevant?' Are these mechanisms combinable with or inhibitive of one another?

I hope this dissertation may serve as a foundation for these or other future inquiries that will advance our understanding of how games such as *WoW* can engage common denominators of human experience to positive ends.

Appendices

A Pure World: Moral Cognition and Spiritual Experiences in Chinese *World of Warcraft*

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DPhil Candidate

Anthropology

2012

Appendix A: Helpful Information about *WoW*

For those who have no prior knowledge of *WoW*, this section briefly outlines a few important aspects of *WoW* gameplay that will be referenced throughout the dissertation. By skimming through this section as necessary, the reader can avoid any undue confusion about the in-world processes being described in subsequent analyses.

(A.1) Communicating with Other Players

In *WoW* players can communicate with one another in various ways. (1) *Typed messages*. When talking with other players in one's vicinity, players can type messages in 'general chat' (e.g., by typing in the chat bar '/s hello,' where 's' is short for 'say') that will appear in speech balloons over the speaking character's head and also in a dialogue box on the interface.



Figure A.1. A dwarf priest says hello.



Figure A.2. Dialogue box. The green characters indicate guild chat; the white characters indicate trade chat.

When talking with other players who are not in one's vicinity, players can use one of several chat channels. In party chat, guild chat, or battleground chat, only other members of one's party, guild, or battleground team can see one's typed messages, which will appear in the aforementioned dialogue box in an appropriate colour (green for guild chat, red for battleground chat, etc.). Players can also access 'trade chat' when in major cities. All players currently in one of their faction's major cities (i.e., potentially over 100 players at any given time) can read and contribute to the messages in trade chat. Trade chat is normally where one finds in plenitude the 'boy's tree house' dialogue described by Nardi in Chapter 1.

(2) *Voice chat*. Players may use various voice over internet protocol (VoIP) platforms for better in-game coordination. Though Blizzard has built a VoIP service directly into the game, players usually prefer to use external programs, such as Skype, Ventriloquist or, in China, YY.

(3) *Emotes*. The game features over 200 'emote' functions that allow players to enact gestures towards other players. To illustrate, if Snowtree clicks on Autumnal and types '/clap,' Snowtree will start jumping up and down and clapping, and a message will appear in the dialogue box that says: 'Snowtree claps excitedly for Autumnal!' Emotes range from nice (/encourage) to funny (/joke) to coquettish (/flirt) to crude (/fart) or antagonistic (/spit).

(A.2) Guilds

A guild is an in-game association of player characters. Guilds are primarily formed to make collaborations on game objectives easier and to foster a social atmosphere in which to enjoy the game. A guild may have just a dozen or several thousand members.

Guilds have their own in-game bank accounts wherein guildmates can store for communal access weapons, resources, etc. Guilds often advertise an image or gameplay specialization. Some guilds may focus on 'player vs player' combat (PvP, see below) while other guilds may exist to accommodate elderly players, people of a certain religious faith, or people who can only play during off-peak hours. Some guilds have open membership policies, while others have strict membership criteria – applicants to the latter may need to have certain achievement scores, PvP ratings, or gear scores, or may need to belong to a certain in-game race (e.g., *Me and My Gnomies* is a 'gnomes only' guild on a NA*WoW* server) before they can be considered for group membership. Players communicate with other guild members through guild chat, voice chat, the guild calendar (an in-game device that lists guild raid schedules and notifies players of upcoming guild events) and/or external websites (many guilds run their own websites) and forums.

(A.3) *Wangba*s

Most C*WoW* players access the game in an Internet café, or *wangba* (网吧). Such cafés are often large, sometimes containing several hundred computers, and may be divided into different sections (e.g., regular, VIP). Players pay by the hour and, during my fieldwork, the price for using a *wangba* computer ranged between RMB¥2 and 10 (or GBP£.2 and 1) per hour. Once seated, players have access to dozens of games installed on the computer (though players must have an account and prepaid time registered with the relevant game company before they can play a given game). Throughout my fieldwork *wangba*s were, depending on the informant, both celebrated and vilified for their atmosphere. Players often preferred to play C*WoW* in the *wangba* rather than at

home or in their dormitories because the *wangba*s boasted greater social atmosphere, or *renao* (热闹,'heat and excitement'). On the other hand, *wangba*s were often characterised by non-gamers as filthy lairs of smoking and thievery and were occasionally likened to 'opium dens,' where youth were said to fritter away their lives and career prospects. I was frequently warned by people who knew I spent time in *wangba*s to be on guard for thieves and disreputable women[129].

(A.4) PvP vs. PvE

At the most general level of categorisation, in-game combat can be broken down into two types: 'player vs. environment' (PvE) combat and 'player vs. player' (PvP) combat. In the former, players pit their combat skills against the gameworld's NPC antagonists, which operate on algorithms and artificial intelligence systems. Dungeon raids constitute the most popular endgame PvE activities, in which groups of players will team up to fight scores of powerful NPC enemies. In PvP combat, players pit their combat skills against other players of the opposing faction (i.e., Alliance vs. Horde). Alliance and Horde may clash in Arena PvP tournaments, in random parts of Azeroth where a member of the Horde and a member of the Alliance cross paths, or in one of the battlegrounds. Battlegrounds are by far the most popular venue for PvP and are divided into brackets by level (e.g., a level 33 player will play in the level 30-34 bracket; a level 37 player will play in the level 35-39 bracket, etc). Players can click a button that puts them in 'queue' for a given battleground, and as soon as there are enough players in the queue for both sides all players will be summoned and transported to the battleground area.

[129] I found these fears to be unfounded as I never had anything stolen and the *wangba* facilities were often cleaner than Jianghan University's facilities.

Guilds and players tend to have a preference for either PvE or PvP and usually engage in the other only sparingly (this is in part because different types of gear are required to be competent in PvE and PvP – i.e., PvE gear does not work well in battlegrounds, and PvP gear does not work well in dungeons). Autumnal's guild, Coma Divine, was mostly a PvE guild, meaning Autumnal spent most of her time running dungeons with fellow Coma Divine guildmates, or 'guildies.' Polkadot's guild, Fat Guys, was a level 39 PvP guild. At that time, prior to the release of *Wrath of the Lich King* patch 3.2, players did not gain experience points by participating in battlegrounds. Therefore, players could not level-up solely through battleground play and could stay indefinitely in a battleground bracket if they desired. Accordingly, players sometimes developed characters to the highest level of a given bracket and then specialised the character for PvP at that level. This is called 'twinking.' Polkadot spent her time in Fat Guys participating in battlegrounds with other Fat Guys twinks.

(A.5) Expansions, Patches, and Hotfixes

WoW is just the latest development of Blizzard's *Warcraft* franchise and storyline, which tells the on-going sagas of two groups – Horde and Alliance – as well as of a host of secondary characters, groups, gods, warlords, etc. as they battle one another for control of various regions of Azeroth. These two factions were first introduced to players in 1994 when the first instalment of the *Warcraft* series, a 'real time strategy game' called *Warcraft: Humans vs. Orcs*, was released in North America. Since then, Blizzard has been advancing the conflict storylines mostly through new games (e.g., *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness, Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos*) and 'expansions' to those games. An expansion takes the existing game and adds new lands, quests, spells, abilities, objectives,

gear, etc. and advances the *Warcraft* storyline. For the most part, Blizzard endeavours to release expansions just at the point when regular players may start to feel bored with or unchallenged by the existing content. In the earlier, simpler *Warcraft* games expansions may have been released a mere six months after the original game's debut. In the much more complex *WoW*, however, major expansions are released only about every two years.

To date, the *WoW* gameworld consists of the original game (released November 2004[130]) – sometimes referred to as 'classic' or 'vanilla' *WoW* – plus additions made through three subsequent expansions: *The Burning Crusade* (January 2007), *Wrath of the Lich King* (November 2008), and *Cataclysm* (December 2010). Players may simply purchase and play only vanilla *WoW*, if they choose, but they will not be able to level beyond that version's highest level (level 60) or access the new lands, abilities, etc. introduced by the new expansions. Likewise, players must buy all the previous expansions before they can purchase the latest one.

In addition to expansions, Blizzard releases 'patches' and 'hotfixes' every few months, which introduce new content on a much more limited basis, update and/or tweak various aspects of gameplay, and remove any bugs or hacks (i.e., cheating devices) that have infiltrated the gameworld. These are free to all players, though usually the newly added content in patches will be located in areas only accessible by those who have the latest expansion.

As I explain in Chapter 4, expansions and patches are crucial in keeping the gameworld supplied with the contingencies necessary to effect spiritual experiences.

[130] Dates given here are for the North American release dates. The game and its expansions were released at different times in different world regions.

(A.6) Miscellaneous

(1) Servers. WoW is published in different world regions (e.g., North America, Europe, China, etc.), and players who have purchased an account in a region can create characters on any of the region's servers they like. Servers have different real world locations so that players may choose a server that is close to them and minimise lag or latency issues. Servers are mentioned here to dispel any notion that all the world's 12 million players are running around in the same gameworld. For example, because Chinese players will have purchased a Chinese account they will only play on Chinese servers with other Chinese; they will not bump into, for example, North American or European players. Nor are China's 5 million players all in the same gameworld. The Chinese region is divided into over 150 servers. Players may choose any server they like or create characters in multiple servers, but once a given character is created it cannot easily be moved to another server.

(2) C*WoW vs. other WoW gameworlds.* All regional versions of the game should be verbatim equivalents. In other words, the gameworld in North American *WoW* servers should be absolutely identical to the gameworld in European *WoW* servers. As is discussed in Chapter 4, there are some differences in C*WoW* gameworlds on account of changes or omissions demanded by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and/or The 9 or NetEase, Blizzard's past and present joint-venture firms in China. For example, in the Chinese version of the game player corpses do not remain sprawled on the ground after death (as they are in other versions) but appear as tidy graves marked with headstones. Also, the 'undead' race, one of the 12 playable races, are fully fleshed out in C*WoW*. In other versions, undead characters have a zombie-like half rotting flesh, half bone

composition. In addition to these cosmetic makeovers, the Chinese Ministry of Culture is often resistant to allowing Blizzard to introduce expansions, updates, and fixes to the game. As is shown in Chapter 4, this can result in player fatigue with existing content and in a profusion of balance-destroying hacks and bugs.

Appendix B: Additional Information for Chapter 2

(B.1) A Narrowed Moral Domain – The Influence of the Enlightenment, Reason, and 'Quandary Ethics' on 20th Century Moral Psychology

Haidt and Joseph developed the five *moral foundations* outlined in this chapter in response to what they considered to be an overly restricted view of the moral domain in contemporary academic psychology. According to Haidt and Joseph (2007), throughout the 20th century the psychological literature on moral cognition has overemphasized (1) the role of *formal* or *reflective logic* in moral reasoning, (2) *justice* and *care* principles, and (3) an assumption that 'moral' issues are confined to those involving the treatment of other *individuals*. These guiding principles, he argues, are artefacts of Enlightenment ideals. Throughout the 18th century, Enlightenment thinkers, motivated in part by a concern to secure legal institutions from the influences of the church, had some success in detaching intellectual discourse on moral propriety from religious institutions and concerns about the intentions and will of a supreme, moralizing deity. Thus excised, discourse on moral propriety absorbed the Enlightenment preoccupation with formal and calculative logic, and it became common practice to discuss morality by invoking abstract theorems or logical proofs that illustrated, *qed*-style, the rules of moral propriety.

Two highly influential and thoroughly 'rational' ways of thinking about morality emerged from the Enlightenment. First, *formalist* theories of moral propriety defined moral judgements by reference to their logical form. Kant's 'categorical imperative' is perhaps the most famous example of a formalist approach to morality. According to Kant, moral propriety can be could be summed up in one ultimate commandment of

reason, or imperative, from which all duties and obligations derive. Kant's appeal to 'act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law' (1993 [1785], p. 30) requires that one excise from one's motive for a given action the moral formula that underwrites that motive, and then hypothesize a world wherein that formula was enacted as universal law. For example, suppose Mary thinks Bill's new suit is unbecoming on him but, in order to maintain Bill's good mood, Mary lies and says it looks dashing. Here Mary is guided by the moral principle that it is permissible to lie to others in order to cultivate good feelings. However, Kant would argue that Mary's action is morally unacceptable. Presumably, a world wherein deception was a universal action would refute the reliability of language for purposes of human communication; no one would believe anyone, and all truths would be assumed to be lies. This type of world is 'inconceivable' insofar as neither logic nor human prosperity can operate therein.

Second, *consequentialist* theories attempted to ground moral judgements in assessments of the consequences of actions. John Stuart Mill's 'utilitarianism' is perhaps the most famous example of a consequentialist approach to morality. For Mill, the morally correct action is the one that would by rational investigation seem to predict the best consequences (however 'consequences' may be operationalized). Within this framework, a lie is morally permissible if the lie-telling action generates more desirable consequences (perhaps, for example, to lift Bill's spirits) than could be obtained by alternatives.

Although formalism and consequentialism have many differences, Haidt and Joseph point out that their shared emphasis on explicit *reasoning* left a lasting impression on

academic discourse on morality. Both formalism and consequentialism sought to detach moral judgements from the messy webs of specific social practices (e.g., *Is it immoral to wear a hat indoors?*), speculations unto divine will (e.g., *What does God want us to do?*) and intuitive responses to situations (e.g., *What naturally 'feels right' in this situation?*), and to replace these with foundational principles – logical rationality for formalism and calculative rationality for consequentialism. From these formalist and consequentialist paradigms, academic discourses became increasingly comfortable with recognizing explicit forms of reason and logic as the primary movers of moral decision-making.

At the same time, most of the 'thick' rules and strictures of specific social practices (e.g., 'do not wear a baseball cap indoors') were, in academic psychology, relegated to 'convention' status. Conventions, in this sense, include rules extending from 'tradition, efficiency, or social coordination that could just as well be different if people in power, or if people in general, chose to change them' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p.5). By contrast, moral rules were hypothesized to be timeless and pan-cultural. This excision of conventional rules from the moral domain was necessary if the Enlightenment moral frameworks were to remain sensible, as rules about appropriate clothing and dietary habits were not readily compatible with formalist or consequentialist analyses. For example and with respect to Kant's categorical imperative, it is not clear that a world wherein everyone wears baseball caps indoors would be substantially different from a world wherein everyone abstains from wearing baseball caps indoors. In the formalist framework and in post-Enlightenment moral psychology, whether or not one ought to wear baseball caps indoors is a non-issue.

This emphasis on formal logic and excision of 'conventions' from the moral domain effectively narrowed 'moral issues' to those involving disputes between social actors. As Haidt and Joseph argue, a defining feature of post-Enlightenment discourses on morality was 'a modern consensus about the scope of ethical inquiry: morality is about resolving dilemmas involving the competing interests of people' (Haidt & Jospeh, 2007, p. 4). This dilemma-centred outlook laid the foundations for 'quandary ethics' (Pincoffs, 1986), a major paradigm for psychological work in morality in the 20th century. Kohlberg's (1969) longitudinal studies with children constitute perhaps the most famous and influential examples of quandary ethics. In his studies, Kohlberg presented children with moral dilemmas (e.g., should Heinz steal medicine he cannot afford in order to save his dying wife?; Kohlberg, 1963, p.19) and examined the moral logic children used to resolve the dilemmas. Kohlberg argued that children and young adults ordinarily progress through six stages[131] (he later revised it to five) of moral reasoning. In stage 1, the 'punishment and obedience stage,' children tend to view rules and laws as dictates from authority figures that must be unquestioningly obeyed. According to stage 1 reasoners, Heinz should not steal the drug because 'it is against the law' or because 'mom said it is bad to steal.' When asked to elaborate on *why* one should obey the law or one's parents, stage 1 reasoners usually respond by referencing consequences involved, explaining that one should obey laws and parents or else 'you'll get punished' (Crain, 1985, p. 121).

[131] According to Kohlberg, only some young adults will reach stages 5 and 6. Some moral reasoners may never advance beyond stage 3.

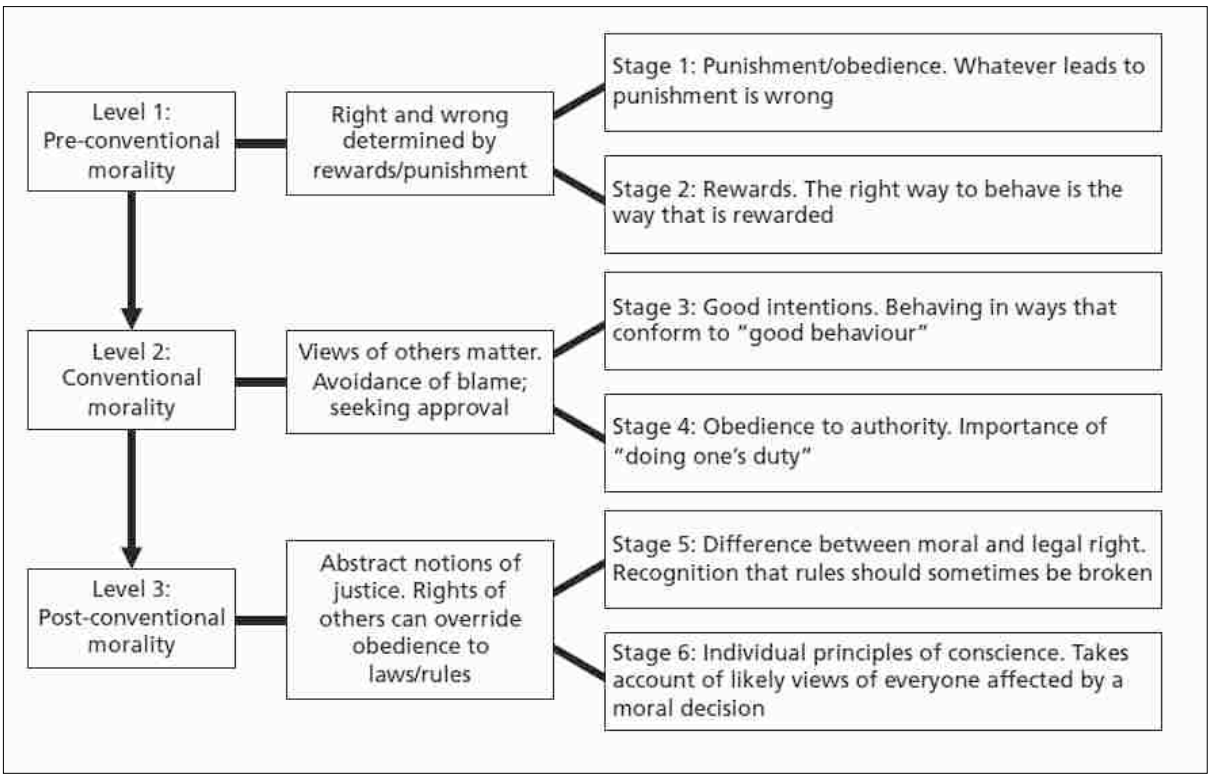


Figure B.1. Kohlberg's six stages of moral development. Adapted from 'Stages of Moral Development,' by Rice, K. E. (2001).

Figure 2.1 outlines Kohlberg's six stages. Kohlberg argued that progress through these stages is always sequential because each stage represents a more comprehensive form of reasoning that includes all the rest. As Crain points out:

> People at stage 4 can still understand stage 3 arguments, but they now subordinate them to wider considerations. They understand that Heinz had good motives for stealing, but they point out that if we all stole whenever we had a good motive, the social structure would break down. Thus stage 4 subordinates a concern for motives to a wider concern for society as a whole . . . Stage 5, in turn, sees the weakness of stage 4; a well-organized society is not necessarily a moral one. Stage 5 therefore considers the rights and orderly processes that make for a moral society. Each new stage retains the insights of the prior stage, but it recasts them into a broader framework. In this sense, each new stage is cognitively more adequate than the prior stage. (1985, p. 129)

To explain *how* children progress from one stage to the next, Kohlberg adopted a Piagetian model of cognitive development. According to Piaget, children do not passively absorb or replicate styles of moral reasoning. Rather, children actively construct their reasoning styles through trial and experiment with other interlocutors. With respect to moral issues, for example, children may take a position in a discussion, then become confused by discrepant information introduced by other interlocutors, and then resolve that confusion by actively reflecting on the issue and forming a new, more advanced and comprehensive position[132].

In Kohlberg's scheme, the final stage of moral reasoning has been obtained when reasoners employ a categorical imperative of *justice*. To illustrate, stage 5 reasoners tend to be concerned with society *in toto* and focused on moral reasoning that would effect a good society. In practice, this concern translates into an interest in protecting individual rights and advocating settling disputes through democratic processes. At the end of stage 5, however, reasoners realize that democratic processes alone do not always result in outcomes that are just. Majorities can use democratic processes to bully or hinder minorities. A search for greater means of justice pushes them into stage 6, wherein they assume what resembles a Kantian or Rawlsian style of reasoning that compels them to consider the universal implications of their actions. Such reasoners readily engage in perspective-taking of all parties relevant to a situation and advocate only those actions that effect a *just* and fair result for all parties involved. Stage 6 reasoners would never, for example, vote for a law that helps some but harms others. According to Kohlberg's

[132] This method is quite similar to the 'Socratic method' of teaching, wherein students give a view, the inadequacies of the view are exposed by the teacher, and the students respond by formulating a better position.

scheme, this justice imperative is the most advanced form of moral reasoning – inclusive of and superior to all previous stages.

For several decades following the original publication of Kohlberg's six stages, discourse in moral psychology was largely confined to how, exactly, social actors acquired this justice imperative. However, in the latter half of the 20th century Carol Gilligan (1982) challenged Kohlberg's position by arguing that for women there was a competing highest principle for moral development: *care*. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's studies used mainly boys (which on average achieved a higher level of moral development on Kohlberg's scale than did girls) and ignored the possibility that women are more inclined towards caring while men are more inclined towards justice. Accordingly, Gilligan argued that when faced with moral quandaries, males seek solutions that are just and fair, while females seek solutions that are caring and benevolent. To illustrate, Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) asked subjects to consider varying situational contexts wherein a pregnant woman is considering an abortion. Gilligan and Attanucci argued that males predominately used justice frameworks to resolve the moral propriety of their decisions about abortions, while women predominately used care frameworks. And similar to Kohlberg's children, Gilligan's participants arrived at their judgements by consciously reasoning through the provided scenarios.

Finally, Haidt and Joseph point out that just as the Enlightenment delimited the moral domain to those issues that could be captured in formalist or consequentialist designs, so the quandary ethics experimental paradigm circumscribed 'moral' issues as those that pertain to the rights and welfare of other *individuals*. Is it permissible for Bob

to treat Frank in this manner? Could one justify doing X to Amy in order to do Y for Lisa? As Haidt and Joseph points out, quandary ethics lead to the academic consensus that 'morality is about helping and hurting people' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p.4). He emphasizes this point by citing Turiel, a former student of Kohlberg and major figure in moral developmental psychology, who defines the moral domain as:

> Prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other. Moral prescriptions are not relative to the social context, nor are they defined by it. Correspondingly, children's moral judgments are not derived directly from social institutional systems but from features inherent to social relationships – including experiences involving harm to persons, violations of rights, and conflicts of competing claims. (Turiel, 1983, p. 2)

One finds, then, that by the late 20th century the common consensus on moral development held that normally developing human minds (1) use conscious or formal reason in (2) the application of care or justice frameworks to (3) resolve issues involving the rights and welfare of other individuals.

(B.2) Modularity

It is essential to become familiar with Fodor's descriptive criteria in order to visualize how a given cognitive module may operate within the human mind. However, very few of the mind's information processing units appear to meet *all* these criteria and most psychologists, including Haidt and Joseph, opt for a slightly less rigid approach to modularity. As Frankenhuis and Ploeger (2007) point out, discourses on modularity generally assume the following, less-rigid paradigmatic commitments: (1) Modules are information-processing mechanisms that take particular inputs and transform those inputs into either data structures (e.g., mental representations) or behavioural outputs (Cosmides

& Tooby, 1987, 1995). (2) Modules are biological adaptations that have been shaped by natural selection over time in response to ancestrally recurrent situations (e.g., mate selection, contamination avoidance). (3) Modules are functionally specialized. Here it is important to recognize that natural selection tends to choose the best of the available variant designs for a recurrent evolutionary problem. And because immense numbers of alternative designs appear over the expanse of evolutionary time, natural selection should result in an accumulation of increasingly quick, reliable, efficacious, *specialized* designs over slower, less-tailored, general purpose designs. As Cosmides and Tooby point out:

> Different adaptive problems often require different solutions and different solutions can, in most cases, be implemented by different, functionally distinct mechanisms. Speed, reliability and efficiency can be engineered into specialized mechanisms because there is no need to engineer a compromise between different task demands …[by contrast] a jack of all trades is necessarily a master of none, because generality can be achieved only by sacrificing effectiveness …[Therefore] when two adaptive problems have solutions that are incompatible or simply different, a single solution will be inferior to two specialized solutions (1994, p. 89).

A general consensus on modularity, then, recognizes that the mind contains information processing modules that were designed by natural selection to perform specific, evolutionarily salient tasks. Additionally, such modules usually exhibit at least *some* of the criteria outlined by Fodor. If a proposed cognitive mechanism can be tested to exhibit one or more of these criteria, the mechanism may be referred to as 'modular to some interesting degree' (Haidt & Joseph, 2007 via Carruthers, 2003) or as displaying 'weak[133]' modularity.

[133] There is no clear consensus on a dividing line between 'weak' and 'strong' modularity. Generally, mechanisms that exhibit only one or two of Fodor's criteria may be termed 'weakly' modular, while mechanisms exhibiting most or all the criteria may be termed 'strongly' modular.

(B.3) Inferences from Cognitive Mechanisms Dedicated to Fear Responses (taken from Cosmides & Tooby, 2000)

(1) There are shifts in perception and attention. You may suddenly hear with far greater clarity sounds that bear on the hypothesis that you are being stalked but that ordinarily you would not perceive or attend to, such as creaks or rustling. Are the creaks footsteps? Is the rustling caused by something moving stealthily through the bushes? Signal detection thresholds shift: Less evidence is required before you respond as if there were a threat, and more true positives will be perceived at the cost of a higher rate of false alarms.

(2) Goals and motivational weightings change. Safety becomes a far higher priority. Other goals and the computational systems that subserve them are deactivated: You are no longer hungry; you cease to think about how to charm a potential mate; practicing a new skill no longer seems rewarding. . . .

(3) Information-gathering programs are redirected: Where is my baby? Where are others who can protect me? Is there somewhere I can go where I can see and hear what is going on better?

(4) Conceptual frames shift, with the automatic imposition of categories such as 'dangerous' or 'safe.' Walking a familiar and usually comfortable route may now be mentally tagged as 'dangerous.' Odd places that you normally would not occupy – a hallway closet, the branches of a tree – suddenly may become salient as instances of the category 'safe' or 'hiding place.'

(5) Memory processes are directed to new retrieval tasks: Where was that tree I climbed before? Did my adversary and his friend look at me furtively the last time I saw them?

(6) Communication processes change. Depending on the circumstances, decision rules might cause you to emit an alarm cry, or to be paralyzed and unable to speak. Your face may automatically assume a species-typical fear expression.

(7) Specialized inference systems are activated. Information about a lion's trajectory or eye direction may be fed into systems for inferring whether the lion saw you. If the inference is 'yes,' then a program automatically infers that the lion knows where you are; if 'no,' then the lion does not know where you are (the 'seeing-is-knowing' circuit identified by Baron-Cohen (1995) and inactive in individuals with autism). This variable may automatically govern whether you freeze in terror or bolt. Are there cues in the lion's behaviour that indicate whether it has eaten recently and is therefore unlikely to be predatory in the near future? (Savannah-dwelling ungulates, such as zebras and wildebeests, commonly make this kind of judgment; Marks, 1987).

(8) Specialized learning systems are activated, as the large literature on fear conditioning indicates (e.g., LeDoux, 1995; Mineka and Cook, 1993; Pitman and Orr, 1995). If the threat is real, and the ambush occurs, you may experience an amygdala-mediated calibration (as in post-traumatic stress disorder) that can last for the remainder of your life (Pitman and Orr, 1995).

(9) Physiology changes: gastric mucosa turn white as blood leaves the digestive tract (another concomitant of motivational priorities changing from feeding to safety);

adrenalin spikes; heart rate may go up or down (depending on whether the situation calls for flight or immobility); blood rushes to the periphery, and so on (Cannon 1929; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kibler & Ernst, 1997); instructions to the musculature (face and elsewhere) are sent (Ekman, 1982). . . .

(10) Behavioural decision rules are activated. Depending on the nature of the potential threat, different courses of action will be potentiated: hiding, flight, self-defense, or even tonic immobility (the latter is a common response to actual attacks, both in other animals and in humans). Some of these responses may be experienced as automatic or involuntary.

(B.4) Ecological Psychology, 'Affordances,' and Feelings

Ecological psychologists working on 'affordances' also tend to agree that perceptions of opportunities for action in the environment are 'direct' and 'felt' as opposed to reflective, and they refer to the experience aspect of affordance-perception as 'valence' (which I take to be analogous with background/gut feelings). In the following quote, J.J. Gibson, who pioneered psychological research on affordances in the late 1930s, describes the manner by which perception and valence collaborate to reveal affordances in the perceiver's environment. Gibson and his colleague L.E. Crooks use the example of driving a car:

> Within the boundaries of the road lies, according to our hypothesis, an indefinitely bounded field which we will name the 'field of safe travel.' It consists, at any given moment, of the field of possible paths which the car may take unimpeded. Phenomenally it is a sort of tongue protruding forward along the road. Its boundaries are chiefly determined by objects or features of the terrain with a negative 'valence' in perception – in other words, obstacles. The field of safe travel itself has a positive 'valence,' more especially along its midline. By

> valences, positive or negative, we refer to the meanings of objects by virtue of which we move toward some of them and away from others (1938, pp. 454-455).

Consequently, valences act as messengers dispatched from various cognitive modules, allowing minds to experience through feelings an *intuitive* sense of what those modules deem to be possible and impossible within one's environment.

(B.5) Additional Support for the Five Moral Foundations

But do these foundations provide the *best* candidates for conceptualizing a system of intuitive ethics? Haidt bolsters his thesis with the following points. First, Haidt and Joseph reiterate that great similarities in how different cultures deal with the five adaptive challenges presented above are discernable in the anthropological record. Throughout the record, social actors recognise the moral significance of providing care to others and of engaging in fair reciprocity. Throughout the record, initiation rites serve to create a strong sense of group cohesion, and tremendous resources are expended to create and display indicators of rank and hierarchy. Throughout the record, biological processes such as menstruation, birth, and defecation are heavy with moral significant as sources of *moral* pollution. That these similarities exist strongly suggests that some underlying cognitive modules dedicated to dealing with the evolutionarily-recurrent challenges illustrated above are, to some degree, influencing *cultural* expression.

Second, four of the five foundations (all MFs except purity) are exhibited in non-human primates (de Waal, 1996). It seems unlikely that the influences exerted by these foundations would suddenly, wholly disappear in the *Australopithecus* and *Homo* evolutionary lines. Third, these five foundations coordinate well with other attempts to map pan-cultural similarities in conceptions of the moral domain. Haidt and Joseph's

MFs add a level of specificity to Shweder's three ethics and incorporate them into an evolutionary framework. Otherwise, Shweder's three ethics fit almost perfectly over Haidt and Joseph's five: the harm/care and fairness/reciprocity MFs coincide with Shweder's ethic of autonomy. The in-group/loyalty and authority/ranking MFs coincide with Shweder's ethic of community. And the purity/sanctity MF supports the ethic of divinity.

Fourth, the five MFs coincide well with three of the four 'relational models' outlined by social anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Alan Fiske. Fiske has accrued an impressive amount of evidence supporting his 'four relational forms' theory, which holds that people in all cultures use just four fundamental models for organizing most aspects of social relationships most of the time (Fiske 1991, 1992). These models are 'communal sharing,' 'authority ranking,' 'equality matching,' and 'market pricing.' Communal sharing (CS) is a relationship in which people treat others in some dyad or group as equivalent and undifferentiated with respect to the social domain in question. Examples include: people using a commons (CS with respect to utilization of the particular resource), people intensely in love (CS with respect to their social selves), or people who kill any member of an enemy group indiscriminately in retaliation for an attack (CS with respect to collective responsibility). In Authority ranking (AR) people have asymmetric positions in a linear hierarchy in which subordinates defer, respect, and (perhaps) obey, while superiors take precedence and take pastoral responsibility for subordinates. Examples include: military hierarchies (AR in decisions and control), ancestor worship (AR in offerings and expectations of protection), or social status systems such as class or ethnic rankings (AR with respect to social value of identities). In Equality matching (EM)

relationships, people keep track of the balance or difference among participants and know what would be required to restore balance. Common manifestations are turn-taking, one-person one-vote elections, equal share distributions, and vengeance based on an eye-for-an-eye, a tooth-for-a-tooth. Examples include sports and games (EM with respect to the rules, procedures, equipment and terrain), baby-sitting co-ops (EM with respect to the exchange of child care), and restitution in-kind (EM with respect to righting a wrong).

Haidt and Joseph note that three of the MFs overlap with Fiske's first three relational models (fairness/reciprocity = equality matching, ingroup/loyalty = communal sharing; authority/respect = authority ranking). Purity/sanctity MF doesn't align with Fiske's forms because while this foundation is probably an innate sense of human moral valuation, it is not primarily a mode of interpersonal relationship. And Fiske's fourth model, 'market pricing,' does not align with the foundations because, according to Haidt and Joseph, 'we do not think it is so clearly innate' (2007, p. 19). On the contrary, the former three relational forms are innate and clearly found in other primates:

> Market Pricing – social relations based on ratios – appears to be uniquely human, emerging later in both phylogenetic and ontogenetic development than Communal Sharing, Authority Ranking and Equality Matching. The case for the innateness of Market Pricing is therefore much weaker, and Fiske suggests that it might be in the process of becoming an innate psychological mechanism for social relationships (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, p. 11).

Appendix C: Testimonial Interpretation Scheme

The following were coded as instances of care:

- General 'there is love and caring in *WoW*' statements
- Players give material goods to lower-level players
- Rescuing hero: one player reports being saved by another
- Wise elder: experienced player patiently answers questions for inexperienced player
- Players express a fondness for taking care of other players or pets
- Damsels in distress: female players report being doted on/cared for by male players

The following were coded as instances of fairness:

- General '*WoW* is fair' statements
- Statements about class or profession balance
- No pain, no gain: players say something analogous to 'you get out of *WoW* what you put into it'
- Commentary on fair in-game distribution of resources
- Players comment approvingly on the fact that you can't buy in-game equipment with real-world money
- Players express a belief that in the game good things will happen to good people, bad things will happen to bad people
- Approving statements about equality of opportunity in *WoW*
- Statements that claim *WoW* is somehow more fair than real life

The following were coded as instances of in-group:

- General statements about *WoW* affording togetherness
- 1+1 = > 2 statements
- Players say other games promote too much individualism or individual heroics
- Players praise *WoW* for requiring cooperation
- Players praise *WoW* for giving them friends[134]
- Players refer to others warmly as brothers and sisters
- Players say *WoW* helps them to combat loneliness
- Players say they sometimes want to quit but could never leave their in-game friends
- Players report pride in their guild or faction
- Players make statements of allegiance to *WoW* or a *WoW* group
- Costly sacrifices for in-game group
- Acts of selflessness for in-game group

The following were coded as instances of authority.

- General statements about *WoW* affording leadership opportunities
- Statements that communicate respect for or fear of in-game leaders
- Statements that communicate acceptance or cherishment of a subordinate role
- Statements that suggest in-game leaders are more competent than real world leaders
- Statements that betoken a desire to become a leader or somehow gain superior status in the game

The following were coded as instances of purity.

[134] The 'in-group' category is larger than the others in part because most testimonials made generic statements about having excellent friends in the game, and if these did not comment on how 'fair' or 'caring,' etc., those friends were they were coded simply as 'in-group.' In effect, this category became a repository for generic reports of friendship.

- General statements about *WoW* being a 'pure' world
- Positive statements about essences – i.e., statements about souls, spirit of the game, etc.
- Statements that refer to the game as something holy or sacred
- Statements that champion memories, emotions or feelings over the game's material rewards.
- Statements that spoke of *WoW* in positive terms as 'another world'

Appendix D: Testimonials

When reading through the full testimonials, please note the following:

(1) Testimonials are coded by footnote. A footnote indicates that the relevant statements exist within the footnote number's immediate in-text vicinity. There is no rule for determining a footnote's exact jurisdiction. Jurisdiction extends to all relevant materials before and after the footnote *up to* irrelevant materials.

(2) New footnotes indicating the same categorical relevance as a previous footnote are supplied when irrelevant materials (i.e., more than one sentence) separate the relevant passages. For example, in Testimonial X a footnote may indicate 'in-group'-relevant statements. Following this footnote, the testimonial may discuss matters relevant to other categories or irrelevant to the coding scheme altogether. If the testimonial then again makes 'in-group'-relevant statements, these will be indicated by a new footnote.

(3) Footnotes that appear next to the testimonial number usually indicate that the testimonial as a whole qualifies as relevant to a category (e.g., a memory-centric testimonial).

(4) The original codings that inform the figures in tables 1.1 and 1.2 were performed on hard copies of the testimonials. I have attempted to reproduce those exact codings in electronic form here. However, some differences between the original codings and these may exist.

(5) Given the above, among other reasons, these codifications should not be mistaken as precise quantitative measures.

(6) The English versions of the testimonials may in some cases be difficult to read. They were translated quickly and directly.

(7) Consequent to (6) and as mentioned in Section 1.7.4, passages that appear in the dissertation body were often revised. Hence there are occasionally minor differences between some in-text testimonial passages and the same passages below.

(8) Readers may also see different character names given in the in-text passages. All character names in both the dissertation body and the appendices are false.

Testimonial 1

Testimonial #1

Why do so many people love playing WoW? You can hear many words about WoW everywhere, ads in the internet, souvenirs of WoW, everyone is asking hey guys are you playing WoW? Actually, you play it using your time and money. Maybe many people will say that it's not good for your life. No money, no work, not REAL. You can't be more charming just by playing it. Can't attract others by playing WoW, because in China playing this seems very unbelievable or not understandable, but why so many people are crazy about this, even some of them give up their loved ones and girlfriends. The reason is what? I just want to talk about my idea of it.

[1]In WoW one person is weak, the group is powerful. 1 + 1 in WoW does not = 2, 1 + 1 = 3 or even 4, of course the more people you have in your group the shorter you will spend on your tasks and the faster you can raise your level. The online game [NAME] is not as interesting as WoW. The Asian online games always emphasize individualism. And many players want to be powerful just individually and because of that, many people cannot defeat him, but it is completely different in the western country games. What they emphasize is solidarity. You can find this in their online games just like WoW. Endless tasks, WoW. Why do so many Asians love the individual heroes …why do they love to be individual heroes. It is because in the unreal world they can find things they can't find in the real world. [2]We all want to be unified. But when someone shows up and wants to ask everybody to be unified the result is always to be very upset. Many of the people think that 'it is not my business.' But it is completely in the unreal game societies. Many people, a group of people, can come together to be solidified for just one aim – too push down the boss. Personally I think the other games are unfair. [3]Personally I think WoW is fair. But in other games maybe you will find the strongest class (an OP class), maybe many people think that their class is just rubbish compared with the strongest class. This makes people very upset and lose confidence in the game. But this can't happen in WoW, because every class has their own charm, their own characteristics. At the same time in WoW even in same class you can have different talent specs. On the other hand, in WoW it's not a painful task for all the players to level up. It's very easy to level up because you can do many different and interesting tasks. It's far more interesting than seeing the same monster for 3 months. [4]Of course there are many people who act like they are successful but really aren't. And they said you should think about your future and shouldn't waste a lot of time on online games. I

[1] In-group
[2] In-group
[3] Fairness
[4] Authority

should say our idea of life is completely different. He has different definitions of success. I can remember clearly when I was young someone who can give me a toy. But now I think if you give me a toy I will feel bored with it. In different periods of time people can feel very differently. Many people said that no pain no gain, no you are working hard and your future will be brighter, but what's the end of your future? What's the future of the future? Your idea is yours, but I think we should enjoy the happiness just in front of our eyes. You spent $ and time in the WoW but you also gain happiness. People live in the world looking for happiness.

The last point. Ok our parents, your generation thought playing games is bad, awful, even devil's play, often a waste of time. When the foreigners, Americans, Japanese, Koreans regard the games as a way to improve their society. We Chinese mistook the games as bad things. I can't agree more.

为什么多人这么喜欢玩 WOW？随处可听到魔兽世界的专有名词，网上到处可看到广告，商业上也随之有魔兽的系列产品，随时会有友人问你有没有在玩。理智点来说，玩的是精力，时间，从客观的来说不会带来有利你人生的东西，没有物质奖励，没有实际收入，也不是因为你玩了魔兽你就更吸引人，更有魅力。可是还是这么多人孜孜不卷，有些甚至放弃了女友啊（不过那只能说明那个人实在魅力太差，活的都比不过一堆数据）等等。究其这到底是什么原因呢？我也就说说我的感想。

WOW 里面，一个人是弱小的，团队是强大的，1+1 在里面绝不等于 2，只有和人配合，效率才高，当然人越多，完成任务的时间越短，升级也越快。亚洲的网游都是些强调个人英雄的东西（个人感觉）你一个人强了，很多人都搞不定你，是不是亚洲人就喜欢这样？在外国，他们倡导的是合作，团结。这点从他们的游戏里就能看出，无尽的任务，魔兽世界。那既然亚洲人都喜欢个人英雄，为什么这么收欢迎？其实网游就是满足了在现实中找不到的东西，找不到感觉，想做的事情里面都可以带你实现，我们平时都渴望团结，但真正有人站出来想号召别人的团结的结果却往往是让人失望，让人沮丧的，有人事不关己，有人不服这服那，可在虚拟社会里就不同了，大家可以为了些目标，实现这种团结的力量，感受团结带来的喜悦。

个人感觉这个游戏很是平衡。往往游戏玩到后面都会出现最强职业，那时很多人辛辛苦苦练的东西，感觉就一垃圾，这使人很是挫折，失去了信心。在魔兽世界里不会，每个职业都有魅力，都有乐趣，玩家可以完全凭着喜好选择，没有最强的东西，只是喜欢。还是那句话没有最强的个人，只有最强的团队。同时，在魔兽的世界里，就算同一个职业都能发展出不同的形式，全凭个人喜好。

再说，在魔兽的世界里面，觉对没有以往的网游练及的痛苦。轻轻松松就升及了，

其中任务带着故事很是乐趣。远远超越了那些对着一个怪看三个月的游戏。

当然有人说活着就要为明天考虑，为了一堆数据浪费了大好时间。呵呵那只好说人生观不同，记得小时候我很希望我有个人型玩具，拿在手里玩，那时很是渴望。现在呢？送给我玩我都觉的无聊，人嘛在不同的时候对不同的东西就有不一样的感觉，经常有人说，现在的努力为了将来的快乐，但是将来以后就没将来的嘛？你什么时候停呢？别人怎么想是他的，我就这么认为，眼前有的快乐，放在不切实际的将来去享受，可能嘛？在魔兽的世界里花了钱，但得到了快乐就行了~仅此而已，人不就是要快乐嘛。

最后说一点，家长啊，老一辈们看到玩游戏就是不好，觉的浪费时间，哈哈，怎么说呢，当老外，日本人，韩国人都把游戏当成一种产业来促进社会发展的时候，我们还在说那是误人前程的东西。

Testimonial 2

Testimonial 2

I have been playing Wow for nearly 2 years. I never found another game which has this vitality. [1]At first I played this game I just wanted to kill time or to chase for unreal fame. [2]But now this game has given me a group of friends. After working and studying[3] I can chat with them and have another way to relax, loosen tensions. We can chat together, sing together, even take photos in all corners of Azeroth. We enjoy the friends WoW gives us. Enjoy the happiness when the group pushes down the boss. And the arguing after pushing down the boss because of the equipment. If the group they have the class who need the equipment they give it. It all depends on what the group it is, whether it's guild group, if in the G group the equipment will be sold to the players who need them, but guild groups share. We enjoy the friendship in WoW. We can say that WoW gives us a completely new life. A way to relax ourselves. And then makes us have more enthusiasm in the real world. Every week we meet together and go to the dungeons, talk about our interesting experiences in real life, or make a G group to make some gold. They make a G group to make some allowance. You know that there are some players who use RMB to buy gold.

[4]When I'm playing, I really enjoy the pure feelings!

Sometimes, many people begin to believe that WoW is a part of their life. Because on the Internet we can be really ourselves …not the one who should wear a mask in the real world. Every week a few G groups, a few dungeons, you can enjoy the life too. [5]Maybe in the real world we can be successful, but you can be a great leader or great DPS in the game world. [6]In the real world, maybe your talents can be ignored. But if you work hard in WoW maybe all the players in the realm can know your name. [7]You can be a man of success in WoW.

[8]We love WoW, we will support it to go to the future.

Now the WLK comes and we are now chasing for the level 80. Maybe many changes make it not that easy for us to get used to the new WoW, but it's worse off waiting for so long.

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[1] Authority
[2] In-group
[3] Education system
[4] Purity
[5] Authority
[6] Fairness
[7] Authority
[8] Allegiance

玩魔兽快 2 年了，重来没有过玩过哪种游戏比魔兽世界更有生命力了！最初的游戏只是为了消磨时光，追求虚拟的荣耀，但是如今的游戏是为了一堆天南海北的朋友，可以在学习，工作之余无限放松自己的一种生活，可以一起聊天，一起歌唱，一起在艾泽拉斯大陆的各个角落里留影，为了给自己的青春留下一丝涟漪！

我们享受着魔兽带给我们的朋友，享受着推翻 BOSS 时的成就，在分装备时的面红耳赤却在结束后淡然一笑所要分红，我们享受朋友之情，兄弟之义，可以说魔兽世界带给了我们一种新的生活，一种释放自己在现实中的压力的场所，让我们在现实中依旧有着动力前行！每周我们相约在一起，通过 YY 来聊天，说说各自的趣事，或者组织个 G 团，大家一起说说笑笑打着 FB，为我们的游戏生活挣点零花钱，那一刻的我们没有了现实生活中的勾心斗角，没有了攀比斗艳，那一个的纯真让我很享受！

有很多人开始以魔兽世界作为他们的生活，因为隔着网络我们可以做真实的自己，每周打打 G 团出售 G 币，一样可以很好的过生活，在现实中他们无法获得成功，在游戏中他们可以，因为现实中的怀才不遇，在游戏中只要你肯努力，你的名字可以让遍布全国的网友知晓，他们一样可以成为成功者！

我们爱 WOW，我们会支持着他走向未来~

如今 WLK 开了，我们开始了追寻 80 的成就！可是太多的改变让我们有些不习惯，但是长久的期待还是让我们为之兴奋！

Testimonial 7

Testimonial 7[1]

AFK

Since a few days ago when I sent my brothers on the train, I feel lost. [2]Last semester I caused some troubles in school because of WoW. Terrible and got a lot of people involved. And besides this semester when I get back to school I have a lot of things to be busy with. I have some make-up exams and reunion parties and want to join the dance club in school. I'm going to begin the WLK, friends are not online, feel lonely. Day before yesterday I sent my last friend away. I and one of my friends were sitting under the tree outside the gate of the AH. And we sat the whole night pleasantly even though I didn't tell her I decided to AFK. That night I took some photos with her and talked about a lot of music and we lit blue fire crackers and felt so happy. Second day I spent the entire day preparing a gift for her and left a long message for her in my YY. And on my QQ I sent her the news that I'm going to AFK. A lot of people came to talk with me, including her, and she said we haven't yet said goodbye. I didn't reply because I didn't know what to say. She asked me why I didn't say it yesterday and I said I didn't know how to say it. Then she asked me to get online tonight once again b/c she wanted to say goodbye to me. Now she's gone to KLZ and I was sitting under that tree, calling up the three years of WoW. And thinking about the ZS I practiced and changed server 2 times and gave a game account to someone. I remember when I was practicing, when I was beginning to play the game and I was levelling and killing monsters. And I got tired of running on my feet, when I got my horse I rode it seeing the beauties all around the world …when I got bored I would build up a secondary account. [3]To listen to hear NAME singing in the darkness. I remember the fireflame festival and I was dancing with a group of BL in Tarnassus and said goodbye at last. And I remember when my friends took me first to the KLZ I was so excited I drank several bottles of [medicine]. And I got the name of Toxic. I remember the first time I played ZAM I got the magical juice and I even didn't know what it was and I first explored the PLACE it died down once after another, but my fame grew up. And I also remember the first time I beat the BT I saw DD, I dragged some brothers and kiss, hug with DD like a wind, and I remember the union first time gave AB to me and I used it twice and said it's not good and then I wrote to QS. And I also remember the first time I heard the girl's voice in YY and I was excited to see the precious NAME and I also remember that time I stayed up for 2 days and nights only to accompany with one of my brother's girlfriends. And I also remember the first time [4]I opened the G group and in the night I had everybody's money in my pocket and I lost it. And the second day I fixed it and

[1] Memory centric
[2] Education system
[3] In-group
[4] Fairness

was shouting in the trade chat and found apple and her husband has already paid money for me and I knew apple and her husband like that ….and I also remember the first time I met Pole Dancer and he was pretending to be a girl, and finally I got his name and age. I also remember heart breaking quarrelling a friend named Garbage lent him money to buy junk equipment, even though we broke up. But we are still brothers. I remember after I knew NAME I discovered another kind of WoW, relaxing, shopping, and fighting for the materials and making business. . I also remember my classmates, Hiro, Kissybear. I also remember my good brother, Equinox. Istabu, Brumley, Teacup, Soulfire, Misterpenguin, a lot of names, but now they are not here. I'm so lonely. I can't stand this loneliness. And just now a little D is sitting beside me and messaged me 'are you waiting for someone?' and I said 'maybe.' And we strike up a conversation and he talks about his WoW and his current sad life and when I was listening to him my tears kept dropping for no reason and only the song of FAMOUS SINGER is around my ears, repeating and repeating.

AFK 了

自从前几天，一个一个把兄弟们送上车以后。心里就特别不舒服。上学期，因为 WOW 在学校里闹出不少事。特别麻烦。牵扯到很多人。而且，这学期，回到学校，我有很多事要忙，补考、考级，置办老乡会，接手舞协。最近要开 WLK 了，人心惶惶，朋友们也都不上线了。好孤单。 前天，就在我送走最后一个兄弟以后， 我和我一个好朋友坐在暴风城 AH 门口的树下，一直坐着，坐了一个晚上。我很高兴。虽然我没有告诉她，我决定 AFK 了。那晚上，我和她一起拍了几张全家福，聊了许多歌曲，一起放了蓝色的烟火。我很高兴。第二天，我在自己的 YY 里准备了一个礼物给她，花了一天布置了一个 YY，留下了一封好长的信。并且，在我的 Q 上，发出了我决定 AFK 的消息。好多人来和我说这说那。其中也包括她，她说我们还没有道别，我没有回，我真的不知道该说点什么。她问我为什么昨天不说，我说我不知道该如何开口。于是她要我晚上再上一次线，说要送送我。现在，她打 KLZ 去了。 我就在那棵树下自己坐着，想我这近 3 年的 WOW。想我练过的 4 个 ZS，2 个换服务器，一个送人。我想起自己练级的时候，打怪啊打怪，跑路啊跑路，累的时候，就骑着我那匹小马，满世界的去转风景。我想起无聊的时候，我会建一个 UD 的小号，去幽暗听希尔瓦娜斯唱歌。我想起火焰节时在塔纳利斯和一大群 BL 的小朋友们跳舞，最后互相挥手致意。想起刚开始朋友带着我打 KLZ，我激动的喝了好几瓶合剂，结果落个"浪费"的名声。我想起第一次打 ZAM 就拿到了魔汁，虽然那时还不知道魔汁的意义。想起刚开荒 HS，一次次的灭，结果声望刷的好快。想起第一次打 BT 见到 DD，我风一样的拽着几个哥们跟 DD 又亲又抱又合影。想起工会第一把 AB 给了我，后来我用了两下说不好，结果写信给了 QS。想起第一次在 YY 里听到女孩子的声音，激动地像看到珍兽一样，嗷嗷的疯叫。想起那一次为了陪兄弟的媳妇第一次熬了两天两夜（吵架了）。

[Remainder of Chinese removed]

Testimonial 8

Testimonial 8[1]

Take care or farewell.

Once I played WoW for a year and I was online crazily every day, people would always say I'm at home playing. But lately because of the guild and some personal reasons I sold my character and deleted the game. Game over. A year later and because my friends persuaded me to play the game again, I changed my name and restarted and entered another guild. [2]And then I met someone, my little brother, and I remember the first time we met b/c we are all bored and we went to BB and after that we were together, he called me 'sister' and went to defeat the Raven, the Tiger, the Dragon, and the White Chicken with me. But maybe because our luck was not so good, nothing came out except the White Chicken. [3]Whenever I wanted to download the FB or go for mission, you were always there. And I felt to have a brother like you is such a great thing. And also remember when we collected the BB you told me that day 'my sister I have a gift for you,' and then you traded a gift box for me and opened it and it was a black dragon baby. I refused to take it but you also refused to take it back. And the result of course ended up with my failure (I took the dragon). And I also remember the time we did ZAM for the freedom magic necklace, we said it's black because you lost the PK and ROLL and we were not happy. And then I was angry and didn't want to see you. You mailed me a lot of times saying it's my fault, my sister. And didn't get my reply. And then you mailed the GM. And then the necklace was lost. At that moment I really didn't know what to say. Before I left WLK many times I have thought of quitting the guild only because this guild has nothing for me to miss except you.

Then I left WLK and I was online so there were less than 10 people in the guild. I decided to quit and go back to my former guild. During this year so many things have changed, including old love and hatred, I quit the guild and just clicked the mouse but never thought this click would make you AFK. You said 'you can't leave this guild' because if I quit you'd have no reason to log in again. [4]Then it's fine, I respect your choice, after all a game is only a game. It can never be better than the reality, but I only hope if you have time afterwards you can log on and see me once a while, so we don't say goodbye, just say take care. In my heart you are always my best brother. The WLK people have been long waiting after all the misfortune and I cannot run away from it. It's the thing I can never forget. I cannot get over it. It's unforgettable but it's also tiring.

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[1] Memory-centric
[2] Group
[3] Shout-out
[4] Shout-out

道一声珍重，还是再见

曾经，玩过近乎一年的 WOW，每天疯狂在线，别人都说我很宅，后来，因为公会以及个人原因，卖号，并删掉了游戏，GAME OVER。一年后，在朋友的怂恿下，改名换姓，重新玩起了 WOW，也进了另外一个公会，并认识了你——小奥，我的弟弟。记得我们最初认识，是因为都闲着无聊，于是就相约，一起去刷 BBo(ノ □ ヽ)o，后来，就一直在一起，你叫我子若姐姐，陪我刷乌鸦，刷老虎，刷龙，刷白鸡，只是，或许我们 RP 不好，除了小白，啥也没出过。。。当我需要下 FB 或做任务的时候，你也基本上是随叫随到，那时候总感觉，有这样一个弟弟陪着，多好！还曾记得，在我们疯狂收集 BB 的时候，你那天贼兮兮的和我说：“姐，送你个礼物！”然后交易给我一个礼品盒，打开一看，是个黑龙宝宝，我拒绝收下，但你也拒绝拿回去。。。结果，当然是以我的失败而告终- -也曾记得我们去下 ZAM，为了那条自由魔法项链，说了黑的，结果你因为 PK 输了，一不开心也 ROLL 了，然后我怒了，一直不鸟你，你在 M 我说了很多次“姐姐我错了”却得不到回应之后，去 M 了 GM，项链最终到了我手上，那一刻，我真不知道该说什么才好。在开 WLK 之前，有很多次，我都透露过想退会的念头，只是因为，这个公会除了你，实在没有太多能让我留恋的东西。

于是，是 WLK 开了之后，上线，见到会里只有不到 10 个人之后，我终究选择了退出，回到原来的公会。一年时间，改变的时间太多，包括一切恩怨。退出公会，只是轻轻的鼠标一按，只是想不到，这一按，却把你也给按得 AFK 了。

你说，这个公会你离不开，但是，我的退出，让你再也找不到登陆的理由。

那么好吧，我尊重你的选择，毕竟，游戏只是游戏，再怎样也比不过现实。只是，希望你以后有时间，还能偶尔登陆来看下我，所以，我们不说再见，只是道一声珍重好不好？在我心里，你永远是我最好的小奥弟弟。

众人期盼已久的 WLK，终究还是成为了我的一个劫，而我注定在劫难逃

Testimonial 11

Testimonial 11

I'm a new sophomore college student. And I will talk about my viewpoint towards life in WoW. At January 1, 2010, I created my account in WoW. For a game that is so popular all around the world for the past four years, I am a new player. When I was in high school I loved playing computer games but they were not online games. I never touched WoW. I'd seen classmates playing WoW they were all addicted. [1]At that time I was relatively innocent and didn't leave my studies. I entered a normal university. I feel like I have to try this game which most of the players think is the number one game. [2]Because some advanced players helped me I understood it faster and levelled up faster, I didn't need to waste a lot of time exploring it alone. And in a short time my understanding of this game levelled up to a new level.

The game has been running for 5 years and hasn't died out. And there are more players expected, this game must be existing with the form of the guild. The guild, big or small, has hundreds of people and they have to build into teams to pass each level. I still remember the first guild Big Cow Fraternity. The first guild I entered and now that guild has been up for 3 years, it's the first guild in the server. [3]At that time I was new in the game and knew nothing about it and asked everything in the chatting channel in the guild and there was always someone to help me AND answer the question. And of course I would say thank you, it's fine, it's ok. They answer your questions but you cannot pay them, but they still want to help you. [4]You can get a lot of spiritual encouragement that you can never get in reality. This might be the essence of the game. I have to say the major players of this game are the working people, and students are not the mainstream. The active time of 80% of the guild starts at 7pm in the evening, and that is the time the working people got off from work, have their dinner, have a bath, open the computer and fight with their brothers and build up a team with 25 people under the command of the chief. At that time I was new in this game and every mission was so impressive and fresh to me. [5]That spirit of the team and the character of modesty and harmonious communication that only exists in novels and movies and even in the real society I cannot find it. [6]Also remember at that time a piece of equipment dropped which is about 400 RMB. I thought it's going to be a very fierce, fierce fight. But your [7]brothers and your soldiers they all know and understand each other very well, no one wants it. People are so

[1] Education system
[2] Care
[3] Care
[4] Purity
[5] Purity
[6] Material vs. Spiritual
[7] In-group

modest. I have not seen anything like that. And there was also another time also dropped equipment that is a piece of graduation equipment. It was ninja-ed. And that thief fished the whole night at the seashore and made it into expensive food and sent it to the other 24 people at that place. And it was also the first time for me to have that feeling. This is something the people outside the game would never know.

There will always be the slogan 'improve the people's quality and build up a harmonious society' in the news. In fact, there are a lot of players in the game who are people with very high quality. One can make a lot of friends. [8]They will only remember your goodness, only enjoying the happiness with you, such friends, how can you refuse to get online earlier and earlier everyday to meet them?

[9]I play this game because I like the style. This is not a game that a person with a lot of money can play very well. The same equipment on 10 different people can result in 10 different effects. Because the equipment in this game is not so valuable. Unlike in real society, in this game money is not so important. And playing this game is healthier than watching dating tv shows.

At last I want to say I'm not encouraging everyone to play this game. All this above is only a contemporary university student's point about this game. [10]The reason why so many people are addicted to this game is maybe because at the back of society are some deeper morality, spiritual issues. At this age, which is impetuous, the digital world might help people to become more clear about friendship and brotherhood.

我是一名即将大二的学生，让我来讲述一下我的魔兽世界生活和对 WOW 的看法。2010 年 1 月 1 日，我创建的 WOW 帐号，对于一个风靡全世界四年的老游戏，我只能算是新玩家，高中时我很喜欢玩电脑游戏，玩的都是竞技的单机游戏，却从未玩过 WOW，看见周围玩 WOW 的同学一个个都很沉迷，那时还是比较懂事，并没有去渐渐的荒废学业。

考上了还算正常的大学，我觉得我有必要去试试这个几乎所有懂游戏的人都认为是第一游戏的网游了。由于身边有很多高端的同学带我，自然也就领悟的快些，不用一个人去"摸爬滚打"，过多的消耗时间，而我短时间之内也算对这个游戏的认识到了一个深的档次。

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[8] In-group
[9] Fairness
[10] Purity

运营了五周年不衰败，还有更多玩家在期待！这个游戏必须以工会形式生存，大大小小的工会里面有百来号人，才能组成团队进行副本的过关，依稀记得我进入的第一个工会《name》，现在那个工会已经成立了三年，是服务器里第一的工会，那时我刚玩这个游戏，什么都不会，在工会的聊天频道里问这问那，总是有人来帮我解答。我会去说谢谢，当然别人也会说客气。你的疑惑他来解答，你不能给予任何报酬，而他们却心甘情愿的帮你。能获得许多现实社会中得不到的精神鼓励，这或许是这个游戏的本质。不得不说，这个网游的主流玩家-----上班族，其实我们学生并不是这个游戏的主流，大大小小起码百分之八十的工会活动时间是晚上 7 点开始，刚刚下班的上班族，吃完饭，洗去身上的疲惫，打开电脑，和许许多多的战友并肩作战，开动脑筋，组成 25 人团队，听着团长的指挥大家一起共存亡，那时我刚开始玩这游戏，几乎每次活动我都印象深刻，充满了新鲜感，那种小说电影里才有的团队精神，谦让的品德，和谐交流，哪怕在现实社会中也体会不到。记得那次出了一件掉率非常低大概人民币 400 元的装备，本以为即将引发激烈的争夺，但是每天见面的战友之间早已相互理解，没有人主动需求，大家最后你推我让，那种相互的信任感至今没有在遇，还有一次出了一件工会主力盗贼的最后一件毕业装备，大家都高兴坏了，恭喜贺喜，那个盗贼在海边钓了一晚上鱼，然后做成很贵的食物送给当时在场的另外 24 个人，我还是第一次体会这样的感觉，游戏中有着旁观者不知道的点点滴滴。

新闻里总是出现提高人民素质，构建和谐社会的口号，其实，这个游戏中的玩家都是有很高素质很高的社会涵养的，能交着许多朋友，他们在游戏中只会知道你的好，只会和你嬉笑打闹，这样的朋友，玩家们怎能不去天天希望早点上线碰到战友么？

我玩这个游戏，还很喜欢它的风格，这不是一个有人民币玩家能玩好的游戏，一样的装备十个人可以打出十种不同的效果。因为里面的装备值不了大价钱，这就更加远离了社会中那些骄奢淫逸的东西，玩 WOW 显然比看非诚误扰更要健康。

最后，我想说的是我并不是鼓励大家玩这个游戏，以上仅仅是一个当代大学生对这个游戏的看法，之所以会有那么多人沉迷于这个游戏，或许应该上升到这个社会背后，那些深层的道德，精神，品德的问题，在这个浮躁的年代里，虚拟世界也许人们更清醒。

Testimonial 12

Testimonial 12

A classmate once asked me why I play WoW …what is it all about. I didn't give him a precise answer at that time, but rethinking about the adventures on the land of Azeroth of the last year I feel that WoW brings me more than just happiness.

I began to play WoW since last June. But at that time I was completely following my friends and I followed them on their adventures until I left my home country and left to study in Wuhan, and that was the beginning of my real playing in this game. During this period I experienced from the change from 74 to MS. And also experienced from PLACE to PLACE, from the first day I came to the PLACE I worked hard to make myself a part of my guild. At that time I played my small account and I had no way to play with many players so I chatted in the forum in the group only because I wanted more people to notice me. But I had a lot of positive effects, a lot of friends started to know me from the PLACE. They also remembered the time I was newly arrived in Wuhan, because I was unfamiliar with everything day and night I wanted to make my life better so I was busier and only wanted to play the game in the net bar only once inn a while. But at that time I was PLACE and more with a lot of my friends until October I bought my computer, and that is the beginning of the adventure of the land of Azeroth. Because of some personal reasons I gave up 74 and started MS and I left the GUILD NAME and I think I am now the oldest member of the GUILD NAME because from the first day the guild was set up I was in this guild.

At that time I went home from school at 9pm every day. I finished my dinner and turned on my computer and played the whole night. At that time I was alone in Wuhan and didn't have many friends. And I was so unfamiliar to this city and had no place to go at night, it was WoW accompanying me that gave me a lot of joyful nights. In the place I met all kinds of people and saw some very interesting jokes in the guild. [1]And talked with friends on the road let me forget the loneliness of being alone. It was the friends who had the adventure with me on the island of Azeroth filled up the emptiness of that time and let me no longer be lonely.

And I gradually adapted to the life in Wuhan and got used to my work but I didn't forget my friends. I still want to play with them and go on adventures with them everyday. At that time, Eastern Plaguelands, STSM, Blackrock, I and my friends conquered them little by little. And finally I was at 60, I can satisfy my curiosity and go to MC and fight with everyone. And start a new journey. And get to know more about the guild.

[1] In-group

And I realized the game was changing. It's not like what I thought before. It's not only just laughter. At the moment I felt like the game was more complex, and I felt like I was just then understanding the society. The incoming change made me unprepared, I didn't know what to do. I was so timid, because of my timidity I chose to run away. I was thinking if I hide I will not get hurt. But then I found that all the enthusiasm I devoted to the guild had paid me back with endless disappointment.

I'm so sad every time I see the guild. Maybe I'm a selfish person. I'm always wanting friends to stay besides me. But whenever they leave, I can do nothing about it except bless them. Yesterday I couldn't help myself and wanted to quit the game. I really wanted to go, having seen that game which is totally different. I want to put all the unhappiness in the box of time and never open it again. And I want to take all the good memories for the future but I accept the other people can come back to the game again. People didn't want me to go.

This is a sleepless night. I chat with a friend named Solar the whole night. Being the best friend in the game, I can understand his decision and support him without any conditions. When he was resting offline, I began to rethink about every moment on the land of Azeroth and wanted to find that true meaning of the game.

The so called 'true meaning' is different for every adventurer. Some people are there for the true beauty of Azeroth, some people for the [2]dazzling equipment, and some people just want to let their nerves rest and relax, [3]but I come here only for friends. For the friends who can bring me joy and happiness, for the friends who can fill up my emptiness, for the friends who can make me no longer realize my loneliness. [4]You are the only reason for me to play WoW. The game for me is only about friendship. The friendship that surpasses time and space.

Maybe I will leave the Azeroth when I cannot find friends. But I believe that friendship will not only surpass time and space, it will also surpass time and be with me until I am old.

同学曾经问我为什么玩魔兽？有什么好玩的？当时我没有办法给他一个准确的回答，可是现在回想这一年多在艾泽拉斯特大陆上的冒险，我觉得 WOW 带给我的不仅仅是快乐。

[PARAGRAPH OMITTED]

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[2] Material

[3] In-group

[4] Shout-out

还记得刚到武汉的那段时间，由于一切都不熟，一天到晚自己都在为了能让自己生活的好一些而忙碌，只是偶尔去网吧玩会游戏，可是那时候我还是冰封的，还是更多的和我的朋友在一起。直到 10 月我买来了电脑，才算是开始真正的艾泽拉斯特大陆冒险之旅。因为一些个人原因放弃了 74，玩起了 MS。认识了 Red，离开了冰封来了义龙。我想我应该算是义龙的老会员了吧，从义龙无双工会成立的第一天开始我就在这个会了。

那时候我每天 9 点放学，吃过晚饭就打开电脑玩一个晚上。要知道那段岁月我一个人来到武汉没有太多的朋友，对这个城市也不是熟悉，基本上到了晚上都是无处可以去的，是 WOW 陪伴我渡过了一个个充满欢笑的晚上。在这里我遇到了形形色色的人，看到工会里那一个个让人笑道肚子疼的玩笑，和朋友一路上的嬉笑让我忘却了一个人的孤单。正是这些在艾泽拉斯特大陆一起冒险的朋友，帮我填补了当时我无尽的空虚，让我不在孤单，让我忘却现实的陌生。

慢慢的我开始适应了武汉的生活，适应了我的工作，可是我没有忘记我的朋友们，每天还是希望可以和他们一起去冒险。那时候东瘟，STSM，黑石塔自己和朋友们一点点去征服。终于到了 60，可以抛弃自己对 MC 的好奇和大家一起去并肩作战了，开始了一段全新的旅程，开始更为全面的接触工会。

慢慢的我发现游戏变了，不在像我以前看到的那样了，不在只有欢笑了。那一刻仿佛是一个对社会充满希望的学生来到了庞杂的社会一样。突如其来的变化开始让我自己手足无措，不知道要怎么样才好。生性胆小的我选择了逃避，总以为躲的远远的，自己就不会受伤害了。可是发现自己对工会投入的满腔热情到头来换来的是无边的失望。

看到朋友们离开工会心中说不出的难过。也许我是个自私的人，总希望自己的朋友都可以留在自己的身边，可是当他们离去的时候，除了祝福我一点点挽留的能力都没有。

昨天终于忍不住自己的性子，一时冲动到要放弃游戏的地步。面对那个让我感觉面目全非的游戏，我真的想就一走了之。把所有的不愉快都封存在时间的盒子里，永远都不要打开，带着美好的记忆去面对未来的征途。可是最终我接受了大家的挽留，再一次回到了游戏。

这是一个未眠之夜，陪着 NAME 聊了一个晚上。做为游戏里面最好的朋友，我能理解他的决定，也会无条件的支持他。当他下线休息的时候我一个开始回想艾泽拉斯特大陆上的一幕幕，想找寻那游戏的真谛。

其实想想所谓的真谛对于每一个冒险者而言都是不同的。有人为了艾泽拉斯特大陆的风光；有人为了那让人炫目的装备；也有人仅仅是为了放松自己已经紧绷的神经。可是我来到这里仅仅是为了－－朋友！

为了那些带给我欢笑的朋友，帮我排挤空虚的朋友，让我不在孤单的朋友。真的你们才是我玩 WOW 唯一的理由。游戏对于我来说的真谛就是友谊——超越空间的友谊！

也许我会一直等到找不到朋友的时候才会离开艾泽拉斯特大陆，但是我相信那友谊，将不在仅仅只是超越空间，还会超越时间陪我一直到老！

Testimonial 13

Testimonial 13

I am a TBC WoW player. The WoW game at the beginning was a part of my leisure life. And it gradually became the [1]spiritual thing that I can rely on. At a time when TBC first opened my friend introduced me to playing this game produced by Blizzard. And at that time I was playing WC3 and began to play this game, that's how my WoW career began. I chose to be a shaman, and the natural elements that protect him are the wind, water, fire, air. And I was the first shaman in my guild. I enjoyed the process of levelling and quest. WoW taught me a lot about dealing with people, especially the famous fraternity mission chain. From the city of Stormwind, the great King had to chase and kill his working men to prevent the blueprints from being stolen. At that time I did not know whether I should go to Deadmines. At the same time in the twilight forest I became a hiding body …I hide all the dead bodies. And I did not forget his wife and found the tomb of his wife. I shall never forget. At Western Plaguelands there will be a place the holy light is always covering. There is the bright messenger NAME, he taught me we should not be controlled by our hatred. And at that same place there was the most motivating quest in the history of WoW called 'Love and Family'. And that old picture you and me will never forget. And the quests of TBC did not motivate too much. Maybe it's because Blizzard[2] became lazier. I have been discussing the profession Shaman. When I was levelled to the highest I got a guild to explore the BT. And during the process of raiding I learned [3]teamwork spirit I did not learn from other games. [4]Sometimes in order to beat the strong enemy I had to sacrifice myself and complete the mission. We never had a quarrel or argument within our team. [5]We learned trust. Being a man during this PvP career and life I learned how to win the game, how to beat the enemy.

And nowadays WLK is open in China mainland. I and my team are having our journey on the frozen arctic land. And this is a poem. It's called Spirit of Shaman[6]:

Controlling the elements of nature
I dance with the lightening in my hand
I enjoy the blessing of the earth mother
And fearless heart, awe to our ancestors

I will never recover from the battle

[1] Purity
[2] Creator agency
[3] Purity
[4] In-group
[5] Transformation
[6] Art

And the tide is filling up in my breast
And soul of a wild wolf can never be tamed
When the wolf screams in his kingdom

[7]There will be no loneliness
No helplessness
Only the anger of shaman
Even remained the body that will never be revived again

This is the anger of the wind
The crying of the rain

我是一名 TBC 开始接触魔兽世界的中生代 WOW 玩家。它，在一开始，是我休闲娱乐生活的一部分，而渐渐的，它在精神上成为了我一部分的寄托。

在 TBC 刚开放的那个时候，我的朋友推荐我和他们一起玩这个 BLZ 出品的游戏，而当时作为一名很喜欢 WC3 的我，也就慢慢开始玩了。于是，我的魔兽生涯就这样开始了。

我，选择的是萨满祭祀这个职业，它守护者自然元素，风，火，水，空气。

而我，也是第一批联盟萨满，我很享受升级以及做任务的过程，WOW 教会了我很多人情世故，比如很著名的兄弟会任务链，范·德克里夫设计了伟大的联盟主城——暴风城，而他伟大的王上，却因为担心他把图纸泄露而要追杀他和他的能工巧匠，在那时，我真不知道我应不应该去下那个名叫死亡矿井的联盟第一个副本。同样的，在暮色森林，虽然成为亡灵的“藏尸者”，依然不忘他的妻子，不远千里回寻找着他妻子的墓地，我，不会忘记。在西瘟疫之地，这个终年弥漫腐烂的瘟疫之地，有那么一块地方，圣光一直照耀着它，那就是伟大的白银之手骑士团长——光明使者·乌瑟尔，所安葬的地方，他教会了我们，不能被仇恨控制自己的理智，我不会忘记。而在那里，还有 WOW 历史上最感人的，“爱与家庭”任务系列，那张尘封的老张片，你，我，都不会忘记。而 TBC 的任务，并没有让我有很多感动，也许 BLZ 变懒了吧。

我，作为稀缺职业的萨满，满级的时候，很抢手的找到了一个公会开荒 BT，在 Raid 的过程中，我也学会了不曾在其他游戏之中的所能学到的团结合作，以及为了打倒强敌有时候牺牲自己，成全他人也是必要的，我们强大的团队从来没有起过内讧，学会了信赖。而作为男人的我，也在 PvP 的事业中，成就了男人的血性，学到了克敌制胜的操作。

[7] In-group

如今，WLK 的在中国大陆开放，我，和我的团队，都已经在北极寒冷的路途上旅行着.....

下面是一首《萨满的精神》：

掌控者大自然的元素

手中的闪电肆意挥舞

享受着大地母亲的祝福

无畏的心只敬畏着先祖

为了战斗而不再恢复

潮汐与激流在胸中倾注

狂野的狼魂不可能驯服

嗥叫在自己划定的国度

再 没有孤独

再 没有无助

只有萨满之怒

即使留下不能再复生的躯体

还有 风 怒

还有 雨 哭

Testimonial 17

Testimonial 17

I am a male, 22 years old, started from beta. From the beta testing the WoW has accompanied me for 4 years, and the thing I appreciate most is its perfect quest system. During the four years I've tried a lot of professions, and the one made me most proud is Rogue. Before WoW and after WoW I had never touched a game that has so much history, sentiment, not matter is the epidemic covering Plaguelands, or the evil PERSON in the body of PERSON, or the PLACE damaged after the ancient war. And those mysterious titans. Every species, every piece of map, every boss, and even some tiny stuff in the game, I can find history there. Here's a quotation someone said to me: 'ahh greenhand, kill some chickens and prove your ability.' In this dialogue if this is in the game the Hot Blood Legends in 2001, I would accept it. But after 10 years the throne of the netgame has changed. But why this plot and dialogue has never improved? The mission NPC is only about having a Rogue steal something or some precious packet has been lost in some valleys, it's about children grabbed by a lion or a tiger. And the plot of the Chinese netgame are all copies of these, they are just so immature they make my penis hurt and make me have no interest after reading some text about the quest. And I can just directly accept and chase the monsters, and it's all automatic. To run, to kill the monsters, to track them, and to pay NPCs, all automatic.

And if the plots of one game can shock me into the bottom of my heart, it is the WoW. [12]The classic mission 'Of Love and Family,' represents the spirit of chivalry and the love of father. The classic line in the game is this: 'I've seen the best monsters and the worst humans.' And this elevated my evaluation of the PvP in WoW to a new level. After that, to kill was the only to practice the game technics, it was not motivated by the hatred between the species.

There's also a classic mission in the game: 'love never changes.' It's about eternal love. Even though the beloved wife became the sacrifice of war, she still lives in the heart of her husband. And when he met the soul of his wife, the motivating dialogue always made me cry.

[3]When you hear the crying, the wailing of Pamela, does it touch your heart? For you don't know that the dead little girl has to struggle to get her doll back.

And when Cole at the crossroads got back the dead body of his wife killed by the wild pig man, and after he cried and said he will begin a new battle. Do you have admiration for

[1] Purity
[2] Authority
[3] Care

him? [4]And when the heroes at the entrance of the cursed land tell you once again ‘we are against the wrong enemies and should throw away our prejudice for the burning crusade’ do you have a little shame? For you have killed the secondary account of your enemy.

For every NPC who has a name in the game wow, they have their own stories. They are not merely for solving quests and earning experience or money. You must be moved and motivated when you are willing to know more about them and to listen more to them.

本人男，今年 22 岁，从公测开始，魔兽世界已经陪伴我 4 年了，让我最欣赏的，是他完美的任务体系。4 年间，尝试了很多职业，最让我自豪的就是盗贼，喜欢玩盗贼的快感。

自魔兽世界以前，以及从魔兽世界以后，我都没有碰到如此历史积淀的游戏。无论是瘟疫笼罩的安多哈尔，还是麦迪文体内的恶魔萨格拉斯，还是远古大战后崩坏的诺森德雪原，还有神秘莫测无可考证的泰坦之神……在魔兽世界的每一个种族、每一片地图、每一个 BOSS 的身上，甚至一些莫名其妙的小物件上都有可以考证的史料。

“啊，新人，请你去杀几只鸡证明你的能力吧！”如果这对话出现在 2001 年的《热血传奇》中，我会欣然接受。但时隔十年，网游宝座换了一轮又一轮，这种俗套的剧情和对白，为什么就丝毫没有改进呢？任务 NPC 不是被山贼抢走了物什，就是锦囊丢在什么山沟里了，要不就是小孩被老虎狮子之类的野兽叼走了。国产游戏的剧情，难道是拷贝不走样？真是低能得让人蛋疼。以至于玩过几个游戏之后就没了阅读任务文本的兴趣，直接点接受、追踪任务怪自动跑、砍怪、追踪交付 NPC 自动跑、交任务。

如果说还有一种剧情可以震撼到心灵深处，唯有魔兽世界。

经典任务“爱与家庭”自然首推第一。骑士精神和父爱淋漓尽致的表现，经典台词“我见过最高尚的兽人，也见过最卑劣的人类”让魔兽世界的 PVP 观得到了升华。打打杀杀只是游戏技巧的磨练，而非种族之间的宿仇。

联盟经典任务“永志不渝”传达的是永恒的爱情。即使深爱的妻子成了战争的陪葬，她仍活在丈夫的心中。当他与妻子的灵魂相逢，那令人动容的深情表白，总是让我潸然泪下。

[4] In-group

当你听到帕米拉的哭诉时，为甚至不知道自己已经死去的小女孩拼回她的洋娃娃时，心中有没有一丝酸楚？

当你为十字路口的科尔找回被野猪人杀死的妻子的尸体，而他啜泣后表示要重新振奋开始新一轮战斗时，心中有没有一丝崇敬？

当你听诅咒之地入口的英雄焦急地反复告诫“我们在对抗错误的敌人，抛开偏见对抗燃烧军团”的时候，心中有没有为杀过敌对阵营小号而有一丝羞愧？

魔兽世界里每一个有名有姓的 NPC，都有他自己的故事。他们不仅仅是交予任务、给予经验和金钱的 NPC。当你愿意了解他们更多，愿意倾听更多的时候，一定会收获不曾了解的感动。

Testimonial 18

Testimonial 18[1]

The WoW is not so important for our lives.

As I said, the Wow is not so important to our life. Maybe some people say every day or every week we play and struggle with our friends in the game. And it give us new goals and this feeling has become a part of our lives. But I think this is complete bullshit. For college students the boring college[2] life is only an excuse to play the netgame. They do not know they paid 10K a year for the college fee only to pay this netgame. Is the game so important. The equipment, they are just a piece of shit. Waste our time. I can say firmly this game by Blizzard has ruined the new generation. And for the people have got jobs and family, can a virtual game be more important than love of family? I do not deny the attraction of the WoW. After all, I was once in it. I have seen a lot of adults, middle-aged, and even parents with their infants in the game, they are all playing. It's the sense of conquering in the game that weights more than the love of a father and mother. We can see from this, this so-called sense of conquering makes our people become aimless. And only leads us into the darkness.

And I will say WoW is a very good relaxation for life and for study. And maybe it takes a lot of excitement and passion to your boring life.

The netgames do have a great attraction. Especially the excellent producers like Blizzard. The pictures and the animations. And the attractive missions and other designs make people crazy for it. Even though a 30yuan game card is not so much – we would spend that watching a movie – but we have 5 million loyal players in China, 30 * 5 million and this is the income of one week of the game. A foreign game can earn so much in China for only one week, and this money is majorly contributed by college students. And the money of college students was given to them by their parents. And foreigners earn the money that the parents paid for their children. I feel shameful for the students who play the WoW. How can the students be so ignorant of his/her parents' hard work

The pressure from study[3] and life can be released through sports and other recreations. Do we have to put money into digitalizing these games? Sports can build up our bodies. Singing can practice our singing skills. And going to the restaurant can satisfy our stomach. What does the netgame for? Spiritual demand? Nevermind. You'd better go home and play with your mom. At least you have a real person.

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[1] Negative
[2] Education system
[3] Education system

And once more, you can find love and friendship in the game. About the friendship I agree[4]. Because I myself have made several good friends through the game. And this is the most valuable thing in the game for 3 years. But the real friendship cannot be measured by a game. A lot of people have been cheated by the friends in the game, and after all they hurt themselves. I will quote one saying 'things pay back.' The virtual things are virtual, they are not real. And the people play by the game are idiots. About love, I do not want to say more. On the internet, in the baidu, there's all kinds of scandals. And there are not only one or two people being cheated. And I will say once again, the virtual things are not real. It's shit.

If you want to find women, find girls, you have to learn more, to experience more, to increase your ability, this is the real way.

At last I want to say. Because I was so immature I wasted two years but now I will not do it. A lot of people also think like me. Netgame is a tool to cheat people and get money. The producer of the game and the running servers are the real winners. And it's not so important you have lost time then you do not realize it. So I can say now. The game WoW is not important in my life at all. It's only a good memory of my student life. Thank you.

[Chinese not available]

[4] In-group

Testimonial 20

Testimonial 20

WoW in my heart.

20 years old, male

Talking about WoW, I have a lot to say. A few years ago when I heard that Blizzard was going to release a net game I was so excited because this company has created a lot of legendary computer games. At that time, the net game industry was so disappointing. Every producer was only for profit, every element of the game had been commercialized. The producer will follow every style of the game which is profitable. And the MMORPGs had already overwhelmingly made a lot of people lose confidence about net games. [1]Or they already thought net games were simple games in which you can play with your friends. But this time it is Blizzard producing it, and it has no experience of producing net games. So a lot of people were sceptical waiting for this unknown game. [2]But Blizzard overthrew the tradition once again and built its legend. And Blizzard once again took out a game in next century and shocked all the players.

When entering WoW it's a revolution of gameplay. And the epoch when you can control everything by mouse in the netgame world has been turned upside down in a second. Open the map and look beyond, search carefully and you will find you are so small in the world. Yes, this is the real world. And I have to exclaim for this mega project of Blizzard and when I dip into the game and explore every character, you will know this is what Blizzard has been long working on. [3]Different but balanced. And you have to admire this very well-designed game. Battlefields. Arena. And the bosses in the dungeons. The team instancing. And all the producing skills. The game system has changed, changed the monolithic image of the MMORPG in people's eyes.

[4]But I have to say in WoW what is most attractive to me is the so-called teamwork spirit. This is what every player should learn. [5]In WoW, I finally experienced the concept of 1 + 1 > 2. Two friends with their cooperation and sensitivity can build up a legend. He told me, you alone no matter how good your weapons are, no matter how high your skills are, you cannot achieve greatness. Only by cooperating you two can both benefit. And this is what other

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[1] Creator agency
[2] Authority
[3] Fairness
[4] Purity
[5] In-group

games did not have at that time. In retrospect to that time, when you are a greenhand and go to the instance for the first time, and there are no people leading/guiding you, you cannot find other people. So you too want to try it. You would experience countless destruction. [6]And when you exclaim on the dead body of the boss with all your equipment red, the unprecedented sense of achievement it's the most attractive.

WoW has saved the world of net games and it has always been imitated but never surpassed. [7]In my life, WoW is my dream. It's something I cannot experience in reality. [8]And the dream to fight with my friends was realized by it. And this is WoW, the indispensible part of my life.

我心中的 wow

20 岁 男

说起 wow，我真的是有好多话想要说。早在多年前，听说暴雪大神要出一款网游，一向只出单机游戏并创造神话的它居然要出网游！真令人兴奋。而当时的网游界却令人心寒，每款游戏的制作商都是为了牟利以及牟更多的利，一切游戏性的元素商业化，哪种风格有商机就一味跟风，而 MMORPG 早已泛滥成灾，使很多人对网游已经失去了信心，或者将网游已定位为了这样一种单调的但是可以和朋友一起玩罢了的游戏。但是这次是暴雪大神直接制作，但是它也没有制作网游的经验啊，于是很多人抱着半信半疑的心态等待着这款未知的游戏。但是暴雪又一次的推翻了传统，创造了神话，暴雪又一次拿出了下一个世纪的游戏来震了玩家。

一进入 wow，首先就是操作方法的大革命，网游世界"一鼠掌天下"的时代瞬间被颠覆。打开地图，放眼望去，仔细寻找，才发现自己只是世界渺小的一角，是啊，这才是"世界"啊，不尽感叹暴雪大神这次工程的庞大。深入游戏，挖掘每个职业，你才知道这就是暴雪一直以来所追求的"不同但平衡"，让人不尽感叹其精心的设计。战场，竞技场，野外 boss，团队副本，各种生产技能，丰富的游戏系统颠覆了以往 MMORPG 在大家眼中单调的形象。

但是不得不说，在 wow 中，最吸引我的，还是他说宣扬的"团队合作"精神，这是每个玩家都应该学习的。在 wow 中，我才终于体会到了"1+1>2"的概念，两个默契的好友，只要有默契的配合与意识，你们就可以创造神话。他告诉了我，你一个人，不论装备再怎么好，技术再怎么高，也成不了大事，只有合作，才能让你们共同获利，这是

[6] Peak experience
[7] Purity
[8] In-group

当时一些其他游戏所没有的。遥想当年，当你们两个新手第一次下副本的时候，没有人带，也组不到人一起去，于是你们决定两个人试一试，在你们经历了无限的团灭，你们红着装备站在 boss 的尸体上呐喊的时候，那种空前的成就感是不可能不吸引人的。

Wow 拯救了整个网游界，一直被模仿，从未被超越。而在我的生活中，wow 就是我的梦，我在现实中所体会不到的，和朋友一起并肩作战的梦，他给予了实现。这就是 wow，我生活中不可缺少的一部分。

Testimonial 21

Testimonial 21

[1]My WoW began one month before the college entrance exams. [2]It was only for keeping contact with my friends and classmates who have the same habits, play the same game, to continue our friendship. Facing graduation from high school I didn't want to lose touch with these people I've been studying with for 3 years, so I chose the game they had been playing for a long time, WoW. But when beginning to play the game I began to love it because when playing the game I made new friends. And in WoW I came across a lot of moving stories, because of WoW I learned to accomplish missions with people of the same faction and kill people of the enemy faction. [3]Because of WoW I understand the importance of time and realized the value of cooperation. [4]Because of WoW, as a main tank I got the trust from my teammates and enjoyed pride.

I talk about several small things. In the beginning when I played WoW I did not understand many things, just knew levelling and killing monsters, getting equipment, and levelling. [5]And once one of my classmates who has highest level took me to FB and I said 'what's that' and he said you just follow me. And in that way I got my first FB since I played WoW. I got a blue equipment and I was so excited and then I asked him to take me several more times and I was thinking it's so easy to get good equipment and gear that would be so cool if I got all of it, but he said I just help you to get a weapon and all the rest depends on you.

[6]Since then I often heard him talking about WoW, and LM and love stories, the betrayal of brothers, and revenge of princes, and the third war of JJG and a lot about legendary weapons. WEAPON NAME and the symbol of MT, the windsword, and the guarantee of DPS, the double sword. In WoW there are too many stories I want to talk about. I still remember the first time we went through the SW with the guild, the last JD, which we did for a whole afternoon. And at last we went through the TBC, that was the glory of the whole guild. And it was a sense of satisfaction.

[7]And then there were those coincidences in WoW, when many names of the players in the enemy faction were exactly the nicknames of the friends in my life, and whenever we mention it we burst into laughter, and WoW indeed brought us so much happiness[8]. And I still remember everybody getting together to beat the enemy or be killed at the same time. That has made us closer and more connected.

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1 Education system
2 In-group
3 Transformation
4 Authority
5 Care
6 In-group
7 In-group
8 Peak experience

[9]In the game WoW we are not only playing a game but making friends and harvesting happiness. [10]In a word, WoW, I will always support you.

我的 wow 是在高考前大概一个月开始的，不为别的，只是为了跟同学继续保持联系，有同样的爱好，玩同样的游戏，继续我们的友情。面对毕业，一起生活学习的三年的朋友，同学，我不想因为毕业而各奔东西，不再联系，所以，我选择了他们玩了好久的 wow，but，一玩，便喜欢上了 wow，因为 wow，我又交上了新的朋友，因为 wow，我知道了好多感人的故事，因为 wow，我会帮助同阵营的做任务，杀敌对阵营的玩家，因为 wow，我了解了团队的重要，明白了合作，因为 wow，作为 MT 的我，感受到队友的的信任，感受到骄傲。

说几件小事，当初刚开始玩 wow 的时候，有很多不明白，很多不了解，只是知道傻傻的升级，杀怪，拿装备，在升级，有次，我一同学（满级！），突然说是呀带我去刷 FB，我说："啊？什么东西？"，他说："你跟我走就好了。"就这样，我刷了玩 wow 一来第一个 FB，摸到第一件蓝色装备，当时我心里那个激动哦，看到自己经验涨的那么容易，那叫一个爽啊，便叫他在多带我几遍，心里想着："哇，好装备这么容易就能拿到啊，还是个套装，集齐了那多帅。"但是，他说："帮你刷到武器就好了，剩下的还是靠你，因为好多故事都是非常精彩的。"

在那以后，时常听他说起 WOW 的故事，一个人的 LM，小人物的爱情故事，兄弟的背叛，英勇的反击，王子的复仇，第三次 JJG 大战。还有好多传说中的神器，奥金斧，MT 的象征，风剑，DPS 的保证，双刀。魔兽中有太多让我说起的故事，还记得跟工会第一次刷通 SW，最后的 JD，灭了一下午，最后终于在指挥嘶哑的喊叫指挥中打败了基尔加丹，全通 TBC。那是一个公会的荣耀.那是一种满足感。

还有就是魔兽中的巧合，敌对阵营居然有玩家的角色名称就是我朋友的生活中的外号，每当提起我们都哈哈大笑，魔兽，真的给了我们太多快乐，太多感动，记得朋友被守尸，大家集合一起打退敌人，一起被杀，都让我们连在了一起，心跟心拉近了距离。

在 wow 里，我不只是玩一个游戏，更是结交朋友，收获快乐。总之，wow，我顶你。

[9] More than a game
[10] Allegiance

Testimonial 23

Testimonial 23

When I have a break during work and have dinner with friends after work, I feel so warm in my heart calling up all the stories that happened in wow. I can't help asking myself what did I play this for – it's only a game. I think everyone has an answer for his own. And the most representative one is the classic line: [1]We are all WoW players.

We are all WoW players, as simple as that. But it contains too many things. The suffering of friends and the passion of a team. And the gains and losses. And the occasional anger.

I still remember the first time I applied for a QQ account many years ago. I joined the beta test of the game, the King of Kings. And I became the first player of the game, the magic baby, and I played in the game with my friends, the heroes from the MARTIAL ARTS BOOKS. And I also witnessed the cruelty of the game Legend. I played a lot of the games that are so-called classics. But only WoW is unsurpassable in my heart.

I have been thinking, what makes the WoW so attractive. [2]I think it is the fact that WoW has brought us so many things that we are longing to get, but we can't get in reality. [3]No matter the education by your parents by a very young age, what a traditional education we got in school. And until the real environment we entered society, all of them are pragmatic and only emphasize the results rather than to enjoy the process, and besides the players in WoW are almost all single children, and the life road of the single child is that we are all lonely. [4]How many of us can experience the warmth of a big family like our parents have? A lot of people on the net are always crying that they are lonely and empty. We want to experience the passion of fighting monsters with our friends. And want to suffer together with our brothers. Because our life circles are too narrow (in reality we are single children and we don't have many people to see), we want sincere communication with people. Just at the same time the game WoW emerged.

In WoW no matter you volunteer or are forced you have to have contact with other

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[1] In-group
[2] Purity
[3] Education system
[4] In-group

people. As small as an elite mission or as big as big instancing, you have to cooperate with other people. And just from this process the distances between people are shortened. [5]And some people will wonder 'what about single missions?' and I'm pretty sure this is not the motivation of the game designer. The reason they make these situations is because this game has been twisted by the people into a very ill-formed version. The players who make single player recrods, when they are celebrating this they must feel kind of loss.

[6]Many people will feel this way. That wow is a miniature society. And indeed, we met good people as well as bad people in the game. [7]And we will appreciate the help we received and will also be angry of all the cheating. We will talk the whole night with the people who have the same interests and will also argue with those who have the opposite opinion, and maybe we will become friends because of a very simple piece of equipment, and we will also feel a grudge because of a mindless sentence.

[8]All the things I've seen since I've played WoW can be concluded into [9]three flavours: sour, sweet, bitter. Even now every time I log into the game I feel a sense of emptiness, NAME is still guarding Orgimarr, and the king of the Stormwind is still sitting on his throne and looking upon the people. But time has changed, players have also changed, the players born after 1980s are mostly married and have children and have gotten away from the World of Warcraft. And the players born after 1990s have been filling our positions, the ill-formed versions have made us so depressed. Some people chose to leave forever. And some people leave their hometown and work in other cities. But more people are hoping to see the frozen land of Northrend after they wake up.

And I can't help thinking that if one day the WoW does not exist any longer what will I remember?

And I think if that day really comes the memories will accompany me forever. The sour, sweet and bitter or spicy, and the stories made me cry. [10]The friends at my side, will always be at the bottom of my heart.

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[5] Creator agency
[6] WoW is like real life
[7] Care
[8] Peak experience
[9] Just interesting
[10] In-group

If one day the WoW disappears, I don't know what will be left in your heart. I think it's just like the people drinking water, whether it's cold or warm, only the drinkers knows. There will be some special memories at the bottom of every player who loved the game.

当工作间歇的时候，当下班之后和朋友吃吃喝喝的时候。想起魔兽里的那些曾经发生的故事，都会让心里感觉一暖，我不禁反问，魔兽到底是什么？仅仅是个游戏吗？我想每个人在心底都会有个呼之欲出的答案。我想最具代表性的就是那句经典："我们是魔兽玩家。"

"我们是魔兽玩家。"虽然就是这么简单的一句话，可是这句话却包含了太多太多的东西。朋友之间的患难与共，在团队中一起奋斗的激情，还有太多的无奈和失落，以及偶尔的愤怒。

记得 N 年前第一次申请 QQ。参与了《万王之王》的公测，有幸成为了《魔力宝贝》的第一批玩家，和同学在《金庸群侠传》中无法自拔，见识了《传奇》中的残酷。一路走来，玩过了很多曾经堪称经典的游戏。唯独 WOW 在我心里的地位是高高在上的。

我曾经思索过，魔兽吸引人的地方到底在哪里。

我想，应该是魔兽带给了我们应该拥有渴望拥有却在现实中拥有不了的东西。不管懵懂时期家长的言行身教，还是在步入学堂之后的传统教育，一直到接触社会之后的环境，无一不是功利化的教育，导致我们往往只重视结果，却不去享受过程。另外魔兽所面对的客户群基本都是独生子女。独生子女的人生道路上，几乎都是孤立而又寂寞的。有多少人能够体会到我们父辈那种兄弟姐妹大家族其乐融融的温暖。

很多人在网络上，都不由自主的喊着：寂寞啊，空虚啊。我们渴望那种与人肩并肩一起奋斗的热情，渴望那种患难与共的情节。因为我们生活的圈子太狭窄了，我们渴望着能够与人真诚的交流。恰恰这时候魔兽这个游戏平台出现了。

在魔兽中，不管你是自愿的还是被逼的，都要与别人发生接触。小到做一个精英任务，大到需求那些大型副本的装备。都需要人和人之间共同合作才能完成。就这么一下子，人和人的距离就拉近了。（有些人会说，那些单刷呢？我想这肯定不是游戏设计者的初衷。造成这种情况的原因，有很大一部分是因为这个游戏，在我们这边被人为的扭曲成了一个畸形的版本。那些创造着单刷记录的玩家，在高兴之余肯定也会感觉到些许的无奈。）

很多人都会有这样的体会，感觉魔兽就是一个微缩的社会。确实如此，我们在魔兽中会遇到好人同样也会遇到坏人。在受到帮助时会心怀感激，在受到欺骗时会愤怒。遇到志同道合的人会彻夜长谈，遇到与自己意见相反的人会针锋相对。也许因为一件不起眼的物品我们会成为朋友，也许会因为不经心的一句话会心存芥蒂。

从我接触魔兽到现在，遇到的事情，总结为：酸，甜，苦
距离就拉近了。（有些人会说，那些单刷呢？我想这肯定不是游戏设计者的初衷。造成这种情况的原因，有很大一部分是因为这个游戏，在我们这边被人为的扭曲成了一个畸形的版本。那些创造着单刷记录的玩家，在高兴之余肯定也会感觉到些许的无奈。）

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时至今日，当我每一次登陆游戏之后，都会感到一丝的惆怅和空虚。萨尔依旧在奥格瑞玛的大厅中守护着部落，暴风城的国王依旧高高的坐在王座上俯视众生。可是时代变了，玩游戏的人也换了一茬又一茬。像我这样的 80 后玩家大多已经结婚生子，远离了魔兽这个世界。而 90 后的玩家不断的填补着我们的位置。畸形的版本，让我们在一次次无奈与无声的抗争中变得消沉。有的人永远的离开了，有的人背井离乡顶着蝗虫金币农民的帽子在海外漂泊，有的人在沉默中渐渐的扭曲了。更多的人都希望在一夜醒来之后会看到北极那片冰冷的大陆。

我不禁想到，如果魔兽不存在了。我们还会记得什么？

我想如果有一天魔兽不存在了，记忆会永远伴随在我的余生中。那些游戏中的酸甜苦辣，那些让我流泪的故事，那些在我身边陪伴的朋友，都会永远留存在我的心底。

如果有一天魔兽不存在了，不知道你们在心里会留下什么？我想应该就像如人饮水，冷暖自知。在每一个热爱魔兽的人的心底，都会留下一些特别的回
忆！

Testimonial 24

Testimonial 24[12]

There must be a game that makes you addicted after playing and you will never think about playing other games. Then this game can only be WoW. Before I play WoW I did not understand why the best game is WoW.

After playing I knew it can only be, it must be, WoW. And [3]her beauty can never be imitated or compared by other games. [4]It is the sentiment of the hard work of many people that made that land so vast, so beautiful, and the battles so real and splendid and the instancing emphasizing the teamwork.

Every time I play wow it's like I'm in love. I hug with her and breathe with her and in WoW everything is so joyful and when leaving I'm always looking back.

[5]I know inside my body there is something connected with this game. Very closely. I knew that the WoW has an inherent magic in the game and she/it catches me (Spirituality?)

Whenever I am tired of missions and levelling I rode on my elephant and wandering in the vast land of Azeroth. Watching the snow in the winterspring valley and watching the waterfall in mauradon and watching the animals in the valley of Thorns and waiting for the sunrise Thunder Cliffs, and touching the old tree of 1,000 years in Hyjer, and looking at the starry sky and empty storm (outlands?). I could not express my love towards WoW more precisely because I'm in it, I cannot see clearly and cannot read through and the only thing I can chose to addict to the game.

I was addicted. [6]The hot summer of last year entered the gate of high school. [7]There I met four brothers and we made commitments to playing the game and made our world.

And at that time I did not decide which game to play. When we entered netbar and we were about to play another game but we saw two people playing wow – one is FS

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[1] Memory-centric
[2] Art
[3] WoW personified and feminized.
[4] Creator agency
[5] Purity
[6] Education system
[7] In-group

and one is SM – they are KLZ, and our 5 people were seduced by WoW and then decided to play it.

The days at that time were so simple but however happy. [8]Because we are all green and this was the first time playing the WoW we made a lot of jokes. Someone was killed dropping from the cliff and then we knew we could kill ourselves that way. And we swam across the sea and at last we knew there was boats at the other side. And later I played the account of BL I was standing in the darkness for two hours and could not get into the city. And then I met an SQ brother and then knew the gates can be opened from the inside. And then we knew an older brother in the netbar, and that is the time we really began our journey in WoW. Because we didn't have high level, so whenever we went instancing we were dependent on ourselves. And we 5 were on the same time. I still remember when we were all 19th level we went to SK and OT for five times and went to Van Clefff (boss of deadmines) and we could not beat him. And now I'm recalling that the hardship at that time was happier than selling/being experience baby (marked on paper ….maybe he's talking about EXP farming). I still remember there was a fat person in SK he can talk 'you bastards from Stormwind, the professor Van Cleff will cut off your head' and when he says that it's very funny (Thor or whatever give syou the mace).

[9]And the time went fast. It has been a year and we are in the second year of high school. And our five our separated because we had to be separated according to the subject they were learning …art vs science. And at the time separated they said 'distance will never change our friendship,' but

Our friendship could not stand for reality. Because something in real life we had some problems and we did not contact with each other and no longer played wow, whenever I went into the net bar alone, I went online and saw the names of my friends are all grey (not there) and I was so lost.

Now they four area ll in their second year of high school but I am still the first year (freshman), I was so addicted and fascinated and crazy about WoW. …skipping class was so common for me and I did very bad in studies. And I always sigh there's no regretting medicine in this world (Chinese saying: if you get sick you can take medicine, but there's no medicine for regret) and if there was would I chose WoW or study.

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[8] In-group

[9] Education system

No matter how that year was happiest year. Every land of Azeroth there was my sweat and blood and the trail of battle, but now that the 5 have departed this seems to be so shameful (he feels so lost about his friendship with them [think me and mike])

[10]Towards WoW I feel complex, love her because she is good, and hate her because she waste me a whole year [fox says female 'ta' is to show you adore something], and now I am often getting online and riding my elephant alone, walking on the road at mountain summit and all the view the scenary is so familiar, but the difference is there were four people and four elephants [every wow seems to have an arc …think of me and pvp ..lonely thereafter]

There is a road we walk on with hardship and there is a friendship we did not want to lose. There was a dream we want to have everyday. [11]I experienced love, belonging, pain, and I cried, I experienced being alone, a song, a period of time, a sense of loss, and a sense of missing.

一定有个游戏，玩过之后就让你沉溺，其他游戏都不想玩了，就想一直玩这个游戏。

那么，这个游戏，只能是魔兽世界。以前未玩魔兽时，一直不明白，为什么，最好玩的是魔兽？

[10] WoW personified and feminized

[11] Peak experience



玩过之后，才知，只能，必须，一定，是魔兽。她的风情，不是别的游戏可以模拟可以相比的。是积淀了无数人的心血，才有了那辽阔的土地、优美的风景、真实华丽的战斗、讲究团队配合的 FB 等等。

我每次玩魔兽时，仿佛都投入一场热恋，与之交缠拥抱，与之呼吸缠绕，在魔兽里，一切都是愉快的……离开时，依依不舍，满怀伤感……

我知道我体内，有一种东西，与魔兽这个游戏很合拍，很靠的近；我知道，魔兽有种与生俱来的魔力，她生出一个吸盘，牢牢的吸引住了我。

每当我升级、任务累了的时候，就骑上我的大象，漫步在艾泽拉斯辽阔的土地上：冬泉谷观雪，玛拉顿赏瀑布，荆棘谷看动物，雷霆崖等待日出，海加尔抚摩千年古树，虚空风暴赞无尽星空……我无法细腻地表达出对于魔兽的喜欢了——因为身在庐山，我看不清，道不明，也读不透了。我只能选择沉溺了，沉溺在这魔兽。

沉溺了……去年那个炎热的夏天，我带着满脸幼稚进入了高中的大门，在那里，我碰到了 4 个兄弟，我们说要一起玩个游戏、一起拼出我们的天空。

当时一直决定不了到底玩哪个游戏，本来说是玩诛仙的，到网吧时，碰巧看

到有两个人在打魔兽，一 FS 一 SM，正下 KLZ 呢，我们 5 个被魔兽所“勾引”，所以决定玩魔兽，哈哈。



当初的日子，很单纯，也很快乐，因为都是第 1 次玩魔兽，都是新手，闹过许多笑话：从山上掉下去死了，才知道原来能摔死；横穿大海，憋死后，才知道原来那边有船；最最哭的是，后来玩 BL 的号，硬是在幽暗站了 2 小时进不去城，后来碰到个好心的 SQ 哥哥才知道原来内墙能打开..后来在网吧了认了个师傅后，才开始了正确的 WOW 之旅。因为都没大号，所以下 FB 都是自强，我们 5 个人正好组一队，记的我们都 19 级的时候，去推 SK，OT 了 5 回，才打到范格里夫那里，结果打不过他……现在想起来，当初艰难的推本都比现在当经验宝宝开心多了，还记的 SK 里有个胖子还会说话“你们这群暴风城的走狗，范格里夫教授会割掉你们的头颅的”内说话的语气很搞笑。

这样无忧无虑的日子过的很快，转眼就是一年。一年后，我们到了高二，面临文理分科，我们 5 个分开了，分开时，我们曾说过，再远的距离改变不了我们的友情，可是...

我们的友情，没有抵过现实的摧残，因为现实里的某些事，我们之间发生了矛盾，老死不相往来，也都不玩魔兽了。每次我孤孤单单一人来到网吧，上线后，看到好友里那一个个灰色的名字，心里抑郁着无限惆怅……

现在，他们 4 个都上的高二；而我，却是高一，去年的魔兽，我为之着迷，为之沉溺，为之疯狂，旷课、夜市是家常便饭，学习自然而然的落下了。有时也在感叹，幸亏这世上没有后悔药，如果有的话，我回到去年，我是继续选择魔兽还是选择学业呢..?

不管怎样，那一年，是我最快乐的一年，在艾泽拉斯的每一块土地上，都留下了我们辛勤的汗水、无畏的鲜血，那些战斗的痕迹，仍在诉说当初我们的友谊，却是如此的刺眼。

对于魔兽，复杂的情感：爱她，因为她好；恨她，因为她让我挥霍了一年光阴...现在的我，还是经常上线去看看，自己一个骑着大象，走在路上，在山顶、风景旧曾谙，只是旁边少了四个人和四头大象，也少了快乐……

有一段路，我们走的好辛苦；有一份情，我们都不舍得丢；有一个梦，我们每天会去做；爱过，有过，痛过，哭过，经历过一个人，一首歌，一段时光，一场落寞，一份想念。

Testimonial 25

Testimonial 25[1]

That was the best times and also the worst of times

That was the year of wisdom and also the year of stupidity

That was the time of belief and also the time of scepticism

That was the season of brightness and also the season of darkness

That was the spring of hope and also the winter of disappointment

We are all running into heaven, and we are all running in the opposite direction.

--from the Tale of Two cities.[2]

PICTURE[3]

When mentioning my career in WoW it reminds me of the beginning of the tale of two cities, and I will make it the beginning of mine.

THE BEGINNNING OF TRAGEDY: it was a ***beginning. I began my career in WoW with my spirit from the game Legend. [4]I truly believed all my hard work would pay back and I went to the 60 level step by step and I made myself an awesome rogue that opened locks. During this period I joined several guilds but every time in the end it was the guild would separate. [5]At that time it was like being a prostitute, I was not pretty nor sexy, I tried my best to flirt but I did not know when I would get customer. Never mention ZG or MC, I didn't fight for several times.

And I realized I could not wait for other people to come and I wanted to be my own master, so on a very dark night I built a new guild with several friends and this guild was the smallest one on this server. [6]No one would ever imagine after several years this guild would become famous in the server.

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[1] Memory-centric
[2] Art
[3] Art
[4] Fairness
[5] Authority
[6] Transformation

The fame of ZG had almost reached its highest point, and we did not know how to open the gate of MC. And the first time in MC there were some people who mistook the leaf and the little red dragon card in BWL and that lead to half of the guild when MT reached 1%. [7]I did not know what was the spirit that supported us. But we overcame. And one day we got the legendary sword of fraternity and one brother of my guild held that big sword around, bragging, Ironforge Castle for 100 times. I looked at him and remembered the time I got my first purple bracelet in ZG. [8]I was like a king. And someone compared NAXX to the time of black iron, and the tolerance of the instance is very low. [9]And if one step is not good, the whole game is lost. It's as cruel as a war, and we were fighting day after day, and everybody was like superman, but it was still so hard to move on. [10]The attraction of T3 was so big and so was the payment and at that time I failed six subjects but I believe I was not the worst, and after the war I could not look at my score paper.

At that time we are all watching the TV show, it's called 'Struggling.' And when the character, the hero of the show, jumps from the building, it was like that person is me. And I had a cold sweat and some illusions, and then I AFK with tears in my face. Of course this was not the first time for me to AFK but everybody knew that I meant it this time. [11]I wrote on a the forum that if I cannot get the diploma I have to go back and feed up the pigs and marry a country girl. But my real love is the city girls. [12]And the second day I saw dozens of replies and they were all blessings. I nearly cried. And I rose my head and let my tears dry and savoured the most precious fortune the WoW brought to me.

I had to start from the beginning at school; it was hard. But I took all the examinations I had failed and eventually got the diploma. Once someone told me, if a person cannot play a game well, what do we expect him to do? But I said I don't agree. I think a very good player is not necessarily a very good worker. When I was looking for a job, I began being a prostitute again and every day all I thought about was how to sell myself. And when I saw the resumes of other people they had written that they won a scholarship or participated in some contest, I could not tell the HR manager that I did not get any scholarship but I am the guild master in the biggest guild in some server in

[7] Purity
[8] Authority
[9] Contingencies
[10] Education
[11] Education
[12] In-group

WoW. I was always the first in DPS. All right, I'm going to die. Oh well. And it was like this, I was jobless for half a year. And then I eventually sold myself and got a job only because my school was a good school. During that period my guild became the top guild of the server. But I did not experience that because I was looking for jobs and didn't play much. I can only forget the friendship and occasionally get online and play with my friends in arena.

[13]I thought life is true, and dream is an illusion. But they are not. The reality and the game are so similar, everything is difficult in the beginning, [14]but all your hard work will pay back. Over time it worked in reality and I cherish every chance to get better in work. And finally I jump, skip into another company which is another good one. It's an aircraft-designing institute. [15]And I thought the holy spirit must be with me.

The title is whenever you get something you lose something. The glory in the game and helplessness in reality. Gaining and losing have filled up my life in WoW. But whenever I assembled this puzzle my heart is full of warmth and happiness.[16] WoW gave me a childhood dream about being a hero. A dream about the youth and I still want the time to stand still and do not want to wake up.

I'm not a good sleeper, but I'm a good dreamer.

那是最美好的年代，那是最糟糕的年代。

那是智慧的年头，那是愚昧的年头。

那是信仰的时期，那是怀疑的时期。

那是光明的季节，那是黑暗的季节。

那是希望的春天，那是失望的冬天。

我们都在直奔天堂，我们都在直奔相反的方向

提及魔兽生涯，我想到了《双城记》的这段开头，姑且做个引子吧。

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[13] WoW is like real life
[14] Fairness
[15] Purity
[16] Authority



悲剧的开始

It was a **ing beginning!

我以专业的《传奇》精神高调的开始了魔兽生涯，坚定的信奉着只要功夫深铁棒子磨成针的真理,一刀刀坎到了 60 级，练就了一个连开锁都为 0 的极品盗贼。期间我陆陆续续加入了几个公会，但结局总是树倒猢狲散。那段日子就像是坐台，而我既不漂亮也不性感，我尽情的卖弄风骚但却永远不知道什么时候才能接到客。别说 ZG,MC 了，连黑上黑下也没打过几次。

我觉得不能再坐以待毙等着别人的宠幸了，农奴要翻身做主我要吃上白面馍馍。于是在一个月黑风高的夜晚，我威逼利诱着几个狐朋狗友高唱国际歌起义了。一群蓝蓝绿绿的散兵游勇，这个乡下小服最小的毛会。可谁也没想到几年以后就是这几条破枪会拿下服务器一个个 FD，名噪一时。

ZG 声望都快打到崇拜了 MC 门还不知道朝哪边开，MC 第一次过老 9 就有人自动拾取误拿了叶子，BWL 小红龙卡散了半个公会终于打到 1%MT 却被干涉了……不知道是怎样一种操蛋的精神支撑着我们，就这么啼笑皆非就这么拧巴，可是我们挺过来了 。于是孙子熬成了婆，猛地有一天好像所有人都开窍了，我们一鼓作气推掉了奈法并开出了传说中的兄弟会之剑。那厮扛着大剑在铁炉堡兜

兜转转溜达了不下 100 圈，我静静地看着他，却依稀想起自己在 ZG 换到第一件紫色护腕时的情形，蹦蹦跳跳骄傲的像个国王。

曾有人把 NAXX 比作黑铁时代，木桶效应在这里得到最完美的印证。FB 容错率极低，一着不慎满盘皆输，残酷的就像一场战争。夜以继日日以继夜，所有人都打了鸡血一样把自己当成王进喜，可是依旧寸步难行。T3 的诱惑实在太大了，代价也是如此，到此时我累计挂了 6 科，而我确信我不是挂的最多的。当这场战争打完，我的成绩单早已变得伤痕累累满目疮痍，撕心裂肺的恨自己没有早信春哥。

那会大家都在看《奋斗》，当高强从楼上一跃而下，我恍惚觉得跳的那个人就是自己，浑身冒冷汗。于是我散尽家财，内牛满面的 AFK 了，当然这不是第一次 AFK 当然所有人都知道这次是动真格的了。我戏谑地在论坛上写到如果拿不到学位证我就得回家种地养猪娶淑芬了，而我爱的是城里的小丽。第二天我看到了几十条回复，没有过多刻意的挽留满满的都是祝福。那一刻鼻子真的有点酸，我像四娘一样将头扬起四十五度角，让眼泪慢慢的干涸，品味着魔兽带给我最宝贵的财富。

雄关漫道真如铁，而今迈步从头越。从头越，太他妈难。好吧，苦不苦想想当年荆棘谷。头悬梁，锥刺股，终于在毕业之前补齐所有的科目顺利拿到学位证。曾经有人说一个连游戏都玩不好的人还能指望他干什么，可是一个游戏玩的很好的人也不见得能有什么骄傲的资本。找工作，我再次开始了“坐台”生涯，每天做梦都是把自己卖出去了。可是，如果没有可是就好了，可是当别人简历上写着拿过几次奖学金参加过什么大赛，而我……我总不能跑到人家面前说---您好，我没有拿过奖学金，但是我是魔兽世界某区某服第一大会的会长。我 DPS 总是打第一，曾经拳打奈法利安脚踢帕奇维克……好吧，我屎去。就这样西装革履人五人六的溜溜小半年，最后是学校的名气帮我把自己卖出去了。期间公会经过 NAXX 的洗礼之后成为服务器第一公会，拿下 TBC 之后一个又一个 FD，而我并没有亲历。只是依旧割舍不掉那份情结，偶尔上上线和朋友打打竞技场，唏嘘不已。

我以为生活是真实的，梦是虚幻的，原来都不是。现实与游戏有着神似的轨迹。万事开头难，但天道酬勤。数不尽的出差与加班，珍惜每一次锻炼的机会，终于我跳槽拿到某飞机工业集团设计院的接收函，原来圣光一直与我同在。

有得有失

游戏里的荣耀与现实中的无奈，意气风发与失魂落魄，得得失失就这样交错杂糅充斥着我的整个魔兽生涯。但是在将这些斑驳凌乱的记忆组织在一起的时候，

心中却满是温暖与快乐。魔兽让我做了一个梦，一个关于儿时英雄情结的梦，一个与青春有关快意恩仇的梦，多想时间定格一梦不醒。

I’m not a good sleeper, but I’m a good dreamer!

Testimonial 28

Testimonial 28[1]

It's hard to leave because I played it for so long that in the bottom of my memory I could not think of your date of birth.

It's hard to leave because the connection is too close. And whenever I heard people talking about you my drawn ear cannot help but trembling. And I made you a part of my thinking. It's hard to leave because we are so familiar to each other … your name went into my brain, your body has accompanied me throughout my youth, you witnessed my love, my laughter, and my sadness. 5 years. [2]For a person like me who just entered the 20s, you carried 1/4 of the weight of my heart.

How many people remembered the time I was introduced to you. Even though the people you are so familiar with cannot tell that date. DATE. That was the coldest time of the last year of my junior middle school. It was your naked body that lit up the desire of the depressed student.

So many times I could not get out of the game, so many times you played me in front of you [3]I wanted to be a slave.

Do you know so many people are crazy for you? So many people just use up all the money and want to get you. And so many young children want to get satisfaction from you. And waste their youth. No one can get you, event though they spent everything they have they can only get your smile. And for that impulsive, helpless youth, what you can offer is the comfort in very well-controlled amounts.

I forgot how many times I went on my daily raids. And spent the exciting moments[4] together with you. I spent my most precious time with you, and you rewarded me with the happiness I deserved. I still remember that time I entered the unknown field for the first time to ask for my happiness to fill my void. I satisfied the sense of accomplishment by conquering.

You have also left me, during the 3-months you left every day was like a year. You made me think of you, but you left only several words and disappeared. Your

[1] WoW personified and feminized
[2] Just interesting
[3] Authority
[4] Peak performances

disappearing has caused so many topics and arguments, and this wounded me and I chose to leave my hometown and went abroad. Maybe it was to forget what you had given or maybe to follow your footsteps. But now you come back again after 3 months you are in front of me, beautifully. I still worship you.

In my life which was not so exciting before WoW, it is your gracious breast that warms up my frozen body and now I am growing I began to realize that your sweet milk is actually a drug. And it made me addicted. And made me compromise. I do not want that anymore.

I want to leave. Because you treat me well and make me realize the importance of life, I want to leave you. I want to leave you even though as I say this my blood is still boiling in my vessels, and regret is filling up my breast.

[5]I want to say you are not the pillar of my spirit and you cannot use my endless passion, you cannot squeeze out my strength and suck off my youth. And I only want to say you are merely a comfort when I am bored. When I get angry and I beat someone you are there.

You are only a plaything now. I'm not that addicted anymore.

很难离开，因为认识太久太久。以至于在记忆的底层，翻箱倒柜也仍然记不起你出生日期。

很难离开，因为关系太亲太亲。以至于在人群中听到关于你的点点滴滴，耳膜都会情不自禁的颤抖，呼唤着你去融入我的思绪。

很难离开，因为彼此过分的熟悉。你的名字闯进了我的大脑，你的身躯陪伴了我的青春，你赤裸的见证了我的喜怒哀乐。五年，对于我这个刚满二十的人来说，你承载了我内心四分之一的重量。

有多少人记得当年认识你的时间?即便是对你再熟悉的人，和你再亲密的人，也很难说出那个日子 DATE。那个初三最忙碌也是最冷淡的时期，是你的胴体点燃了那些被压抑已久的学生们内心埋藏的欲望。

交媾，缠绵。多少次的欲罢不能，多少次被你玩弄，在你面前，我束手就擒。

[5] Purity

你知道哪些为你疯狂的人们么？那些挥洒着钞票为了得到你全部的人们，那些挥霍青春为了从你那得到满足的少年。没有人能占有你，即便是倾囊而出，也只是你的莞尔一笑。而对于那些无助少年的冲动，你更是只给予了点到为止的安慰。

已经忘记有多少次准时准点的陪伴你，共同度过那激动的时刻，我付出了我最可贵的时间，你偿还了我理应得到的快乐。还记得那曾几何时，年少轻狂的我第一次进入那未知的领域，去索取我的快乐，去填补我的空虚。用自己征服欲来满足自己的成就感。

你也曾离开过我，在你离开的那三个月，仿佛度日如年。你让我牵挂，我当时着了魔样的去迷恋你，而你只留下了只言片语，就消失在茫茫人海中。你的失踪，引起了多少话题与争论。此时此刻忍受着创伤的我，选择了背井离乡，漂泊海外，可能是想去忘记你给过我的，也可能是想去找寻你的足迹。可是，你又回来了，在时隔三个月后，华丽的展现在我的面前。 我，仍旧诚服在你美丽的衣裙之下。

在之前苟延残喘的生命里，是你那丰满的双峰温暖了我冰封的躯壳。而如今，渐渐长大的我，慢慢意识到你那甜蜜的乳汁是剂催情的毒药，让人上瘾，让人妥协，我不再需要你的哺乳。

我想离开你，因为你对我的好，让我认识到生命的重要。

我想离开你，因为你对我的好，让我认识到生活的中心。

我想离开你，即便当我说出这话时，血液在血管中沸腾，懊恼在胸腔里冲撞，悔恨在脑海里翻滚。

我想说，你不在是我的精神支柱，你无法在利用我那没日没夜的激情，榨干我的精力，吸取我的青春。

我想说，如今的你，只是我无聊时的慰藉品，只是我愤怒时的发泄物，只是我狂欢时的伴随者。

Testimonial 29

Testimonial 29

I'm a leisure player. [1]And the WoW brought me so many things that I wished I had but in reality I could not have. [2]I've always been thinking that WoW has brought much of the success and glory that we cannot get in reality. [3]And now the wow has gone beyond a game, just a game, and so many people lose themselves. [4]And I overheard the captain blame someone for not showing up and with a very insulting tongue, and some people said he has a class and the captain said 'I have class and I come.' [5]And others said 'I have examinations and didn't take it, just came here for the game.' That behaviour is so glorified and respectable. However, I think it's not. You use the money of your parents and buy equipment, I don't believe there's a university that students can get a diploma without taking any classes. If this is not important then why do you go to school? If you just want to kill time in this period in school, then you lose the process of living in this time. Look at all the players in WoW …they're mainly high school and college students or students who just graduated. Look at the night before the college entrance examinations, there are still many people proud of themselves and don't care that there's a very important examination and they're still continuing to get equipment. I did not pass the CET4 examinations and I will talk about it later. I'm speechless. This is very unrespectable. Not only for myself but also for my parents and for my kids, and this is disrespectful to the Chinese society. When so many young boys and girls accept you as examples and will imitate you and they will ruin their lives. At the same time it also ruins the unity, struggling and suffering together that the WoW has outlined.

I hope everyone can treat the game correctly, because it is only a game not the entire life.

我是一个休闲玩家，魔兽世界带给了我应该拥有渴望拥有却在现实中拥有不了的东西。我一直觉得，魔兽作为一个游戏为我们这一代人带来了很多在现实中体会不到的成就与荣誉，而现在，魔兽已经超出了一个游戏该存在的范围，让好多人迷失了自我，经常听到队长用极其严厉的带有辱骂性质的口吻，质问 XX 怎么没有来，有人说他有课，队长立刻一阵外星语，然后说我也有课也来了，某某说我考试都没有去，就是为了活动。多高尚的举动，是不是应该让人肃然起敬。其实应该鄙视，拿父母的血汗钱来混装备，我不相信哪个大学能不用上课不用考试就能拿毕业证学位证，如果这些都不在乎，那还上学干什么，如果上学就是为了消遣这段过程，那就失去了这段活着的过程。看看现在

[1] Purity
[2] Authority
[3] More than a game
[4] Education system
[5] In-group

的魔兽大部分都是大学高中的学生，和刚上班的大学生，看看高考之夜、四级之日仍然有很多人在自豪的炫耀，我高考都不在乎，继续组团刷装备，我四级都没有去，下次再说。我很无语，这是一种极不负责任的态度，不仅是对自己，对家人，对后代，也是对社会的一种不负责任，很多无知的少男少女会以你为榜样，效仿模拟，践踏自己活着的权利。同时也践踏的魔兽向我们诠释的团结，拼搏，患难与共的精神！

我希望大家能正确的对待游戏，因为他仅仅是游戏，而不是我们生活的全部~

Testimonial 30

Testimonial 30

I've been playing for three years. Most of my feelings are just waiting. From the beginning of TBC to the recent opening of WLK, it has been a long wait. Wow is an excellent game. [1]And that's exactly why so much attention and so much harmony and harmonization were given to it. Maybe it's such a pure[2] game like WoW could not be acknowledged by the officials and society in such a country like China. In those days of waiting I was thinking about giving up playing, but every time I saw the icon of the game I could not help but clicking on it and getting online. Looking at those familiar scenes, which always remind me of the tiny moments spent with my friends, there was the magnificence of the door of darkness opening. And excitement in the Black Temple the first time we killed the boss Illidan. And there was also the cheers and the joys exploring with the guild friends. My first class was a mage, and I changed several guilds because of all kinds of reasons. But each of the guilds gave me a sense of feeling of being at home. Sometimes we fight because we all want the equipment but the result was finally that we were all satisfied. I always believe the equipment is not the most important in the guild. But the friendship we build up in the team that everyone cooperates to kill a boss after another[3]. WoW has brought me a lot of sentiment and beauty, and I know that no one in China can expect when is the opening of the next expansion and there are a lot of complaints, but we will never give up. [4]For WoW is not only a game but a fiesta/carnival of unknown friends. We are not just playing, but living[5]. Maybe I will gradually reduce the time playing WoW or even never play but no matter it's happiness or sadness I will not forget anything. Maybe some day I look back I will find another amazing and memorable world.

玩魔兽世界三年多了，最大的感受就是等待，长久的等待。从等待 TBC 的开始一直到现在 WLK 的开放，等待了许久。魔兽世界是一款优秀的游戏，但是正因为如此，它在中国才会备受关注，备受打压。也许在中国这么一个利益至上的国家像魔兽这种比较纯粹的网游是不受官员与社会的认可的吧。在那些等待的日子里，我总是想放弃继续玩这个没有什么需求的版本的魔兽了，但是每每看见魔兽世界的图标总忍不住要点开，上线。看着那些熟悉的场景，总可以回忆起和朋友们一起的点点滴滴。有黑暗之门开启时的壮丽，也有黑暗神殿第一次打过伊利丹的兴奋，更有和工会中朋友开荒时的欢声笑语。我第一个玩的是一个法师号，也因为各种原因换过几个工会，但每个工会都能给我一种家的感觉。虽然有时会为装备起一些争执，但最后总能很和谐的解决，让大家都满意。我始终觉得加入工会最重要的不是装备，而是一个团队齐心协力打败一个个 BOSS 的过程与团队中所有人的友谊。魔兽世界给了我很多感动与美好。我想每一个在中国玩魔兽的玩家都知道下一个资料片不知道又是何时才会开，也会有许许多多的怨言，但是我们绝对不会放弃，魔兽世界不仅仅是一款游戏，更是一个和不知名的朋友们聚会、欢乐的世界，我们并不仅仅是在玩乐，更是在这里生活着。也许我会渐渐减少魔兽的时间，甚至是不玩魔兽了，但无论开心或是悲伤，那一切的一切我都不会淡忘。或许在以后的某一天重回魔兽看看，我又会发现一个令我惊奇而又充满回忆的世界。

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[1] Just interesting
[2] Purity
[3] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[4] More than a game
[5] Existential

Testimonial 32

Testimonial 32

One year ago when TBC was opened I didn't know there was such a game. My brother told me there's a new game called WoW and it's really good, and then I knew it. And the time I really played the game was a long time after the beta testing. There was a roommate of mine that played a rogue, and he had not played any game, not even the FC, but then he was addicted to the game and for this game he bought a computer and an Internet connection. And since then he rarely went out of the dorm.

And not very long after I also bought a computer, and I also wanted to see why the WoW is so interesting, as my brother told me. And then I installed the game and began my journey in WoW. And now recalling the past year I do not know if it was bitter or sweet. At first I played human. The reason why I played human is because I am a human, and the reason I played mage is because I thought the magician was very powerful in the movie before the game. And then there's the real WoW. I began to kill monsters and level and began to know WoW. And the first time I learned new magic tricks, the first time I got the green equipment, the first time I knew what was instancing, and the first time I made the fireball and killed the tribe in order to win honour, and there were so many first times WoW gave me something I never had before. And I had so much time in college so I could play WoW, and I began to know more about it as time went by. [1]I loved the friends in the game [2]they were so nice to me and I felt so warm. And my other roommates began to play WoW. But they were not in the same district with me, even though I have so many friends

Then I sold the magician for 150 yuan, and then re-levelled this account in FWQ. And I thought hunters were strong when I was playing mage because I was killed by hunters several times. And besides I hated the rogue very much, they were always striking me. So I played hunter. On the one hand I can use the hunter to PK very well, and on the other hand it's hard to beat up those rogues. And the hunter levels up very fast and they have a very good ability of survival. And then I knew how to watch the videos on 17173, and then I knew how to kite. And you can kill the monsters or boss who are much stronger than you in a second. You jump and shoot, that was amazing. And hunter should be the best profession in WoW. And the 3 biggest instances, MC, Black Dragon and I finally got the leaf and the black dragon meat in the epic mission, and then I began the legendary mission. I was so tired at that time. And I was thinking after I solve the epic mission I can prove that I am a qualified hunter. [3]And then I will shout: do you see me!? A great hunter!' and then I will leave the mission in the

[1] In-group
[2] Care
[3] Authority

mountain of Hyjal forever and let people to remember there once was a great hunter, a great hero. I relied on my junk equipment and my health was just over 3,000. And I killed four devils. And at that time I was a hero. I got the epic bow and spear but I did not leave WoW. It's not because I miss it but b/c I was so bored in college. If I didn't play something there was too much time.

And now the real story begins. I will talk about the feelings I had when I played WoW for years. It's a really fantastic net game. And I believe everyone who plays this game can get something they never had before – 3D pictures, and the fantastic scenes and the movement of the characters. And there are so many things in WoW that are all so choiceless and helpless. [4]When I played Alliance people were so honourable and when I played Horde I felt that people were all dark. When I was in Alliance people helped me a lot. And in the Horde they are always shouting at each other. Before I thought people in Horde put dead people in front of their city gates, until one day the equipment off my friend was stolen. Then I used my main account to quarrel with them, to argue with them, and then my equipment was stolen.

There are so many inglorious people in the Horde. [5]And you can see from the surface the Alliance and the Horde – one side stands for justice and the other side stands for evil and barbarian. [6]The people who play Horde – do not be mad at me, I did not mean to insult you. I just talk about my true feelings. If you are pissed off do not look at it any more.

And there are so many other things you have to do. For example, if you don't go instancing you will not get good equipment. That's why Blizzard introduces new instances one after another – T1, T2, T3. Everybody says it's more about skill, but if they have better equipment they have several thousand more health than you, then how can you manage to beat them?

[7]Instead WoW means endless instancing. How sad is WoW!

一年前，WOW 刚刚开 TBC 的时候，我并不知道有这样一款网游，我哥哥跟我说有个新游戏叫魔兽世界，很好玩，我才知道 WOW。但真正玩的时候是过了公测很长一段时间，我们寝室有个去玩了个盗贼，以前从不玩游戏甚至连街机也没打过的他一头埋进去了，特地去买了电脑，接上宽带，从此就连寝室也很少出了。

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[4] In-group
[5] Fairness
[6] Shout out
[7] Work

不久我也买了电脑了（大学里电脑是普及品了），我也想试试哥哥说的魔兽世界到底怎么好玩了（看我那同学就知道），于是也装上 WOW，魔兽之旅开始了。现在回想起来，也说不清这一年来是苦是甜。最开始玩的是个人类 FS，之所以玩人类，首先因为我们自己就是人类，有点亲热感，之所以玩 FS，是因为看到片头动画里那个 FS 很牛 B 地把冰箭向一个地狱火砸去，动作超酷！（你表说不是）然后出来的就是 WOW 的正题。好了，开始去打怪了，开始练级了，开始慢慢熟悉 WOW，第一次学到新的法术，第一次打到绿色的装备，第一次知道什么是副本，第一次揉出火球术后杀死 BL 得到荣誉击杀，第一次.....，魔兽带给我的是前所未有的冲击，大学里自由的空间也让我可以有够多的时间来玩 WOW。随着游戏时间的沿长，我开始知慢慢的了解魔兽。我喜欢魔兽里的朋友们，他们对我那么好，感觉真的好温暖。而我寝室的其他人也开始玩起了 WOW，我开始提到的那个贼，跟我不是一个区，我一个人另外一个世界游荡，虽然有那么多的好友，但还是觉得孤单。

于是我把那个 FS 号贱卖了（150 块 ，嘿嘿），我在我同学玩的 FWQ 重练了个号，这次我好好的选择了一下。玩 FS 时候就觉得 LR 很强（被 LR 杀了 N 次），另外很痛恨盗贼，老是偷袭我，于是就玩了个 LR 号。一来是感受 PK 无敌的霸气，二来是教训那些卑鄙的盗贼。LR 练级真的很快，野外生存能力也很强，慢慢我体验到一个 LR 的乐趣，开始懂得观赏 17173 上的视频了，慢慢我学会了怎么去放风筝，华丽的风筝，让你可以杀死一个比你强大 N 倍秒杀其他职业的怪或 BOSS，那一跳一射，感觉太棒了。LR 该是魔兽最好玩的职业了。60 了，三大 FB，MC，黑龙。我终于拿到了史诗任务的叶子和黑龙肉了，可以开始传说的史诗任务之旅了。这时我已经觉的很累了，我在想，等我把史诗任务做了，我可以证明我是一个合格的 LR 了，我就去海加尔山，大喊三声：你们看到了吗？我，一个伟大的 LR！（有点幼稚）然后就把任务永远停在海加尔山。永远，让人们记得这里曾经有位伟大的猎手，一位伟大的英雄。我就靠我那身垃圾装备，血刚过 3000，艰难的把四个恶魔都杀了，那时的我，豪情万仗。史诗弓仗拿到了，我却没有离开 WOW。并不是舍不得，也不是怀念什么，只是因为大学生活的空虚无聊，不玩点什么，大把的时间没法打发。

废话终于说完了，我要说的真正的主题要开始了，WOW 一年来的感受。WOW 真是一款不错的玩游，相信每个人都能感受的到 WOW 带来的前所未有的快感，3D 的画面，精美的场景，超酷的动作....但 WOW 也有很多无奈。也不知道是不是这样，我觉的玩 LM 的人都很正大光明，而玩 BL 的人我觉的或多或少都有些心理阴影，我在 LM 那边的时候，很多人多无私的帮助我，在 BL 这边，一天到晚老有人被摆尸体在奥城或是被刷屏骂，我以前以为被摆尸体的都是坏的，肯定乱抢了别人东西，直到有一天我同学黑上装备被抢，而我开大号去骂的时候反过来被抢东西的人摆了尸体，我才知道，原来被摆尸体的并不都是坏人。BL 这边竟有这么多勾心斗角的无耻之徒。单从外表就看的到，LM 与 BL 一边代表正义与善良一边代表的邪恶与野蛮，玩 BL 的同志不要生气，我没有侮辱你们的意思，我只是说出自己的感受，如果你觉的不爽，请不要看了。

Testimonial 34

Testimonial 34

I'm an old player. Since the beta testing of CWOW in 2005 I have been playing. But because of the limitation of time I wasn't able to play very often. The reason why I loved playing WoW is that I trust in the products of Blizzard[1]. Because the history and sentiment of the game is so heavy, and it can suck you in. I don't think there's any other game that can work the background story into the story that well. But WoW did it. Even though it is a virtual game, you can put a lot of true emotions into it.

Like all kinds of quests in WoW, the mission called 'Love Never Changes' at the black seashore and the Eastern Plaguelands quest 'Of Love and Family,' and a man who lost his beloved son. Every moment of that I can play in front of my life. And now WLK and the city of darkness is still echoing in my ears. Yes, you are not only a participant. Your efforts, your courage are also changing this world. [2]Wow had some influence on our life and study but it also taught me a lot. [3]Like why I chose a warrior as my first career so I can always have someone to protect. I still remember a signature of a warrior.

But the stories between the players are the most real and most motivating. The benefit of a net game is that it can be regarded as a mode of social communication. I still remember the first time I went instancing. The first time I became MT, standing in front of my teammates. The first time I saved a team all by my own. [4]Responsibility and patience, this is what I have gained after fighting with my friends. [5]We held each other's hands, we encouraged each other, and experienced all kinds of feelings. This game brought us together. To some extent, the happiness we gain from WoW does not merely come from the game itself. But from the communication of friends. That's why I kept playing even though my account was stolen so many times, because I didn't want to leave them.

At last WoW is continuing and I will continue running in this world. But the time in reality is very limited. I have my things to do. And I have people to accompany. I believe even though there's one day I will no longer play WoW. I will just come back to this world and recall all the places I have ever fought. [6]And brothers I have forever fought with.

At last, I will say some feelings. Even though I copied this, they are very precise.

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[1] Creator agency
[2] Education system
[3] Care
[4] Transformation
[5] In-group
[6] In-group

[SONG] [7] That day 5 years ago, the drums of the war were very loud. We wore our new armour and held our hands to fight against the invasion of the burning crusade.

We put down the flame of anger of BOSS in the high temperature. We were joking about the flavour of the gnome being roasted.

We beat up the black dragon princess and her brother and used their heads to decorate the city wall. We crushed the plot of ancient god and defeated the arrogant officer of the army sent by heaven.

[8]And I could say loudly, 'These bones are everything?' There are too little for me to put between my teeth.

The war is still continuing. And we have settled on the ghost of Karazhan. And we also let the dragon killer become the game being hunted.

We made the world peaceful again. And we also made the blood elf prince to be subordinate to us. We also ended the betrayer's conquering of Outland.

[9]We shared hot blood in the BG. And fought together in the arenas.

We were always mocking each other, 'Hey, you will be killed before me.'

Our armour were full of chinks, but we polished them every day.

We are still preparing for the new battle. My brothers, the war flames of Northrend are still calling us!!

我是一名老玩家了，自从 05 年 CWOW 公测就在玩了，不过当时由于时间的限制，并不是很常玩。

喜欢 WOW，是因为信得过暴雪的产品，是因为那厚重的内涵以及代入感。我想没有哪个游戏能将其背景故事上升到一个历史的高度，但是 WOW 做到， 所以即便是虚

[7] Art
[8] Contingencies

[9] In-group

拟的游戏，也能付诸深厚的感情。

比如 WOW 中的各种任务，黑海岸那动人的爱情“永志不渝”，东瘟疫的“爱与家庭”，老弗丁痛失爱子的那一幕仍然历历在目，而现今 WLK 中攻打幽暗城的那一战，则更是荡气回肠。是的，你不仅只是一个参与者，你的努力，你的勇气也在改变着这个世界。WOW 确实对我的学习生活造成的一定的影响，不过它也教会我了很多，就像我最先选择战士这个职业一样，因为我有要保护的人，记得看过一则战士的签名——

然而那些玩家们之间的故事，才是最真实和最动人的。网络游戏的好处在于它可以看做是一中社交的模式，我仍然记得自己是如何第一次下副本，第一次成为 MT 站在我的队友面前，第一次凭一己之力拯救小队乃至团队的那一幕。责任与耐心，这就是我与朋友们一同战斗之后得出的结论。我们相互扶持，相互鼓励，共同体验着这个游戏带给我们的喜怒哀乐。从某种意义上来说，WOW 中我们收获的欢乐不仅仅来自于游戏本身，更源于朋友们的交流。所以我才能在多次被盗坚持玩下去，因为我不想离开他们。

最后，WOW 仍在继续，我也仍会在这个世界中继续驰骋。不过现实中时间还是很有限的，我也有要做的事，又要守护的人。我相信即使有一天我不再有玩 WOW 的时间，我也会回来这个世界坐坐，回忆一下曾经战斗过的地方，曾经共同奋战的伙伴。

最后，附上小小的一点感受。虽然是抄来的，不过很贴切。

5 年前的那天，战鼓喧天，我们披上崭新的盔甲，携手对抗燃烧军团的入侵。

我们熄灭了火焰领主的怒焰，在熔火之心的高温中调侃着侏儒被烤熟的滋味。

我们击败了黑龙公主和她的兄弟，用它们的头装饰高大的城门。

我们粉碎了上古之神的阴谋，我们冲进天灾的要塞，击溃了自大的天谴军副官。

我们可以指着漫山遍野的天灾狂妄的说：就这些骨头？还不够塞牙缝的！

我们的战争还在继续。

我们平息了卡拉赞的怨灵们，我们让屠龙者也尝到了变成猎物的滋味。

我们恢复了盘牙水库的平静，我们让狂妄的血精灵王子俯首称臣。

我们砍下了深渊领主的头颅，我们结束了背叛者对外域疯狂的统治。

我们在战场挥洒热血，我们在[removed]并肩作战。

我们总是相互嘲笑彼此：嘿，你一定会比我先倒下！

我们的盔甲已经布满伤痕，可是我们每天还是把它擦的通亮

我们还在准备迎接新的战斗。战友们，诺森德的战火在召唤我们！！

Testimonial 35

Testimonial 35

We are not coming here just to kill monsters and be ultimate.

We are not just playing loneliness. We we need such a world.

[1]A world that is no pain no gain. A world should have a morality. A world that can be developed and that our real world should learn from. Our world is full of hustles and bustles, and we are fighting for a peaceful land. [2]They say we are addicted to the Internet, but we are actually finding a Utopia. We not only want a game, but we need a world that belongs to us.

This world is different from the reality. So we do not wish the rich children to come up. [3]We need a clean land. And we wish here in WoW it is the new dimension of this world…

Professor in video says we should have 'love,' but we don't need WoW. But he does not agree with those people who say something bad about WoW.

[4]We are not coming here just to kill monsters and be ultimate, we are only wanting to find friends and stay with friends. We can fish together, till the fields; we can see the sunset, have adventures, and explore the unknown worlds.

We do not want to beat those poor fishermen anymore. And we do not want to work for those stupid rich kids. And we don't want to hear their poor vocabularies and screaming. Let the time of BOTs go away, I miss the time of wandering around so much. I miss those passions that have been lost. On the desert of Westfall I was still waiting, looking at the lighthouse. I will not make any hurting magic. I will just look at my teammates growing up little by little. [5]I just pull them up from the land and let them fight vigorously.

I fish alone in front of the daybreak of NAME. And I drop my hook at the harbour of Stormwind and I also like the farm of Westfall and to feed the chickens at dusk. But happy moments are always short and the people who want to destroy them are so many. The people who mean to destroy them are under the banner of creating a harmonious society. I mean people, not beasts. People under banner of harmony actually do harm. Poor work and

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[1] Fairness
[2] Purity
[3] Purity
[4] In-group
[5] Care

struggling of life, and more and more Foxcon situations emerge. And it squeezes the space of our survival, which is already narrow. And they will invade in our [6]spiritual homeland (WoW).

[7]I feel sick for those people who play the game for the game's sake. I feel horrified of those invaders coming into our world. We are not afraid of the Scourge. And we can defend from every enemy that invades Azeroth. Because the world is ruined by minorities. We are working people and are the sacrifice of all the harmonization.

We are not only playing WoW, nor loneliness. But we need such a world.

[8]It's been a long time and I've been thinking about the question: what is a game? The game only playing for killing time is meaningless. If you have different opinions you can think about it. What we need is a virtual world. In this world there are some illusions of the original world. [9]But there is more tranquillity that has not been polluted. We can find friends here. And we can also learn a lot of survival techniques and skills here. Yes we did. Most people learned how to accumulate their fortunes little by little and let them grow up. And also the businessmen. They also learn how to make money. And we also become more sensitive and a lot, lot more. And we learned to cooperate and coordinate. And in this world we gained the fortune of life, friendship.

We don't just need a game, but a world.

Here there is a complete social system. A complete morality. A sustaintable development system. No one has achieved this domestically, because they are making just a game, not a world. A world that is no pain, no gain. A world that should have moralities, and a world that can be developed. And this is also what our real world should become.

我们来到这里不是为了打那些小怪兽，我们不是奥特曼。

我们玩的不是魔兽，我们玩的也不仅仅是寂寞，我们是需要这样一个世界。

一个世界，没有不劳而获。一个世界，应该有伦理道德。一个世界，应该可以循环发展。这也是我们现实世界应该借鉴的。

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[6] Purity
[7] More than a game
[8] More than a game
[9] Purity

我们的世界已经日益嘈杂，我们无时无刻不在寻找着一方属于我们的净土。他们说我们沉迷于网络，我们其实是想要寻找一个理想的国度。我们要的不是一个游戏，我们需要的是一个属于我们的世界。

这个世界是有别于现实的，所以，我们不希望那帮富二代们以各种丑恶的嘴脸出现，我们需要一方净土，我们希望这里是一个世界一个新的次元。。。

我们不希望那些叫兽们能够懂得什么就做“要有爱，不要魔兽争霸”，我们来到这里不是为了打那些小怪兽，我们不是奥特曼。我们只是想找到自己的朋友，和朋友们在一起，我们可以一起去钓鱼，可以去耕作，可以做看夕阳，可以去冒险，去探索未知的世界。

我们再也不想不停地去打那些可怜的渔人，我们再也不想一遍遍给那些脑残的富二代打工去推到鸡蛋。我们再也不想听那些可怜的词汇和脑残的嚎叫。让所谓的挂机时代见鬼去吧。多么想念那个流浪的岁月，多么回忆那些逝去的激情，在西部荒野的沙滩上，我还是在那守候，望着灯塔，我再也不发一个伤害魔法，看着战友们的破旧的战衣，看着他们一点点成长。我只是不停地把他们从地上拉起，再让他们充满战斗的活力。

在艾萨拉那破旧的废墟前，我在那默默的垂钓，在暴风城的港口一次次洒下我的鱼钩。我也喜欢那西部荒野的农场，在夕阳下去喂养小鸡。快乐的时光总是短暂，打着和谐旗号破坏和谐的人又是那么多。我说的是人啊，不是什么别的畜生。可怜的工作和挣扎的生计，越来越多的富士康们出现，越来越得多挤压着我们本就狭小的生存空间。他们再剥削完了还要把我们最后的精神家园也给侵占...

我看着那些为了游戏而游戏的游戏恶心，我看着那些来到我们世界的侵略者感到恐惧。我们不怕天灾军团，我们可以抵御那些侵占艾泽拉斯的一切敌人，但是在叫兽们面前，连春哥都会失去勇气。因为世界是这些少数人统治的，我们是劳苦大众，是一切和谐的牺牲者。

我们玩的不是魔兽，我们玩的也不仅仅是寂寞，我们是需要这样一个世界。

长久以来我都在思考一个问题，什么是游戏？仅仅是为了耗费时间的游戏是没有什么意义的。不同意见的可以认真思考下。我们需要的是一个模拟的世界，在这个世界里有着一些原有世界的身影，但更多的是没有被污染的宁静，我们可以在这里寻找知己，可以学到很多生存技能。是的，我们学到了。大多数的人们都学会了怎么一点点去积累自己的财富，去让自己慢慢成长。特别是奸商们，他们学会了怎么赚钱。锻炼出了洞察的敏锐。还有很多很多，在这个世界里，我们学会了团结协作。在这个世界里，我们得

到了人生的财富，友情。

我们要的不是游戏，而是一个世界。

在这里要有完整的社会系统，完整的伦理道德。要有一个世解赖以为继的资源循环系统，这些我们国内还没有谁能做到，因为他们做的是游戏，而不是世界。一个世界，没有不劳而获。一个世界，应该有伦理道德。一个世界，应该可以循环发展。这也是我们现实世界应该变得。

Testimonial 36

Testimonial 36

China server was closed. And if you like you can go to the European server or the Taiwan server, but why are there so many catastrophes surrounding the China server? Every time I hear people say the European server and the Taiwan server are good I feel bad. Why are we who play this game on the China server so inglorious?

I remember a long time before, a long time ago, there were a lot of motivating stories on the China server. [1]There were many different camps supporting and helping each other, but why are they all gone now? Why are even the people from the same faction cursing at each other? Is that because the oranges should not be grown in the north?

Games are played by people, you play a role in the game. You should win honour for this role. When mages are very weak, they say a mage can do nothing except bake bread. And when there are few mages, and people will miss the mages who are always making bread, and the rogue the killer in the wild, a lot of people chose him because he has the ability to kill, if you give him power then you ruin the fame/honour of the rogue. People who hate the rogue will never mention him. If someone is weak but helpful, people will miss you. But if strong but evil-minded, no one wants to be friends with you.

5 million WoW players are being called net addicts. And the WoW player has already become the synonym of net addiction. [2]Can we still be silent; there are so many phenomena in the game that are a reflection of the reality. We need high quality players.

[3]A commander is a leader. If he leads well, people will listen to him and will be united and solve problems.

If the commander himself has very big weakness, no one will listen to him. And force us to be subordinate, then what we have at first is difficulty.

And if you lose in the game, then you can start again. But in reality, can you do that? And how much should you pay for that? In the game, if the guild master commits faults people will forgive him. But in reality if you forgive those bribers, there will be more bribers. In the game players can tell you what is right and what is wrong. But in reality who will tell you that? If you do something wrong in reality people will climb to the highest status by stabbing

[1] Care
[2] WoW is like real life
[3] Authority

your body. This is the difference between the virtual world and the real life! [4]This is the difference between the visualized world and the real life.

Maybe the reason why playing WoW is to find the way of life that one likes in illusions.

魔兽世界国服可以关，关后喜欢的可以去欧 F 或台 F。为什么国 F 的灾难会这么多？看见那些说欧 F 和台 F 好的人，我好难过。为什么国 F 玩个游戏也不能为国争光。

记得很久很久以前，国 F 也有很多感人故事。也有很多不同阵营的互相帮助，为什么现在没了？为什么连同阵营的现在都互相谩骂？难道是橘子不该去北方的缘故？

游戏是人玩的，在游戏中你既然扮演了一个角色，你就应该为这角色争的荣誉！当 FS 非常弱的时候，他们说他们除了做面包，一无是处。FS 少的时候大家怀念着那个老做面包的 FS。盗贼是野外杀手。很多人选择了他。因为他有杀死其他人的本领，给他强权了他就败坏了贼的名声。大家提贼就痛恨！弱但他对人有帮助，大家会想你。强，可心坏。没几个愿意和你成朋友！

500 万魔兽玩家承受着“网瘾”的帽子。魔兽玩家成了“网瘾”的代名词。我们还能沉默吗？游戏中存在的现象很多都是现实现象的映射！我们需要高素质的玩家。

指挥者是领导。如果领导好，大家信服。大家团结就能克服困难！

如果指挥本身缺陷就很大。没人愿意听，被逼着顺从。那摆在面前的就是困难！

魔兽中失败了可以再来，现实中能吗？现实中要付出的代价要多大？在游戏中黑 G 的团长认识到错误，大家还谅解他。现实中的贪污者你们谅解他只会生出更多的贪污者！在游戏中，玩家可以告诉你对错。现实中谁会给你说？你做错了，他才有机会踩你爬上去！这也是虚拟和现实的区别！

或许玩魔兽就是为了在虚幻中寻找自己喜欢的那份生活吧！

[4] Purity

Testimonial 37

Testimonial 37

Age 20

Sex: male

I've been playing WoW for 3 years. From a greenhand who knows nothing about the game to an all-around master now, I have something in my mind that is very complex.

The first time I started WoW was during the data base testing period. At that time I heard it's a game realeased by Blizzard and it had some connection with Warcraft 3. So I tried it. I was a little dizzy playing this game for the first time. And I stopped playing when it charged money. At that time I could not play very well and besides I thought that the game card was expensive. Then I started playing with my friends. I levelled up very fast because I had some friends help, and I levelled up to 70 very quickly. And the first time I raided the Black Temple was also the first time I was doing activities with my guild. I was so excited and nervous. [1]I went instancing with so many people for the first time, I was so worried that my single mistake might lead to the end of the guild. [2]So my hand was trembling when hearing the voice of the commander. But when Illidan fell in front of us, I got the real happiness of WoW.

So I played for a while. And my nerves disappeared. And so did my passion. And because the game didn't update itself my passion disappeared. During this period I went AFK and also tried other games. But eventually I came back to WoW. Even though I was doing some quests that I can already recite, killing the boss with closed eyes, I still felt happy.

[3]Maybe this is not only because of the game itself, but also because of friends. They make the instancing meaningful. And made gaining equipment meaningful.

I just played on and off like this. And I had tried all the 9 classes. And this still is TBC. I do not know how long this kind of time will last. I do not know how long I will play WoW. But I think as long as my friends are still there, what does it matter, play or not play.

And my family also blamed me for playing the game. But I think I can balance the game and life. I will not play the game day after night, day and night, like some people. And I will not

[1] In-group
[2] Authority
[3] In-group

bring problems to my life because of the addiction. WoW is a part of life. [4]It can make me feel some sense of being successful. Like getting equipment other people do not get. Or kill bosses other people did not kill. This might be the biggest fun of WoW.

年龄：20

性别：男

玩 WOW 将近 3 年了，从一个什么也不会玩的菜鸟到现在的全职业制霸，心里总有些说不出的滋味。

第一次接触 WOW 还是在公测阶段，那时只听说是暴雪出的游戏，而又和 WAR3 有着些许关系，于是就尝试了一下，但第一次玩这种游戏，难免有些头晕，因此到正式收费就没有玩了，那时候还觉得点卡很贵，而且玩不清楚。

后来身边的朋友也开始玩 WOW，于是我就和他们一起开始玩了，由于有了朋友，因此上手起来也变的快了，很快就升到了 70 级。第一次打黑暗神庙的时候，也是我第一次参加所谓的工会活动，那时候心里有说不出的激动和紧张，第一次和这么多人一起打 FB，生怕自己犯一个错误导致灭团。所以听着指挥的声音就感觉手在颤抖。当伊利丹倒在面前的时候，才体会到 WOW 真正的快乐。

就这样玩了一段时间，紧张感慢慢消失，激情也随之慢慢消散，WOW 长时间的不更新也导致了热情的降低。期间也 AFK 过，也尝试过其他游戏，但始终有曾经沧海难为水的感觉，最终都是回到了 WOW 中，尽管做着已经可以背下来的任务，打着闭着眼睛都能过的 BOSS,但依然很开心。

也许这些不光和 WOW 本身有关，也和一只陪伴着我的朋友有关吧，有了一起战斗的朋友才会觉得打 FB 有意义，才会觉得拿装备有意义。

就这样断断续续的玩，不知不觉就把九大职业基本玩遍，依然是万年的 TBC，我不知道这样的日子还会有多久，不知道还会玩多长时间的 WOW,但是我觉得，只要有朋友在，玩什么又有什么关系呢？

家里人也说过我，但是我觉得我可以平衡好游戏与生活之间的关系，我当然不会像有些人几天几夜不睡觉玩命的玩，也不沉迷于其中导致自己的生活出现问题，WOW 是生活的一部分，他可以使我有一些“成就感”，例如拿到别人没有的装备推倒别人没有推倒的 BOSS，这大概就是 WOW 的最大乐趣吧。

[4] Authority

Testimonial 38

Testimonial 38

Eternal Azeroth, but fleeting time.

I have been playing WoW since the data base testing. The Taiwan server did not let me leave my homeland and did not want to leave this place to experience the new characters and skills. [1]Because WoW is not just a game for fun for me; every blade of grass and tree in Azeroth will give me tranquillity. And I prefer to wander around in some part of the world, looking at the Barrens at night or looking at the snow in Winterspring when I feel bad. For a long time I did not want to go to the main city. There were all kinds of voices selling cards, selling gold, the voices of the cheaters in the trade channel. I do not know how much longer this game can last. More and more people came and left. Less and less people chose to stay. I did not look down on players of a certain age. And I would like to say, the people who started playing from the data base testing will better understand what I feel.

PICTURE[2]

[3]And a lot of people say this is not only a game, it recalls the memories and pastimes of our youth. [4]This is just like the song we all loved listening to when we had our very first love. Every time it plays there will be a green apple. I'm already in work now, I joined the work force. The problems and the chores are getting more and more. And the time I'm in this world is getting less and less. [5]But here it is my spiritual homeland. To come here when i feel bad has already become my habit. And walking on the empty ground occasionally one or two low level characters running by lets me remember the time when I was like them. And also lets me remember those people I had been experiencing the game and that journey called youth with.

[6]I think I will stay here forever to see the end of this world. By then I will take off all my equipment and swim to the depths of the endless sea. And I will pass away silently along with the wrinkles of my memory.

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[1] More than a game
[2] Art
[3] More than a game
[4] Peak experience
[5] Purity
[6] Just interesting

永远的艾泽拉斯，刹那的芳华

我公测时就开始玩魔兽世界，台服没有让我离开自己的家园，我不想因为去体验那些新的人物和技能而离开这个地方，因为魔兽世界对我来说不是一个猎奇的游戏，艾泽拉斯的一草一木都能让我觉得心情平静，我更愿意徘徊在地球的一些地方，看看夜晚的贫瘠之地，心情不好的时候去冬泉谷踏踏雪，好长时间不愿意去主城了，交易频道里各种卖卡、卖金、刷骗子的声音让我心生厌倦。我不知道这个游戏能走多远，越来越多的人来到又离开，越来越少的人停留。我没有鄙视过任何一个年龄阶段的人，但是我觉得从公测或说从地球时代开始玩这个游戏的人能够更加理解我的心情。



好多人说的很好，这不仅仅是一个游戏，他记载了我们关于青春的记忆和刹那而过的芳华。这就像我们在某段情窦初开的日子里总爱听的那首歌，每当她再次响起，记忆里总会飘起那段青涩的记忆和淡淡的情愫。我已经参加工作了，身边的烦恼琐事越来越多，来到这个世界的时间也越来越少，但这里是我的一个精神家园，烦恼的时候来这里逛逛成为了我的习惯，走在越来越空旷的地球上，偶尔会有一两个小号跑过，让我回忆起自己曾经走过的时光，也让我回忆起与我共同走过的那些人和那段与青春有关的旅程。

我想我会一直在这里呆下去，知道这个世界的终结，到那时候我会脱去所有的装备，游到无尽之海的深处，长久的枕靠在那些记忆的波光里安静的离去

Testimonial 40

Testimonial 40

It was some time after I stopped playing net games before I stopped playing WoW. What I feel about net games is that they take a lot of time, a lot of energy, and are endless. And you can play endlessly and that will naturally invade into your real life. [1]And gradually it will become like work. That's why I gave it up.

About the reason why I played it on and off, we all know that WoW is derived from the PC game Warcraft. I'm always fascinated with the background story of the game. I love those imaginary worlds that cannot exist in reality. I'm curious to know the continuation of the story. I want to know what the world in the future will become.

But it is too sad when I'm really playing the game I am disappointed because very few players are interested in the background story of the game. [2]Most people are chasing after a sense of success. A sense of conquering. It's hard for me to find someone to communicate with. But even though I do not want to say I'm not interested in this, it is easy to gain the sense of being recognized or acknowledged, which is very precious in reality. And you will soon find your own value. But all of this can never replace the value of reality. You have to find your value in the real life.

对于我来说，其实在我玩魔兽世界之前已经有一段时间没怎么玩网络游戏了。
网络游戏给我的感觉就是要很花时间，很花精力，而且它是没有尽头，你可以一直玩下去，自然会侵蚀到你的现实生活，慢慢的它成为了一项"工作"，这也是我当初放弃的原因。

至于为什么又一次玩，我们都知道魔兽世界是在单机游戏魔兽争霸的基础上衍生出来的，我一直都对各种游戏的背景故事非常着迷，我喜欢那些不可能在现实中存在的梦想世界。我渴望知道故事的延续，我渴望了解未来的世界变成什么样的。

可惜的是，真正玩起游戏的时候，莫名的又让我失望，游戏很少有玩家对游戏的背景故事感兴趣。多数的人追求的是一种成功感，一种征服感，很难找到几个人一起交流。但是即使如此，并不表示我对这些并不感兴趣，在游戏中很容易就能获得在现实中难能可贵的被认同感，你一下感觉自己找到了价值。

但终归这些都无法取代你在现实中的价值，你还是得在现实中找到自己的价值。

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[1] Work
[2] Authority

Testimonial 41

Testimonial 41

I do not want to brag that I am an old player. And I will not comment on the fall of the China server in the time of TBC. When in the newly opened WLK there will be a lot of things you can only realize the true meaning and value of by experiencing them. New players, this is not your fault. But I am so regretful that you did not come earlier.

At a crossroads, every time I heard the familiar rhythm and I believed the old players should be very familiar with the missions. And you should all know how to get the missions above the Wailing Caverns. And you will be all excited to get the new moon stick, or the wind sword. We were just simply playing the game. And we found the missions all by ourselves. [1]But why did we have such an unknown excitement? [2]Because the players were all supporting each other towards the same goal. Buying game cards using gold or the gold group at that simple and naïve age, we would never have done such a thing. Five years ago we knew nothing but to support each other. Five years later in this ill-formed version of the game, the gold groups have invaded the entire China server like the Burning Crusade invaded Azeroth. A lot of people do not understand that the [3]glory of the 'C' on the keyboard can never replace the sadness of 'O.' I feel bad when people say that what we get from WoW is only equipment. I feel bad when hearing about this …what do we get from WoW? Equipment? After 5 years I remember every moment of receiving good equipment. It was not because of the equipment itself, but behind this there is something that you cannot trade for gold or RMB. Friendship and memories. I agree with the short online movie, '[4]Warcraft Wisdom'. Before, everybody played WoW in a different way. Someone would go instancing, some would solve the mission, some would go to BGs and at that time there was no JJC. There were are also some people selling equipment, some people PKing without other players. And some people only playing to kill the enemy. And there were some playing only to sack the cities. But no one just wanted to get the equipment and sell them to make money. At least I didn't seen it. In my opinion, the people who pay to play are getting happiness from it because we are players. If someone wants to make money from the game it totally changes the evaluation of the game. At least I disagree with that.

G group, fast food accounts, and levelling other people's accounts to get money … I admit that it is common to make some money levelling for others. And it is also understandable for people who want to experience the top level instancing and PK. And it is also common for

[1] In-group
[2] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[3] Authority
[4] Art

people to buy game cards by using gold. [5]But about the G group, I do not want to be enemy of the majority. [6]But now the G group is already overwhelming. The benefit has gone beyond something in the level of spiritual friendship, now that they are making money it is materialized. One of my colleagues began to play wow last week, and now he has FAMOUS SWORD, and he said 'I had good luck, and next week I can graduate.' And I asked him what will you do after graduation. He said 'make money in the g group.' This is very common right now. The tragedy lead to this ill-formed version of playing the game.

Once I was so naïve I emailed 9 City and asked whether you could open some old version FWQ. And the server that level 60 is the highest. [7]And the server that levelling up was so slow. The current version has given a chance for the storm of G groups that it should not have. My point was just to let the later TBC players to experience the original happiness.

I knew the possibility was almost zero. In fact it is zero

[8]There are many ways of playing the game. A G group has its own meaning. I cannot force everyone to play the game just to simply play it. Is that because people are becoming more complicated or am I just not keeping up with the times? I'm nostalgic.

The guild master is a middle-aged man of 50 years old. I respect him. He doesn't allow any guild member to open G groups. He finish reading all the warcraft novels. [9]And his equipment is the worst of all the hunters of our guild. He has lead more than 200 people to experience the real WoW. And he said, WoW will keep updating and the equiptment will keep updating, in the end the only thing that will not be updated is friendship. And this is the only gift the game brought me.

不想刻意标榜自己是个多么多么资深的老玩家，不愿评论后 TBC 时代国 F 的堕落，还是新开的 WLK 时代，很多东西只有经历过，才懂得它的价值意义，新玩家，这不是你的错，只是我很遗憾你没有提前感受真正的魔兽。

十字路口，每当听到那熟悉的旋律，看到泛黄的旷野，真的很感慨，老玩家对那里的任务应该轻车熟路吧，应该都知道怎么接哀嚎洞穴上面的任务，都会为拿到新月法杖

[5] In-group
[6] Purity
[7] Contingencies
[8] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[9] Material vs. moral/spiritual

或是翼刃而激动。当时只是很无知的在玩游戏，没有插件，任务都是自己找，却莫名的兴奋，为什么?玩家都是相互帮助共同努力。G 买点卡?G 团?在那个纯粹玩游戏的年代，绝不会衍生出纯粹为了利益的这种游戏方式，5 年前，我们都是小白，却彼此相照应。5 年后，在这个畸形的版本中，G 团如入侵艾泽拉斯的燃烧军团一样席卷整个国 F，很多人不解，“C 键的辉煌永远代替不了 O 键的暗淡”是上面意思，我听这句话真的很难受，魔兽中，我们得到了什么。装备??5 年了我拿到好装备的时刻都记着，并不是因为装备本身，而是因为得到史诗装备的背后，承载着两种不是用 G，用 RMB 可以买到的东西——友谊、回忆。我很赞同“魔兽智慧”这部 flash。以前，虽然每个人玩魔兽的方式不同，有 FB 的，有做任务的，有打 ZC 的(那时候没有 JJC)，有休闲的，有在拍卖行倒买倒卖的，有门口插旗 PK 的，有专门杀敌对玩家的，也有专门屠城的。。。但是没有一心只想拿装备，然后把游戏当做赚 RMB 工具的玩家，至少我没见过。在我的观点中，自己掏腰包玩这款游戏，是为了从中获得快乐，我们是游戏玩家。如果把他当做赚钱工具。。恩，完全颠倒了游戏的价值观。至少，我不赞同。

G 团，快餐号，带祖尔带破碎带黑翼，代练。。。我承认带别人的人为了赚钱无可厚非，被带的人想快点升级体验顶级 FB,PK，可以理解。G 买点卡，也是人之常情。但是 G 团。。。我不想以大众为敌，毕竟现在 G 团早已泛滥，利益早已超越了友情等精神层次的存在。我的一个同事上个星期才接触魔兽，但是现在已经拿到 D 刀了。他说：“哥运气好，下个星期就可以毕业了!”我问他你毕业了干什么，他说打 G 团赚钱，现在不都是这样么。。一个畸形版本引发的悲剧。

我曾经天真的给 9C 发 Email 说能不能开一些老版本的 FWQ，60 级封顶的 FWQ，升级还是那样缓慢的 FWQ，急功近利的心遇见畸形的版本，催生了不应有的 G 团风暴，我的出发点只是让后 TBC 的玩家去感受原始的快乐，我知道可能性几乎为零。事实证明，的确是零。

游戏方式有很多种，G 团也有它存在的意义，我又不能强求每个人都为单纯玩游戏而玩游戏，是人们变的复杂了，还是我 out 了??我怀旧了。

会长是个快 50 岁的中年人，我很尊敬他，他是不允许会里人开 G 团的，他看完了魔兽的小说，他在我们会 LR 中装备最差，他带领会里 200 多人体验了真正的魔兽，他说：“魔兽一直在更新，装备一直会更新，到最后，没有更新的只是友谊。”这就是游戏给我们带来的唯一礼物。

Testimonial 43

Testimonial 43

WoW played a very important part in my middle school years. And that continued to the first two years of college. When I first played WoW it was the 3rd year of junior middle school. Because before that I was a player of Warcraft and so I was naturally interested in this net game.

I still remember the day when the data base testing launched was the same as a middle school graduation test. After the test I rushed into the net bar with some of my classmates and wanted to experience the so-called epic game. I remember very clearly at that day I hurried and registered and it was a little slow when I entered the game. My first feeling was that the characters were so ugly. According to my net game experience over so many years, normally characters in the good game are very pretty and well made. Especially the characters in Alliance are so bad looking. And characters in the Horde they don't look like humans. And actually they are not. After a short, painful hesitation when choosing, I chose a gnome mage and the first second I entered the game I realized this was really an epic game and could surpass any net game at that time. Maybe it was because I was playing the 2d game Legend for so long, but at first comparison I thought the game was brilliant, sharp. The Dun Morogh, covered with snow and frozen winds and snow pine trees and snow wolves, made me feel chills in my back. Even now when I played in that place I could not help shaking my body because of cold. Especially when my gnome was walking on the snow and left rows of footprints, and then the footprints were covered by more snow and then disappeared, I felt that this game was so well-made. [1]And since then this game changed my life (usually saying 'changed my life' is a bit of an exaggeration, but recalling this time it did have some large influences on my middle school years).

[2]I still remember when I was in middle school any book about English was so boring. I would even fall asleep having English tests. But if it was a book about WoW even if it was in all English, I would get dictionaries and read every line of it just so I could play the game better. There are so many things in the game you need to research. [3]The game is easy to play, but hard to become a master. It was because of this specialized research that I can say that I am familiar with the 10 careers of the game and all of the history about the game and how to solve missions. [4]And this also meant that I spent very little time on my studies. I had a very average score in my studies. An average score on the college entrance examinations and I am

[1] Transform
[2] Education system
[3] Contingencies
[4] Education system

still average level in college. Everything is so mediocre.

To me I still haven't found a good balance between WoW and study. But I also know that to any real game fan, the attraction of WoW is irresistible and I have some very good experiences and memories.

[5]WoW is like a giant society; one can cooperate with the [6]brothers in the guild and kill the boss together and chat and talk with friends in the game and defend from enemy invasions. Think about it. How many times can a person do something he really loves and not interfere with others?

Now WoW has changed because the China mainland version was so slow to update. And for a long time now it has been a very lowly version of the game. And this has made the players utilitarian and has even made the game ethic decay. And the players are no longer enjoying the happiness of experiencing the game but just chase the equipment in the game and ignore the process of getting them. However, the process is what should be the most important thing. And I will no longer spend a lot of time in this. And I will say 'the length of time is not important, no matter if the time is long or short, the most important thing is that you had once held each other. That's enough.' [7]

I remember the slogan of the 9th City when it first advertised WoW: 'to do something you have never done.' And then because the first version was delayed nine months later than other places in the world, that slogan was changed by Chinese netizens to: 'to do something that other people have done.' And the release of the second version was even later, it was almost a year and that was the time when the other countries almost released the third version, and that slogan had changed again: 'to do something other people stopped doing.' But the slogan 'to do something you have never done' was already written in my mind. Indeed, if I love something I dare to try it. And if I devote most of my energy, no matter what the result is, I will never regret. Unless I don't like it and am tired of it. The title is 'testimonial' and in writing this I feel that I am away from the central idea. This was all written during the World Cup of 2010 after the Brazilians defeated the Koreans, and in Wuhan it has already been raining for a week. When will the rain stop?

魔兽世界在我中学时代占据着很重要的比重，甚至延续到大学头两年。我接触魔兽世界的时候还是初中三年级，那时由于之前就是一名魔兽争霸玩家，自然对这个即将推

[5] WoW is like real life
[6] in-group
[7] Peak experience

出的改编网游倍感兴趣。

我记得刚刚开服务器公测的时候是在初三体育中考那天，考完试我就直接和班上几个同好们奔赴网吧，准备体验一些传说中的史诗巨作。很清楚的记得那天，在匆匆忙忙注册账号之后，进入游戏界面时，有点呆滞。第一感觉，这些人物怎么这么丑，毕竟凭我多年网游经验，一般的好游戏的人物都制作得非常漂亮精美的，而魔兽世界的人物在当时看来，联盟这边不是阳痿就是猥琐（单指男性角色，毕竟我不是著姐，没有当人妖的想法），而部落这么却怎么看都不像人（事实是也确实不是人，牛鬼蛇神一大堆）。在经过短暂的痛苦的抉择后（毕竟当时心急，想赶快体验），选了个侏儒法师（感觉侏儒很像我哈，就两字——聪明！）进入了游戏。一进入，就感觉这制作确实是史诗巨作，感觉可以秒杀当时任何网游（可能是那会玩 2D 的《传奇》多了，一比较立马就感觉这游戏用现在在的话说就两字——犀利！），那白雪皑皑的丹莫罗，那冰冷呼啸的寒风，以及那成片的雪松和到处游走的雪狼，都使我身临其境，感到凉意十足（直到现在，若我还是把游戏角色旅行到丹莫罗，身体竟然会不由打哆嗦……）。特别是每当我那灵活的小侏儒在雪地上赶路时，不光雪地留下那一排排脚印，并且这脚印竟然会随着时间推移而慢慢被下的雪覆盖，最后消失。我当时就感觉这游戏钱途不可限量哈，从此开始了这改变人生的游戏（用“改变人生”好像有点夸张，不过现在回想起来确实在学生时代有着不可取代的影响力）。

记得当初高中看任何关于英语的东西都感到无比厌烦，甚至考生的时候看着看着都可以睡觉。但是若是一本关于魔兽世界的资料书籍，那怕是全英文的，也会把它反复研究，只为玩得更透彻(这游戏也确实有太多的东西需要去研究，易上手，却难于精通.)，也正因为这种专业的研究精神，我到现在可以说熟知魔兽世界十大职业各种玩法以及几乎所有魔兽历史和任务解决方法。这也导致我没在学业上花多少时间，使得学习中等，高考成绩中等，大学中等，一切平庸的现状。

在我看来，我还是没把握好魔兽世界与学习之间的平衡点，可是我也知道，对于任何一个真正的游戏 FANS，魔兽世界的吸引力确实是不可抵抗的。但是拥有这么一段经历也是一种美妙的感觉，魔兽世界就是一个庞大的社会，和工会的兄弟们团结合作 DOWN 掉 BOSS，和游戏里的朋友们指点江山，激昂文字，和铁炉堡的守军共同抵御敌对方的侵略，想想，一个人一生又可以做多少次自己热衷的事而不受外物所干扰呢？

现在，魔兽世界变了，由于中国大陆版本的严重滞后，长期在一个泡菜版本下，使玩家变得功利化，快餐化，甚至游戏道德沦丧化。玩家不再是为了感受体验游戏快乐，而变成追求游戏里那虚无缥缈的装备，无视其获取的过程，殊不知过程才是最美妙的。而我也不在花费大量的时间在此，不再时间玩，套用一句很俗的话——不在乎天长地久，只求曾经拥有（貌似用这句好像不妥帖，算了快写完了，不管了）。

记得九城（原来的魔兽世界代理商，后被网易取代，至今落魄）当初宣传魔兽时的口号是“做你从未做过的事”（听起来确实很霸气！），后来由于第一个资料片严重滞后世界其他地区达 9 个月。被中国网民改成“做别人早已做过的事”，再后来第二个资料片又更加滞后，接近一年，在其他地区马上要发行第三个资料片的情形下还没开放，这句很烂的台词又被有着强大自嘲精神的中国网民改写成“做别人早已不做的事”。按照当下流行的话来说，这个杯具都被摔了两次，已经成了一大餐具！但是“做你从未做过的事”已经深深刻在我脑海中，确实，只要我喜欢，我热爱一项事业就要勇于尝试，敢于体验并投入最大的精力，不管是否变成什么杯具餐具，都不后悔，除非你不喜欢了，感到厌烦了。（题目是鉴定书，写到这感觉走题了，额！！）

一上写于 2010 年世界杯决赛表演足球战胜功夫足球后（武汉都连续下了 1 个星期雨了，什么时候停啊，好烦，纯发泄）

Testimonial 46

Testimonial 46

……[1]The feelings of WoW. The happiest is exploring. The most joyful is rushing. The most helpless is G group. And that which made me most angry is the lowly version of the game. I started playing WoW five years ago. At that time, any time I had I would spend levelling with my friends. My heart would itch when hearing other people talk about fighting in the Molten Core for an entire week, but I had to give up playing because of the high school entrance examinations.

And I am in college now. The boring life brought me back to WoW again. With the introduction of my friend I joined the NAME guild which focuses on exploring. I was so excited and the guild master asked me how is my equipment. I said it's not good. [2]And the guild master told me it doesn't matter, we will help you. And this motivated me for a really, really long time.

We explored together, and experienced a lot. [3]WoW has brought us more than just a game. [45]It made me experience friendship and [6]caring and a sense of responsibility. The excitement and the sleeplessness of getting new equipment. And also the excitement of killing the boss. So many experiences[7] made me feel it is hard to leave this world.

[8]We had been killed again and again in front of strong boss but we didn't give up. [9]And everybody in the guild discussed why we were killed. And after cooperating and practicing we know how to execute our teamwork. And eventually we defeated BOSS. And that night I heard the screamING on the other side of YY and I heard the excitement of the guild master and thought, yes, WoW has witnessed our friendship.

I remember standing in the centre of the desert city, looking at the G man walking beside me, and I wanted to try it on myself. And then I had an unknown fantasy. How I wished I had a gold stick. That was the symbol of TBC. Looking at that STAFF, I cannot forget that.

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[1] Peak experience
[2] Care
[3] More than a game
[4] In-group
[5] Transformation
[6] Care
[7] Peak experience
[8] Contingencies
[9] In-group

[10]WoW is a spirit. There is no brotherhood without WoW. WoW is a kind of friendship. [11]WoW taught me the details of being a good person.

魔兽世界之感悟

……魔兽。　最快乐的是开荒。　最高兴的是 RUSH。　最无奈的是 G 团。　最气愤的是脑残版本。

接触魔兽世界已经是五年前了，那时候我练的是个亡灵术士，那时候一有空就和朋友们一起上魔兽练级，听到别人说整星期的为熔火之心奋斗，我就心痒痒，但是由于要中考了，我选择了放弃了……

转眼间我已经是大学了，无聊的生活让我重新回到了魔兽，在朋友介绍下，我进了正在开荒的 NAME 工会，我心那个激动呀！会长问我装备怎么样。我说不好。“没关系，只要你稳定，我们培养你。”一句话让我感动了好久。

我们一起开荒，到现在的碾压，经历了好多好多，魔兽给我们的不仅仅是游戏这么简单，她让我们体会到了友情，体会到了关心，更展现了我们的责任心。拿装备的兴奋与无眠；灭布胖的激动与惊险；捅马桶男的急速与瞬间……这些经历让我无法离开这个世界。

面对强大的 BOSS，我们一次次倒下，但是我们并没有放弃，而且大家一起探讨，为什么灭团，然后一次次磨合，这更让我们学会了如何团队合作，在最终击败了马桶男-基尔加丹那天晚上，我听到了 YY 对面的尖叫，我听到了五哥的激动，对，是魔兽见证了我们的友谊。

记得，那是的我站在沙城中间，看着 G 杖男从我身边走过。总要试试穿在我身上是啥效果。然后又在那里莫名的幻想。我多么希望我也能有个金杖呀！那是奶德的象征，是 TBC 的象征。看着我手上的阿曼尼占卜法杖，我…但是那份信念却无法忘记。 魔兽是种精神，无兄弟不魔兽，魔兽是种友谊。魔兽让我学会了做人的细节。

[10] Purity
[11] Transformation

Testimonial 47

Testimonial 47[1]

Warcraft.

The summer four years ago when I looked and saw my brother playing a game named WoW I was attracted deeply by the beautiful pictures and the music and the interesting missions and instancing that needs teamwork. And the very easy chatting system. And these laid the pavement of my later WoW journeys. At that time I was doing missions for my brother. And now that I am thinking about that, I was being used by my brother.

First year

It was the first year of high school that I played WoW. At that time one of my classmates had a magician of 60 and I worshipped it so much. So, we five classmates formed a small group: a warrior called Pighead, a warlock, a magician, a priest, and a hunter. And then that was the beginning of my dream journey. The reason why I chose priest was that it was the only healing class on the team. And also because of a video. In the video a SOMETHING and a rogue had a very fierce battle with AM, but when I really played I felt that I made a mistake. [2]The levelling of the priest was so slow and I was killed whenever two monsters would attack me at the same time. But this could not reduce my passion for the game. [3]The first time I rode on a pony and the first time I was motivated by the screaming, but because of the harsh educational system in high school it is always painful for the high school players. The time was so limited. I would always sneak into net bars at night. And on silent nights I would check out the scenes in Azeroth again and again. Sometimes I levelled up only one level for a whole night. From the Barrens to the grey valley to Stranglethron to Winterspring, it was not easy to come all the way here. But I was really excited and happy.

Second Year

And now it is the summer vacation of my freshman year in high school. And TBC has been opened for half a year. But what I had was endless study and test papers. [4]And the sophomore year in high school was the beginning of suffering. Even more intense study and endless classes and terrible teachers. I hated school. Every day I was in class but my mind was in WoW. During this whole year I could only play at noon, but on the weekends it was

[1] Memory-centric
[2] Contingencies
[3] Education system
[4] Education system

the best. I went to Karazhan, so my grades were not good. At summer vacation of sophomore year in high school, we were very fortunate to have the Olympic games in China. We had a month off in summer. Because of studying and the AFK of my classmates I began the game alone and it happened that one of my good friends was in another server. I chose a new journey and chose rogue as my class, which proved to be brilliant. Rogue is the best in PVP and PVE.

Third Year

[5]The end of summer and we had to face school again. Depressing class atmosphere and endless repeating of college entrance examinations, and if you did not explode in the silence you would die in the silence. I exploded. I began to skip classes. That was the time I joined my first guild with my good friend. And I will never forget that. At that point I had the chance to experience the joy of 25 people instancing. If I was alone before, I was unified now and loving WoW even more. That guild master was a classmate also in high school and then before the college entrance exam. Before the exam I knew there were 7 or 8 third year high school students in the guild, and we started raiding on the weekends. And we watched videos and started the PLACE, PLACE, and Black Temple, and by this time it had been half a year since the Sunwell instance had opened. And the server had halted in the Darkness Temple and the Sunwell was only a dream of ours. [67]Whenever the guild was acting and exploring together, those was the best moments of my boring high school life. Chatting in UT and the passionate [8]commanding and the happiness after killing boss. After half a year of exploring I saw the final boss of TBC, but what is ironic is one week later it's June 7 the date of the final exam and also the 9th City closed the server. June 1st, Monday, the last day of instancing updates. And what is more significant is on that day we killed the final boss. And then it was the final exam, which was not important. But the reality was cruel. [9]The closing of the server and the result of the final exam is that I chose to give up entering college. And on the day of exploring most of my friends went to 'self-taught study school.' And some of my friends went to the vocational college. During the two months of waiting, I waited for the whole night for the server to open again. The first second I went into WoW and pressed the O key on my keyboard, and the scene was so sad. And later on everyday I would go online to check my guild, but the result was the AFK of many people. I lost many of my friends. And I became a leisure player.

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[5] Education system
[6] In-group
[7] Peak experience
[8] Authority
[9] Costly sacrifice

Fourth year.

I was so bored and could not give up WoW. And I had another mage and let it grow to level 63. And I was invited into the NAME guild. The original guild was constituted of more than 90% of people who started playing WoW after Netease had opened it and they knew nothing about it. And they ate fast food from 1 to 70. [10]Because I was the only person who had experience from the beginning through TBC, so I became the amateur raid leader. I read some blog postings on how to kill the bosses. [11]I lead a group of fast food players into the [12]true essence of the game, the PVE instancing. And we had explored all the way and I found the old happiness. The only difference was that it was in a different version and with different teammates. Fortunately this version, WLK, has reduced a need for talent. And we went through the TBC.

Conclusion:

It has been four months of raiding, all kinds of instancing, and TBC. And I'm still a leisure player. I will spend two nights every week and two evenings every week and lead the team through instancing, and those are the most relaxing moments. People spend some time playing in the BG and small instancing to get their happiness. [13]And I became more mature from the experience of [14]commanding and realized the power of a team. I do not regret the choice. I love everything, every place of Azeroth so much. [15]And I love my teammates. [16]But now I'm feeling helpless. The endless TBC has made the WoW utilitarian. There's no baptism of exploration for the fast food WoWer, and they will not understand the happiness and fun of playing as a team. [17]They do not get the essence of the game, but only exercise their vanity by pursuing their gold. Thus they only make themselves more distant with WoW by treating it as fast food game! [18]No matter what version of WoW the original or TBC or Wrath of Lich King or Cataclysm, as long as WoW continues to exist we will continue playing.

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[10] Authority
[11] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[12] Purity
[13] Transformation
[14] Authority
[15] In-group
[16] Material vs. spiritual
[17] Purity
[18] Allegiance

魔兽世界

四年前的暑假，当我看见表哥玩一款名叫《魔兽世界》的游戏，我被优美写实的画面，优雅动人的音乐，有趣的任务，团结的组队副本，一级简便快捷的聊天系统深深吸引。这为我今后迷恋 WOW 埋下了伏笔。当时我只是乐此不彼的为哥哥跑任务。囧，现在想起来是被利用了~~~

第一年

正式接触 WOW 还是在高一，当时同学有一个 60 级的大元帅术士，我无比的崇拜！so,我们 5 个同学组成了一个小队，NAME ZS，亡灵 FS SS 巨魔 LR 和 MS，从此开始了我一发不可收拾的梦幻之旅！之所以选择 MS 这队里唯一一个治疗职业，还是因为当年贼皇 shurk 视频和 AM 斗的难解难分！真正玩起来就大呼失策，练级的熟读真的很慢，碰到两个怪就要躺尸！不过这依然不能减弱我的激情。第一次下哀嚎的感动，第一次骑上小马的欣喜。但是由于高中严厉的教育系统，对于深爱 WOW 的玩家是痛苦的！时间久个束缚，我会晚上偷偷去上网，一个个寂静的夜晚，一遍欣赏艾泽的风景一遍组队做任务，虽然有时候一个晚上才升一级，从贫瘠，灰谷，荆棘谷。加基森，费伍德，安戈洛，冬泉谷，一路走来！真的很不容易。但是真的很兴奋很快乐！

第二年

一路走来已经是高一暑期，燃烧的远征也开了半年，但是无尽的补课学习，试卷，我只能压抑。高二是个痛苦的开始，高强度的学习，无尽的拖堂，补课，试卷，严厉的老师，争分夺秒的学习环境。我选择了厌学！每天上课，思绪却飞到了 WOW 里。这一年我只能每天中午偷着玩，然后周末时最幸福的，可以打卡拉赞和祖阿曼。也正是因为这个成绩不是很理想。高二暑期，很幸运的是中国举办奥运会，我们不用补课放假一个月。由于学习原因，同学的 AFK，没有了同伴一个人的游戏。正好初中一个好友在另外一个服务器，于是我开始了自己的新历程。选择了盗贼这个职业，后来证明是很英明的，PVP,PVE 盗贼都是巅峰！

第三年

言归正传，暑期的结束，归来又得面对死板的教学，压抑的课堂氛围，一级喋喋不休的高考高考，更令人无解的是高二没有补课，高三更加的争分夺秒。不在沉默中爆发就在沉默中消亡，我爆发了！开始厌学，而正是那个时候，我和好友一起进了我的第一个公会，我永远的不会忘记！从此我终于体验了团队的乐趣 25 人的副本！如果说从前我是一个人，现在我更是一个整体，开始更加迷恋 WOW！而那个会长也是高三的同仁，后来高考前才知道，会里有 7 到 8 个高三的学生！我们开始了周末的 RAID，看开荒视频，慢慢的打起了毒蛇神殿，风暴要塞，黑暗神殿。而这个时候太阳井副本也开了半年多了，服务器也只停留在打通黑暗神殿，太阳井是我们的一个梦！每当团队活动，一起开荒时，才是我无聊高三生活最开心的时刻。UT 里的闲聊，激情的指挥，down 掉 BOSS

的喜悦！终于在接近半年的开荒加上 3.0 版本，盗贼尊严天赋的 BUG 我们看见了 TBC 版本的最终 BOSS，基尔加丹！但，粉刺的是，再有一个星期，就是 6 月 7 号，高考的日子同时也是九成关服的日子！6 月 1 号，星期一，副本更新的最后一天，具有意义的是我们那天终于 down 掉了基尔加丹！我也拿上了武器天启。很感动，而后是高考，这已经不重要了！然而事实是残酷的，没有限期的关服加上出来的高考成绩，我毅然选择了放弃填报高考志愿。而开荒的那些朋友大多数都去了自考班重新学习，有的则是去高职高专！漫长的两个月的等待中，开服的那晚我彻夜守候，第一时间我上了久违的 WOW 速度的按下 O 键确实一片黯淡！而后每天我都会上线看看公会，等来的却是大多数人的 AFK，没有了往日的队友朋友，我也变成的休闲玩家！

第四年

百般无聊，舍不去的 WOW 情节，练了一个小法师，慢慢成长，63 级在沼泽组队任务的时候，被他们邀请进了现在的 NAME 公会。原来这个会，90%的人都是网易接收后接触 WOW 的，现在的话就是小白，1 到 70 级快餐起来的- - ！由于公会只有我一个人有 TBC 全通经验，我硬着头皮当起了业余 raid leader！重新看着攻略，但不同的是我成了指挥，带着一群快餐玩家进入了游戏真髓的 PVE 副本。好在都善于学习，我们从卡拉赞，祖阿曼，格鲁尔，海山，黑暗神殿，太阳井，一路开荒，我找到了昔日久违的快乐！唯一不同的是，3.13 版本和不同的队友。好在这个 WLK 的天赋和削弱的版本。我们通了 TBC，基尔加丹还出了橙弓。

总结，而今我们也碾压 TBC 各种副本 4 个月了，我依然是半休闲的玩着，每个星期两个晚上会带着团队打副本，那个时候是最轻松的。大家平时也打打战场，小副本，其乐融融。而我从指挥中，也成熟了许多，更加感受到了一个团队的力量，以及个人的处事能力！我不后悔当初的选择，我深深热爱着艾泽的每一片风景，热爱着我们可爱的队友。现在我也很无奈，无尽的 TBC 造就了这个功利时代的 WOW，快餐下的 WOWER 并没有开荒的洗礼，更不懂得团队的乐趣和快乐！他们没有体验到真正的精髓，而是拿着金币去买属于自己的虚荣。这样，只能让他自己与 WOW 更加疏远，把 WOW 变成一个便当游戏！但是不管 WOW 是个怎么样的版本 地球时代也好，远征也好，巫妖王之怒也好，大灾变也好，只要 WOW 还在我们都会继续下去！

Testimonial 48

Testimonial 48[1]

WoW is a first-class game
Actually we are all addicted players
[2]If you have never been addicted
Then you have never really played WoW
"It's a game, it's entertainment"
This is what we comfort ourselves with when we got hurt in WOW
In fact, we do care about it
Care about the weapons in WoW,[3]care about our fame in WoW,care about [4]brothers in WOW
Who hasn't argued with others in the game?
Who has not experienced the happiness of getting a good weapon?
[5]WoW is like life, we are all ambitious animals
We all like higher salary, higher score
In WoW we all like better equipment
[6]Like to see our equipment is better than others'
Don't deny that you have never seen someone showing off their good weapons

[7]WoW is like life, like the society
Someone has high status, while someone is low
[8]That's why we say healing is the best choice
So we have seen too many hunters and rogues complaining about their loneliness
There are a lot of good buddies in WoW, as well as numbers of idiots
[9]Someone helps you, someone mocks you, people have different purposes
Leave for friend, wouldn't you be sad?
For equipment and PK, never be mad or argue?
WoW wasted a lot of my time
Played it too much, and lost too much in life

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[1] Art
[2] Just interesting
[3] Authority
[4] In-group
[5] WoW is like life
[6] Authority
[7] WoW is like real life
[8] Care
[9] Care

We can be addicted in WoW, but not too much
We have to leave when the time has come
WoW is actually contradictory to our lives
You have to abandon one of them in the end
This is a painful curse
Until AFK, the curse will not end

WoW 是个绝顶的游戏
其实我们都是沉迷的玩家
假如你没有沉迷过
你其实没有玩过 WoW
“就是游戏 就是娱乐”
不过是我们在 WoW 中受到伤害时的一句自我安慰罢了
其实我们都在乎
在乎在 WoW 的装备 WoW 的地位 WoW 的兄弟
有谁玩 WoW 没和人争吵过
有谁没为了得到一件好的的装备兴奋过
WoW 如人生 我们都是好强的动物
我们喜欢更高的工资 更高的分数
WoW 中我们喜欢更好的装备
喜欢自己比别人装备好
别说没看见过有很多人把号放在铁 show 装备

WoW 如人生 如社会
有人地位高 有人地位低
于是我们才会说 治疗是大爷
于是我们才会看见太多猎人 盗贼在抱怨孤独
WoW 中有很多好兄弟 也有很多 2b
有人帮你 有人骂你 人人目的不同
为了朋友的离开 自己难道没有伤心过吗
为了装备 pk 自己没生气和争吵过吗
WoW 很浪费时间
WoW 玩得多了 生活中失去好多好多
我们可以沉迷 WoW 但真的不能太久
也许到了时候就必须离开
WoW 和生活其实是冲突的
到了最后必须放弃其一
这其实是个痛苦的诅咒

知道不玩 WoW 了 诅咒才会结束

Testimonial 49

Testimonial 49

WoW is ‘play and entertainment,’ what you said is mostly ‘playing.’
The theory that WoW is just entertainment, seems to exist among some players.
Players are tired of appreciating the beauty, and you can ignore that.
Entertainment is more like a gaming attitude.
If a game teaches players to level up, to PK since the beginning, then the players know nothing but these traditional game attitudes, and ignore other fun. [1]That's the reason that some people say WoW is just entertainment. Because of the development of this traditional game attitude, sometimes it's really hard for people to understand WoW.
Chinese have mouths, and so do Americans, are they the same?
Chinese people speak Chinese, introvert; Americans speak English, extrovert
[2]If the essence of WoW can be communicated to players, and players can cultivate a proper evaluation of that essence, WoW will be a success.
I quite agree that level 60 is just a beginning, since I leveled up to 50 in Korean sever. I anticipated 60, it means liberation to me, get rid of the system, and embrace the happiness of being free.
Attitude is the key, cultivating players' attitudes is more important than designing big mission or systems.
If a player has a good attitude, he will seek for fun himself.
The players are more willing to cooperate with other players, isn't this the difference between net games and PC games?
Besides, I also think that level 60 may be the starting line of the next version, so it's a new start.

WOW 是“玩”＋“娱乐”，你说到的似乎都是“玩”。
所谓的 WOW 也是泡菜的看法，似乎只存在于部分玩家中。
用户的审美疲劳，你也忽略了。
泡菜，现在看来更多的是指一种游戏理念。
如果产品从一开始就在练级、PK 等传统的系统乐趣方面对玩家进行理念培养，那玩家们自然是只知道这些传统游戏理念，而无视（或者根本感觉不到）其他乐趣的。因此出现所谓的 WOW 是泡菜的说法也很正常。因为这种理念的培养，或许有些时候确实无法理解 WOW。
中国人有嘴巴，美国人也有嘴巴，那中国人和美国人是一样的吗？
中国人说中文，比较含蓄。美国人说英文，比较开放。

[1] More than a game
[2] Purity

如果，WOW 的娱乐理念能够很好地传达给用户，并成功培养用户的娱乐取向的话，那 WOW 就必然成功。
至于 60 级是开始的说法，俺是很赞同的，韩服玩到 50 级，对 60 级很有一种期待感，因为 60 级对俺来说，是一种解放，彻底的解放，从系统乐趣中彻底地解放，迎接自由，迎接自由的乐趣。
心态始终是最关键的，培养用户的心态，远比策划什么大构架、大任务重要。
用户有良好的心态，用户就会自己去寻找乐趣。
用户就会更乐于、更愿意花费时间与其他人互动，这不就是网络游戏与单机游戏的区别吗？
再说，俺还认为，60 级可能是 WOW 下一个版本的新起跑线，所以当然是新的开始

Testimonial 51

Testimonial #51

It's been four years since I played WOW, what I miss the most is my friends[1].

Friends and friendship, a team will not last long if these are missing; a team will not last long if the people are gathered together with the same interests of winning equipment[2], for even though they went through the battlefield, they have not emotional bond between them.

I'm a member of the guild called NAME, before entering the guild I was just wandering around. I was a Warrior of 70, and wanted to enter the guild NAME, but failed. Eventually, I joined the NAME, an unfamiliar guild to me, but a guild which I call it a home, a guild in where started my new WOW journey.

From the second-string in the guild to the first-string, and during this period, I knew a lot of people, experienced a lot. Though the guild had two big changes, I didn't leave, because I found this place carries too many of my memories[3].

We went together because of equipment, but I chose to say because of friends[4]. Four years in CWOW taught me that we are not only playing a game[5], we found friends here, we found something not easy to find in real society. There is no cheating[6], not too many rules like in the work place. We all face to each other with our real faces. I remember the moment when we gathered, the shout of raid leader, the disappointment of being destroyed, the argument when we have different opinions, but we just laugh it off, because we are friends, aren't we[7]?

There is something in life, that once you miss it for a moment, you'll miss it for a life. I'm lucky not miss the chance to play with you.

Flower blooms and fades; star shines, and dies. We come together and will also separate. We have laughed together, isn't that the reason for our meeting? Memory will never fade away, even if it's forgot, it shines like the star!

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[1] In-group
[2] Material vs. spiritual
[3] In-group
[4] Material vs. spiritual
[5] More than a game
[6] Fairness
[7] In-group

We know many people can't leave, simply because of the names in the "O" key, friends are not measured by gold or equipment. "Friends are always more valuable than equipment[8]", many people thought so, just in this way, they have more friends, better team, and better memories, something can't forget.

玩魔兽有 4 年了，回忆起来最放不下的还是我的那帮兄弟姐妹。

友情，朋友，如果一个团队没有友情这种东西的话是不会长久的，为了装备走到一起，经历了很多任然没有感情可谈，心里只有装备这样的团队是不会长的，这样的人也不会在 WOW 得到比装备更可贵的东西。

[Paragraph removed]

从进入公会到替补到开荒到成为公会团队的主力,期间我认识了很多人，经历了很多事，虽然公会曾经 2 次动荡，但是我不愿离开，因为我发现这个地方给了我太多太多的回忆，让我已无法割舍。

当初我们也是为了装备走到一起，公会动荡时却因为朋友而不愿离开，CWOW 这 4 年告诉我，我们玩的不仅仅是游戏，我们在游戏里找到朋友，找到在现实社会里不容易找到的东西，这里没有尔虞我诈，没有职场规则，我们都以最真实的一面来面对大家，集合时的调笑，灭团时的不甘，RL 的咆哮，一件装备的谦让，因为意见的不一致而争吵，因为一次失误而生气，但是最后还是一笑带过，因为大家都是朋友不是吗？

人生有些事，错过一时，就错过一世，我很庆幸没有错过和你们在一起的时光`。花开了，然后凋零，星星是璀璨的，可那个光芒也会消失，现在我们走到一起，我们也会有分开的时候，但是我们曾经一起笑过，感动过，这一切不都是相遇过的见证吗？回忆这种东西是不会凋零的，即使回忆被遗忘，但那段经历也曾像星星一样璀璨过，闪耀过！

我们都知道很多人放不下 WOW 就是因为“O”键里的那些名字，朋友不是用 G 或装备来衡量的，“就算拿不到装备也比失去同伴要好”，很多人都是这么想的，就是因为这样想才有了更多的朋友，有了更好的团队，才有了更多的回忆，才有了更多的放不下和忘不了。

[8] Material vs. spiritual

Testimonial 53

Testimonial 53

Since playing WoW with friends in my dorm, I learnt a lot.

Once I asked myself, what does WoW mean to us? I did not know. What do I want to get from it? Equipment, or just fun, or the excitement of killing? This beautiful world caught me with her fascinating scenes, missions, friends, dungeons, and equipment. What do we get in the end?

For a rogue, three orange weapons mean dignity, and they are the end of your WoW, I'm fighting for my goal.....

In WoW, am I actually seeking a pile of numbers? Is that it? I don't believe it! [1]Is this all we come here for? This game, as with other games, has [2]her own style, her own aim, teaching players to know the world, to communicate, to evaluate things and surroundings. I disagree with this viewpoint that we are seeking these things we can't find in real life. What have we learned from the game? How to kill? How to escape? How to click the keyboard? In the end, what will be left after we leave the game? Honor, fame? I do not know.

But people call it memories! Memories are everything you learn. Maybe one day you will forget the PLACE. One month ago, when the sever was in routine maintenance, rumor said there will be 80!! I felt bad when hearing that, since I've just started playing and know little about the story in it, and now here comes the lich king, what's all this about? Are they going to torture our green hands? I still don't know!

Or, maybe I will forget all the equipment I got. Or maybe I will forget the names of the places I've been, but memories last a long time. [3]It's not merely a game, it's true. What I felt, what I said, what I saw, what I lived. I learned to feel like others, learned to let them feel how I feel, these are the result of learning.

[4]Our memories are made drop by drop. People will be changed by their different memories, which will also decide how much happiness you have. For example, the failure of raiding, which was a heavy setback for me. I understand that those people

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[1] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[2] WoW personified and feminized
[3] More than a game
[4] Transformation

who've been called "bad guys" are not really bad, they were cursed by people and dared not to get online, they don't have good memories, what a pain will that be to be one of those guys, I feel really bad for them! [5]If we help them to see the love, and give them good memories, then you will see the freedom of their [6]souls, and you will in turn be warmed up by them, because you made them free. Then you will see the world has changed, the real world. You will be enabled to see their hearts. Then, there's no need to play the game any longer, our real world is much better than the game world!

Once I asked myself, what does WoW mean to me? What do we want to get from it? To me, there's, an obvious answer: [7]friends and memories. How about you?

自从跟着宿舍几个朋友玩起魔兽世界，我感悟了很多 ！

曾经，我问我自己，魔兽对于我们意味着什么？我无从知道，我们在其中又想要寻求什么？寻求装备，寻求快乐，寻求里面打打杀杀的激情？这个美丽的世界，日复一日的，用她迷人的景象抓住了我的心，任务，伙伴，地下城，装备，到最后我到底得到了什么？对于一个盗贼来讲，三橙武器对于盗贼来说是尊严，是象征，是你玩魔兽世界的终结，我在为我的目标而奋斗中.....

在魔兽世界里，我其实是在在追求数据库里的一堆数字，仅是这样吗？我不相信！难道这就是我们来这的目标吗？这个游戏，如同其他游戏一样，有她的风格，有她自己的目标，教会感动玩家，孩子们玩这个游戏来了解这个世界，来学习如何交流，来学习如何看待身边的事物，我绝不赞同这种说法！我们探索这些知识，只是因为在生活中无法找到答案吗？就像科学家所做的，他们简化事物来看清本质，在游戏里，我们学到了什么？怎么杀戮吗？怎么逃生吗？怎么按键盘吗？到底，离开游戏之后，留给我们的会是什么？是名声,是荣誉?是地位?我无从得知！

但人们称他为→回忆！回忆，是你所学到的每件事，也许有一天，你会忘掉曾探索过的地下城（东部王国，卡利姆多，外域），一个月前的一天，竟然在今天服务器的例行维护中，有人传言要出传说中的 80!!! 我听了后，很郁闷，因为我刚玩起这个游戏不久，对于里面的情节知道的微乎其微，现在又来个巫妖王，这是什么乱七八糟的东西，只是故意整我们这些“小白”吗？我依然不知！

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[5] Care
[6] Purity
[7] In-group

或许，我会忘掉曾获得过的装备（刚进一个会，DD 从我身边流逝，因为当时我什么都不懂，我不配拥有这把神圣级别的武器，我忍了!）其次，我连曾去过的地方的名字，没准也会统统忘掉，但回忆永存，这也不仅仅是个游戏，她是真实的，我所感受的，我所说过的，我所看过的，我所生活过的，我学着如何感受他人，学着如何让他人感受我，因为我的感受不同，我会变得不同，我将会改变，这就是学习感受的结果，这就是我玩魔兽世界的结果？

我们的那些回忆，都有一点一滴的感受组成，因回忆里的点点感受影响，会决定你将成为哪种人，因你在游戏里的侧重而异，会决定你生活的快乐程度，比如，R 装备没 R 上，这对于我们来说是个沉重的打击，我明白：这个世界是靠连吃饭的！人生来而美丽，但那些被称为“坏家伙”的人，并非真正的“坏”，他们被人耍得狗血淋头，不敢上线，摆尸体对于他们来说已经是家常便饭，他们没有好的回忆罢了，成为那样的人，是多么的痛苦啊，我真为她们感到悲哀！如果我们帮助他们，让他们看到爱，向他们坦诚的展现你的感受，别怕，给他们留下美好的回忆，然后你会看到，你会看到他们灵魂的光芒，你会被他们心中的光辉所温暖，因为你将使他们自由，然后你会看到这个世界将会改变，真实的世界，你将有能力看到他们的内心，为了这种能力再无需游戏，在无需那些游戏中的美景，其实咱们真实的世界永远会更好！

曾经我问我自己，魔兽对于我们意味着什么？我们在其中又想要寻求什么？对我来说，答案显而易见，朋友和回忆，你的答案呢？

Testimonial 55

Testimonial 55

Actually I'm a DOTA player. But I was always hoping someday I can surpass NAME, but all my roommates are playing WoW.

Actually when I was bored I would try WoW. After all I am a [1]loyal patron of Blizzard. After the opening of WFT I asked a friend to give me an account and began the journey of the death knight. My classmates kept telling me that the Chinese server is feudal. Indeed the first time I saw the ghost feed on dead bodies and I did not recognize what it was. But the game attracted me. I played a rogue before. But it didn't update for a very long time and I gave it up. It is not because I do not have patience. But I felt bad doing one single thing everyday.

At first I played a death knight. It is very interesting to solve the missions in the new players zone, especially rising on the frozen dragon to go to the battlefield. And the horse looks powerful. And eventually I finished the missions in the amateur zones after 23 hours.

[2]But now I am a junior in university. My studies are getting busier, but I will keep playing WoW because I miss the time fighting together with my friends. [3]The biggest happiness in playing WoW is that a team of 24 people care so much about you, understand, help, and support you. And if you always go alone you cannot play it. And if you never buy the gold using the real money then you still cannot play it. And the map of WoW is so big. If there's no mage to open the portal you have to ride on the bird and fly from one map to another. So what you need is friends or brothers who fight together in the war. [4]Here I want to tell people who emphasize so much on equipment. [5]Do not lose the essence of the game because of one single piece of equipment, and the [6]essence is the support and trust of your friends. And equipment just serves to make the game easier. You can deal with or without it. But only friends bring you endless happiness and this is the aim of the game. If everyday you are alone playing WoW do you think there's any necessity for you to keep playing? WoW has been harmonized by some Chinese. Please do not let it become the murder of our friendship. [7]At last, I want to say something cheesy. My teammates I do love you so much. So I want to say

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[1] In-group
[2] Education
[3] Care
[4] Material vs. spiritual
[5] In-group
[6] Purity
[7] Shout-outs

there's no brothers without DOTA. [8]No brothers without WoW. To all the CWoWers, bless you. At this moment enjoy your games, enjoy your lives. Happy mid-autumn day, eat more moon cakes.

其实我是 DOTA 党。一直都在希望有一天能超越 Vigoss。但是寝室里面的室友都在玩 WOW。

实在是闲的无聊我也想试试 WOW 这款游戏，毕竟我是忠实的暴雪玩家。在 WFT 开了以后，我果断找同学要了一个号，开始了死亡骑士的征程。同学一直在对我说 GF（国服）是多么的封建，确实。我第一次看那是食尸鬼的确没马上认出来那个东西是什么。不过游戏的游戏性吸引了我，以前我玩了个 DZ，后来长时间不更新的更新的情况下，我也就没完下去了，并不是我没有耐心，而是每天做着一件事实在不是什么好受的感觉。

初始玩死骑，在新手区做任务做的很有意思，特别是骑着冰霜巨龙去横扫战场。DK 马看上去也霸气十足。终于花了 2 3 个小时做完了新手区的任务。

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不过到了大三现在的学习任务加重了，但是我还是会把 WOW 玩下去，很怀念和朋友们一起奋斗的时光。WOW 最大的乐趣就在于一个团队 24 个人对你一个人的关心，理解，帮助和支持 如果你是独行侠,根本玩不下去. 如果你是个人如果你从来不上网络虚拟平台花钱买金币，那就更加不用说了... 魔兽这游戏地图大,做个任务如果没有 FS 开门,那么就骑着鸟一个地图一个地图飞,说形像点,如果你要飞越 6-8 个地图,那么你点下。所以说这时候需要的是朋友是战友。

在这里我奉劝一些把装备看的很重的人，
不要因为一件装备而失去游戏本身的精髓-----队友的信任和支持，

装备-----只是让游戏变得轻松而已，可有可无，

队友-----让你的游戏其乐无穷，这才是游戏的目的。

如果每天都是你孤零零的一个人在 WOW，您觉得这样还有必要继续下去吗？

WOW 已经成为了中国一部分人"河蟹"的手段了，

请您不要再让它成为破坏我们之间友谊的凶手。

最后我还要肉麻一句：队友们我真的很爱你们。

[8] In-group

所以我要说无兄弟不 DOTA。无兄弟不 WOW。

所有的 CWOWER，祝福你们。在此时此刻，享受自己的游戏，享受自己的人生吧。

中秋愉快！多吃月饼 XD

Testimonial 56

Testimonial 56

Having played wow for five years, sporadically, even though during these periods I have twice stopped playing, I always regard it as the best net game compared to all the other net games I've played.

For example:[1] 'Blizzard products are the best products.' And this is not sufficient to explain how much hard work Blizzard has put into the game. I think one of the most important reasons WoW can be played for such a long time is that it has balance. [2]Everything in the world has a balance of ying and yang, and if you break the balance of the ying and the yang, the result is a catastrophe, and it's the same in games. No matter if it's the balance between two camps, two enemies, or the balance of each class and their skills, Blizzard did it very well. And this is why the game always belongs to its players. …this is why game always has endless players. This game is to me a very important part of my college life. At the very beginning I was attracted by my roommate into this fire hole, only because we wanted to find a common interest and communicate better. I remember at the very beginning of the game my roommates told me let's go to play in the Horde, and I said I want to play paladin, and that brother said there's no paladin in Horde, then I asked, is there a profession in the Horde that can combat and also do magic? And he told me yes there is, there is the [3]spiritual leader of the tribe: shaman. In this way I chose a tauren shaman. Later in the game I enjoyed the visual entertainment brought by the game pictures. And in the meantime experienced the worldview of the game. In the beginning because all my friends were high levels, I did the levelling up alone [4]without feeling loneliness or boredom, because in the game I could always meet some friends levelling up like me. And then we solved missions together, naturally. After we went offline we added each others' QQ and became friends, and next time we were all online we would see each other and say hi. And next time just go instancing, go raiding. In this way even though we never met face to face even once, we still felt very close to each other.

At that time feeling like this was awesome. [5]The fighting together in the game was like fighting in the society after [6]graduation. [7]The happiest thing in the game is even though we did not know each other, whenever we meet problems we would [8]support each other. And in

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[1] Creator agency
[2] Fairness
[3] Purity
[4] In-group
[5] WoW is like real life
[6] Education system
[7] In-group
[8] Care

addition, sometimes there would be very interesting guys in the game. In this way, we made a lot of friends and experienced the same period of time in this virtual world.

Later after graduation and work every evening I would spend some time with my girlfriend. So I played less back home. But I would always say hi to the friends I made in the game on QQ. And time went by. In my working environment all my colleagues are middle-aged men. Though they are all friendly, they are not the same age as mine. [9]So I could not find the feeling with my old friends. And then once the WoW updated its story, naturally again a friend said let's go back. Let's go back to Azeroth. And then we walked together into that piece of memory. In the game I can still feel the happiness with my friends.

[10]In the end, the most important thing I want to say is what we are playing is not merely a game but[1112] friendship and affection. It's the safety we feel of mutual trust. It's the echo we all hear of friends in the same circumstances. [13]In this world we find a feeling of existence we cannot find in the real world. This does not mean that we are escaping, nor can we just play games. People who say this are not real players. So please don't blame us. [14]Do not think playing games is a waste of time, because the game made up for something we lost.

断断续续玩 WOW 也有 5 年了，虽然中间也有过 2 个时期放下没有玩，但是我始终觉得这是角色扮演类型网游中，最好玩也是最重要的一个游戏。

诸如"暴雪出品，必属精品"之类的话已经不足以说明暴雪对这个游戏下的功夫。个人认为 WOW 能延续至今的一个最主要的原因，就是游戏的平衡性。世间万物都有一个阴阳的调和，打破了阴阳的平衡，带来的便是灾难。游戏也是一样，不管是 2 个敌对玩家的阵营之间的平衡，各种职业之间技能的平衡等等等等，暴雪都做得非常用心。这也是为什么这个游戏一直有属于它的玩家群存在的原因。

这个游戏对于我来说，可以说是当年大学生活中非常重要的一笔。当年被寝室的兄弟带入了这个火坑，其实就是为了大家能一起有个共同的爱好，能有更多的交流。记得当时玩游戏之前，寝室的兄弟告诉我："我们一起玩部落。"我说："我想玩圣骑士。"那兄弟又说："部落没有圣骑士…"我又问："那部落哪个职业既能近战搏斗，又会施法攻击？"他告诉我："有啊！部落的精神领袖---萨满！"于是就这样，我建号时选择了一个牛头人萨满祭司。

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[9] Peak experiences
[10] More than a game
[11] In-group
[12] Care
[13] Existential
[14] Just interesting

然后在游戏中，我一边领略着游戏画面带来视觉享受，一边感受这个游戏宏大的世界观。刚开始因为兄弟们级别都很高，于是我一个新人自己练级，但是一点也没有那种孤独和枯燥的感觉，因为在游戏中经常可以碰到一些和我一样练级的朋友，然后很自然的大家一起做任务，再然后下线之前大家互相加为好友，再再然后下次上线时看到对方便互相打招呼，再再再下次便是约着一起打副本，于是最后变成了虽然一次面也没有见过，却已经互相很熟悉的好朋友。

当时的这种感觉很不错，在游戏中一起打拼，当时觉得颇有点像以后在社会上拼搏的感觉。在游戏中最让人觉得快乐的便是即使是素不相识的玩家，遇到问题，也会互相帮助，而且时常会出现一些很有趣的家伙。就这样大家在这个虚拟的世界里，认识了很多朋友，一起走过一段岁月。

到后来毕业之后参加了工作，每天晚上还要和女朋友共度一段时间，所以回家后也很少玩游戏，但是在游戏中的朋友时常还是会在 QQ 上互相打招呼问好。时间一如既往的度过，但是我工作的环境，同事们全部都是中年人，虽然都很友好，但是毕竟不是同龄人，所以我始终找不到以前和好朋友们在一起时那种感觉。于是有段时间刚好 WOW 更新了资料片，于是又很自然地，兄弟跟我说：“咱们回去吧？回到艾泽拉斯！”我们便又走进了那段回忆。在游戏中，我依然可以感觉到那种和朋友一起玩的快乐。

最后，其实也是我最想说的：我们玩的不是游戏，而是感情，是大家在一起互相信任的安全感，是拥有共同现实处境的朋友在一起的共鸣。我们在这个世界中找到了在这个现实世界中不能拥有的一种存在感，但是这并不是代表我们逃避，并不是说我们只会玩游戏，会这么说的人都是没有真正体验这个游戏的人，所以请不要用一种责怪的眼神看待我们，不要认为玩游戏是很浪费时间的事情，因为游戏，给我们弥补了很多。

Testimonial 58

Testimonial 58

When I was 60 there was not much feeling, maybe it was because I was young. I just regarded WoW as a game not very different from Legend or other games. [1]And later gradually I realized this game is different, the system of the game is exactly the reflection of the real society, and when I reached 70 I understood it more. That's why the game cost me too much time. [2]I skipped class to play but now that I think about it, I think it was worthwhile. Sometimes it's difficult to say whether the game has affected my life. [3]Because in WoW I had friends that were made in the net game and met in the real world.

To me, I like exploring best. And the most attractive feeling to me was the first time I killed a boss. Because at this time the power and the strength of the whole team was focused and could not be done by any single person. In the second half of TBC in the Chinese server, this feeling is all gone. I began to leave the game. At that time I realized my real life was not as abundant/satisfying as before, maybe because I was addicted to the game. And all off the sudden I understood why people were so addicted to the game or even could not tell the real world from the visual world. I spoke highly of this game but no matter what, your real life surroundings are the most important. Unless you get paid by WoW like some students. Those people do that because they want to make a living. And their enthusiasm about the game is reducing; they will eventually become robots.

I went to the Taiwan server from the boring China server. At 3.0.3 I could not play any longer all by myself in this strange environment. And I tried to meet some Taiwan friends, which was interesting. But it is because of the sense of belonging I AFK when it was 3.1. When I came back to the Taiwan server again it was 3.3, this time I went there with a group of my mainland friends for Lich King.

I will talk about my last period of WoW. After killing the Lich King it was not as exciting as I thought. The last few days I just played it like a routine, but later I savoured it [4]when we made the video about BGM. I thought a lot about BGM, and I was unsatisfied with the second song in the video. In the end, after the uploading of the video [5]I realized 'bring me to life' should be at that place. The Dawn has been used too much. I still put it in because this song is so meaningful to me. The first time I heard music that was related to WoW it was that

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[1] WoW is like real life
[2] Education system
[3] In-group
[4] Art
[5] Existential

song. So I would like to make it as an end to draw a circle and have everything go back to zero. I have to say, the song 'For the Love of a Princess' is very suitable for the atmosphere when the Lich King falls. [6]The bagpipe combined with symphony made this scenario beyond description.

'Is it truly righteousness that drives you? I wonder. Is it hatred that has driven you to the frozen throne?' Uther taught Arthas that we are paladins and we should not let the emotion of revenge fill our brains. After witnessing how Arthas' rage against the Scourge turned him into a villain himself, I feel I should have no more hatred towards the Burning Legion. I just hope I haven't misinterpreted Arthas' last words; I hope I came here not out of hatred. I hope this was just Arthas trying to shock us. I love these stories and I want to know their true meanings

60 的时候，懵懂而没有太多感受，也许是因为年龄小的关系，单纯地把 WOW 当作一个游戏，和之前的传奇，甚至泡泡堂没有区别。后来慢慢才发现这个游戏的与众不同，其体系简直就是真实社会的映射。到了 70 更是体会到这一点，于是这个游戏花费了我很多时间。不惜逃课去玩，现在想起来也是值得的。有时候会很难说游戏是否影响到我正常的生活，因为在 WOW 中我也有朋友，从网络中认识，现实中走到一起相见。

对我来说，开荒是最喜欢的。首次打掉某个 BOSS 时候的感觉最吸引人，因为这凝聚了整个团队的力量，而不是其中哪一个人能单独做到的。而国服漫长的 TBC 后期，这种感觉已荡然无存，我渐渐远离了游戏。这时我发现现实生活变得不如以前充实，大概是有点沉迷了。突然理解了那些更沉迷的人，甚至分不清现实和虚拟的人。我对这个游戏评价很高，但不管如何，你的身边真实存在的东西才更重要，除非你是靠 WOW 拿工资的人。比如 XX 工作室。那样的人大多是为了养家糊口才干这行的，对游戏的热情也在被一点点磨灭，成为机器人。

离开无趣的国服，我到了台服。3.0.3 时候，在这个完全陌生的环境里，我几乎没法一个人玩下去，试着去认识一些台湾朋友，也是很有意思的事情。但是归属感作怪，3.1 就 AFK 了。再次到台服，已是 3.3，这次是和一群大陆朋友，为了 lich king 而去。

说说最后一段 WOW 时光吧。过掉 lich king 并没有想象中的激动人心，最后几天几乎是例行公事般地去打，只有后来做视频的时候，才久久回味。关于 BGM 我想了很久，最后也对第 2 首歌不满意，直到视频发出去才想到 bring me to life 应该在那个位置。the dawn 虽然都被别人用烂了，我依然固执地把它放了进去。这支曲子对我有特殊意义，第一次听到 WOW 有关的音乐就是它，因此还是把它作为结束吧，画了一个圆，一切归零。不得不说 for the love of a princess 是非常适合 lich king 倒下时的气氛的，风笛加

[6] Just interesting

交响乐完美衬托了这超越语言的场面。

Is it truly righteousness that drives you? I wonder. 是仇恨驱使我们来到寒冰王座吗，乌瑟尔曾教导阿尔萨斯：我们是圣骑士，不能让复仇的情绪占据大脑。而目睹了亡灵大军的肆虐后，我们对天灾何尝没有仇恨，希望是我想多了，希望这句只是阿尔萨斯临死前为了动摇敌人说的话。看来我还是个剧情控。

Testimonial 61

Testimonial 61

I left WoW for more than half a month ago. Even though my impression of the game is getting blurry, the smiling faces of my friends are still clear. There are so many things and good deeds in the game I want to talk about. And I want to say hi to the friends I miss. [1]And I will talk about the sweet, sour, bitter in my past six months of WoW life. Maybe this is the reason I wrote the following words.

I am not a girl who is addicted to net games. But I have a lot of sisters that are addicted. My first net game was A3, the reason why I played is I was attracted by the beautiful pictures. WoW was my second net game. It was the first game I put real emotion into. And I began playing since WoW began data base testing using an account of one of my colleagues. And I had another sister play using that account. And when the ending of the testing came around, I was a rogue of 29. At that time I was absolutely an amateur. I could never go raiding and my understanding to the game was quite superficial. What attracted me to WoW was the magnificent story and dream-like scenarios. Thus, at the end of the testing I decided to experience the real charm of the game.

But I was unable to participate in the game because of some personal reasons. The first day of playing I used my nickname to create a character. The name means 'NAME' and then it was about 2 weeks I didn't play. But I had the ability to foresee and gave this account to one of my colleagues and asked him to level. And when I was 31 I began my real journey in the game. In the beginning I came to this world and everything was strange to me. I knew little or nothing about it. And why do we play the game, I never thought about it. In highlands of Arathi I understood what is PK for the first time. [2]In Stranglethorn I understood the cruelty between the Horde and Alliance. And in the south sea town I knew some friends that would affect my WoW life: Crazy. Brutus. Jim. Fang. Dark Desperado. Exeter, and so on. And it was the first time I understood the meaning of friends in the net game. And I joined my first guild it was called The Confederacy of the Alliance. That was my happiest moment in WoW. [3]At that time the guild did not have many people, but everyone was so kind, caring, helping each other. And people got together levelling, instancing, killing the Horde, and had no selfishness. I felt so good. But it was me who knew nothing and always needed the support and help from other people. [4]And I was like a child at that time. I regarded the equipment as more important than anything else. I asked people to get this or that with me. Now when I

[1] Peak experience
[2] In-group
[3] Care
[4] Material vs. moral/spiritual

think about it I feel so shameful. Soon enough I reached 40, with the help of others I rode on the tiger. In a time when 45 was the highest level, my biggest pleasure was to ride on the tiger everywhere in the world.

After the end of the public testing and when the level 60 was opened and everybody began rushing to the next round. Gradually my understanding of the game has changed a lot. And so did the people and the things around me. So many people and friends began to leave. And since then I began to think where is the true meaning of the game? For equipment, honour or for just some visualized equipment? [5]Since then, the real WoW began to exist like the real world. WoW was full of hypocrites, cheaters, and frauds. Maybe my evaluation was too dark. Or the understanding of the game is different. Friends became distant, and the things we chased after were glorified.

Later on, I began to feel weird with WoW. [6]Or I may say not used to seeing the reality in the net game. In the real society I have seen too much fraud and cheating between people and recklessness for money. And during the WoW period I had some problems with my relationships and felt disappointed about everything. I wanted to find a clean and a [7]pure land in the game, find some real emotion, besides the equipment. That emotion is not only love, but also the true and [8]sincere caring and helping between people. But I realized the world in WoW is so similar to the real world. Most people chasing after equipment, money, honour, power, it's getting away from my ideal WoW. I could not say I am right and other people are wrong because people are different. So eventually I chose to leave. Even though sometimes I felt it was so difficult to leave those memorable times and unforgettable friends, and I came back try to find the feeling from the beginning. However, I gave up. Because so many things helped me to understand what I want is different from the majority and this world is not suitable for persons like me to survive. I was already tired in the real society, I could not bear the boring-ness in the visual world. I was right to leave. The last thing that made me decide to leave WoW was really heart-breaking [9]and let me realize there's no difference at all between the WoW and real life. Only in the virtual world people can show human nature more directly more recklessly. It was in my last paladin guild, the best Alliance guild in that server. Because I could not stand for some people's hypocrisy I quit it. And a week after that I heard something I got a level 60 purple necklace from killing the black

[5] WoW is like real life
[6] WoW is like real life
[7] Purity
[8] Care
[9] WoW is like real life

dragon princess. It made me become the centre of mockery and criticism. [10]They said I came for equipment and disappeared after getting the equipment. I did not feel anger, I just felt woeful. People are the same. Maybe the majority of people regard those best pieces of equipment as more important than anything else. But I am different. Maybe my getting it makes you feel unhappy, but when I gave up my equipment no one remembered me. But when I left the game, something happened like this. I knew I should give up WoW totally because it's not worth me staying. I destroyed that necklace. [11]If I could trade it I would have given it to my friends, but I could not. I destroyed it and left from WoW, clean and with dignity.

I admit that as a woman I am too sensitive. Cannot bear the ignorance of others. And cannot stand for the cheating. What do we play for? First of all, relaxation of pressure that life brought you. I love pets. [12]I love the unconditional caring between people. I like the cooperation of a team. I want to see the [13]pure and the real emotions between people. In the real world all this ugliness has brought us too much pressure and fatigue. In the virtual environment we should pursue those things we don't have in reality. Let the visual world give us a peaceful harbour like heaven. Maybe a lot of people will say I'm naïve but this is the fantasy I have for WoW. In the end of life for everybody it is the same. Death. Like dust. But when you die what can you take away? The fortunes in real life or the virtual equipment? After 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, whenever you are reminded you have ever played a game named WoW will what's in your memory be those extraordinary pieces of equipment? Maybe some people will say yes, but in my memory it is only the [14]pure sincerity and the pure happy time with my friends. Why do we have to dwell on this superficial stuff that makes us even more tired?

Now the ID I had in that virtual world was sent to a friend in the game. Even though I never met him in real life nor do I know him, I wish him a happy and pleasant playing.

In this article I gave it to my best friends, Fang, Jim, Maniac, Dark Desperado, Bitter Coffee, ColorWolf, KuKu, SmilingFox, and SaintCat, BullKiller and other people I cannot remember their names. [15]Thank you so much for the happiness and the memories you gave me. Thank you for all this selfless help and encouragement. I wish you all will live a happy lives, forever.

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[10] Material vs moral/spiritual
[11] Costly sacrifice
[12] Care
[13] Purity
[14] Purity
[15] Shout-outs

不知不觉，我离开 WOW 已经半个多月了，虽然对于游戏的印象越来越模糊，可是记忆里好多朋友的音容笑貌却依然清晰，对游戏里的好多事好多人也是越来越如鲠在喉不吐不快，想对我还思念的朋友问个好，说说我在 WOW6 个月里的苦乐酸甜，这也许就是我写下下面文字的缘由吧。

我其实不是一个喜欢玩网游的女孩，相比之下我周围的好多姐妹都是网游疯子，而我玩得第一个网游是 A3，之所以玩，也是被 A3 精美华丽的画面所吸引的。WOW 是我平生玩得第 2 款网络游戏，也是真正能触动我感情的第一款游戏。记得 WOW 内测时我就参加了，单位一个同事的号，我还另一个姐妹 3 个人同时玩那个内测号，直到内测结束时我也只是一个 29 级的小贼，那时的我，绝对是个菜鸟，连正经的副本都没下过，对于 WOW 的理解，也很肤浅的，WOW 吸引我的是那恢宏的故事和如梦如幻场景。因此，内测结束时我就决定，一定要好好感受一下 WOW 的魅力。

可是时事难料，WOW 开始正式公测的时候，我反倒由于很多个人的原因没能第一时间的参加进来，开放的第一天我进入游戏用我的小名创建了一个人物：黑客毛毛，之后大概两个多周没有时间来玩游戏，还好我有先见之明，把号拜托一个同事帮我练级，哈，黑客毛毛 31 级的时候，我才真正的来到了 WOW，开始了我的魔兽之旅。

[Paragraph Removed]

公测结束了，60 级的级别限制也开放了，大家也都开始新一轮的冲刺了，慢慢的，我对游戏的理解也有了好多好多变化，身边的人和事也慢慢变了。级别越来越高，装备越来越好，有些好朋友却开始渐渐远去了。从那时起，我开始思考起游戏的意义到底在哪里呢？为了装备？为了荣誉？抑或是为了某样虚拟的物品？也是从那时起，WOW 才真正的展现在了我们的眼前。像一个真实的世界一样，WOW 也慢慢开始充满了虚伪，人与人的相互利用，尔虞我诈的利益之争。也许是我的世界观太灰暗，也许是我对于游戏的理解一开始就有偏差，周围的朋友渐渐疏远了，大家追求的东西也越来越不同。

后来，我开始适应不了 WOW 了，或者说适应不了网游世界的真实了。在真实的社会里，我见识了太多人与人之间的虚伪，为了利益的不择手段，为了金钱的不顾一切。在 WOW 期间，我的感情生活也发生了很多变故，有一段时间对什么都感觉到失望，对什么都不再在乎。我想在网游里找到一片净土，找到存在于虚拟装备之外的真实情感。那份情感不一定是狭隘的爱情，且一定要是人与人之间真诚的关心、帮助，不存在丝毫伪装的感情。感情可是我发现，WOW 的世界和真实的世界是那么的相似，大多数人追求的是装备、金钱、荣誉、权力，我理想中的 WOW 离我越来越远。人和人追求的东西是不一样的，我不能说我就是对的他人就是错的，可是，WOW 的世界真的离我的理想越来越远。所以，我最终选择了离开，虽然好几次我舍不得陪伴我

的那些美好回忆，舍不得那些我忘怀不了的朋友，我又回来了，又试图找回开始的感觉，可是，我还是放弃了，因为好多事让我明白了，我追求的东西和大数人太不一样，这个世界已经不适合我这样的人继续生存。在真实的社会里我已经很疲惫了，我无法在一个虚拟的世界里继续承受疲惫，我的离开是应该的。最后让我下定决心离开WOW的一件事，真的很伤我的心，让我彻底明白WOW的世界和现实没有什么不同，只不过在虚拟的WOW里，大家可以更加直白、更加无所顾忌的先露出人的本性。那是在我最后的一个骑士团，北2风行者服务器最伟大的联盟骑士团，禁地，由于看不惯一些事情，受不了人的虚伪和搪塞，我退团了。就在我离开之后的一个周，我第2次上线的时候，我听说了一件事，我参加击杀黑龙公主得到的一件60级紫色项链，使我成为被人辱骂和批判的对象，说我为了装备而来，拿到了装备就跑了。当我听说这个事情的时候其实我没有愤怒，我只是感觉悲哀。人啊，到头来在哪里都是一样的，也许大多数人把那些所谓极品的虚拟的装备看得比什么都重，可我和你们不一样。也许我得到了它让很多人不痛快不高兴，可为什么要把你们的思想强加给我呢？当我主动放弃装备的时候，没有人记得我，可是当我离开的时候.....发生了这样的事，我知道我应该彻底的离开WOW了，因为它已经不值得我继续留下。我摧毁了那个项链，如果能交易的话我会把它还给禁地的朋友们，可惜不能，我只能摧毁它，然后干净的有点尊严的从WOW离开。

我承认，作为一个女人，我是过于敏感了，我忍受不了的被人轻视，被人敌视，忍受不了被人搪塞、应付甚至欺骗。玩游戏到底为了什么呢？玩游戏首先当然是为了娱乐，为了放松生活给你带来的压力。我喜欢小宠物，我喜欢人与人不存在丝毫利益的关心照顾，我喜欢大家亲密无私的合作，我喜欢看人和人真实纯净的情感。在真实社会里的所有丑陋的虚伪的东西已经给了我们太多的压力、疲惫，在虚拟的环境里，我们应该追求现实中没有的那份真诚，让虚拟的世界给我们一个天堂一样的心灵港湾。看到这里肯定会有好多人说我幼稚，可笑，但是这的确是我的对于WOW的追求和幻想。人的一生一世，结果都是一样，死亡，像灰尘一样四散而去。当你死亡的时候，你能带走什么呢？是现实的财富还是虚拟的装备？再过10年、20年、30年，当你回想起你年轻的时候玩过一款游戏，它的名字叫魔兽世界，留在你记忆里的还是那些无与伦比的装备吗？也许有的人会，但是我的记忆只有朋友带给我的纯洁真诚的感情和与之相关的美好时光。何必苦苦执着于一些皮毛而让自己活得更累更虚伪呢？

现在，曾经陪伴我的那个虚拟世界的ID，我已经赠送给一位游戏中的好朋友继续玩了。虽然我和他从未在现实中见面，我也不了解他的生活。希望他能玩得高兴，愉快。

[Paragraph Removed]

Testimonial 62

Testimonial 62

I'm one of the huge net game players and WoW is the only game I like playing. I had fun playing games after school. I appreciate the wisdom, skills, curious stories in the game, and I became amateur player of WoW. And I did not want to become a simple player. I wanted to be a WoW lover, and this was my first step.

Since the coming of WoW from the Burning Crusade to eve of the storm, I am not a very professional player. I just like its special pictures and effects, instancing some days or doing missions when I have leisure time, levelling. Several months ago I was just a hunter of 50. Even though I cannot say it's a very powerful one, I feel myself to be powerful. Raiding, battlefields, and into the camp of enemies; I had a lot of more glorious events. I had the ARMOUR and I had a crossbow in my hand. And an unknown feeling of achievement came into me and I felt a lot more than that. [1]Even though it's just in a virtual net world, I realized it has the same truths as the real world.

When I was busy at with levelling there were endless players joining in the battle of burning crusades. They would have very good weapons and treasures. [2]When I was wandering in Auberdine and saw the pretty weapons I was longing for those and fantasizing some day I could have the same equipment. When I was running on the ground there were people flying in the sky and now I'm one of the top players. All my initial dreaming came into reality gradually. I had a suit that other people were envious about. I had long-range weapons, skilled fishing and cooking techniques. This was far from reachable before, but now it's easy. Even though I will never stop exploring, the new goals lie ahead, new missions for me to solve.

[3]This is a game, and so is life. I am not an addicted player. I understand the fun of games. And the game is just a game. It will go back to dust in the end. And I also understand there's a lot of fun and joy in life as well as sadness and hopelessness. And hopes and dreams waiting for me to taste, to struggle, to fight. Game is a miniature of life. You can feel the joyfulness of success and sweetness of striving more easily.

I have many good dreams and wishes and they're just like the game. But they are not the moon in the mirror or the flower in the water. Some day they will become true. [4]The process

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[1] WoW is like real life
[2] Authority
[3] WoW is like real life
[4] Contingencies

of struggling for your goal is mixed up with opportunities and difficulties. The long waiting tests your perseverance. Difficulties in the process examines your determination. All things are decided by men, by humans. And success is natural. Just like what I felt is not so difficult. On the contrary, it's as simple as this. Just like in the game and in life it's the same. And the dream will be washed off by the reality. But if you treat everything seriously there will be pies falling from the sky. [5]It's just as simple as that, if you persevere and are determined there will be pie from sky.

People with hope will never say give up. This is my feeling. Playing games is no longer the spending of time and energy. [6]The reason why I can play until today is because of the help of my friends. I had never thought the playmates are just playmates. It's different from friends. In fact your friendship is getting [7]purified in the game. Or you have grown up in the game. Thank you for all the friends I had playing with me.

我是广大网络游戏玩家之一，魔兽是我喜欢的唯一游戏，学习之余不善交际的我找到了游戏的乐趣。欣赏开发者的的聪慧，技巧，着迷于故事情节的曲折，离奇，于是成为业余魔兽世界玩家。在为之付出之后，不想成为一名普普通通的游戏玩家，应是名魔兽爱好者！这是我的第一步，以这篇文章记之。

——题记

从魔兽世界问世，到燃烧的远征，再到风暴前夕，我算不上是名称职的玩家，只是喜欢其独特的画面效果，主流的操作系统，在星期天或是有空闲的时候会在游戏里边做做任务，练练等级，几个月前还是只有 50 等级的小猎人，现在虽不能说是极端暴力角色，但也自觉已相当强悍。拼死副本，征战沙场，深入敌营，还有许多令人骄傲的光辉事迹。身着格隆追猎者套装，手持无情打击之弩，肩扛荒芜戟，一种不是很强烈的成就感油然而生，此外也是百感交集。虽然游戏只是网络虚拟的世界，却从中悟出了 一些于现实世界相同的道理　当我还在为等级忙碌的时候，已经有无数玩家参与到与伊利丹，燃烧军团的斗争中了，他们会在这

时获得不错的收获，稀有的武器，宝物；当我在奥格瑞玛闲逛时看到他们漂亮的武器是，心中已产生对其渴望之情，幻想有一天也要拿到这样的武器；当我还在陆地上疲于奔命时，天空已有骑着飞行坐骑的在享受飞翔的乐趣。而如今，我是佼佼者，当初的梦想逐一被实现，有着令人羡慕的戈隆套装，拉风漂亮的长柄武器，娴熟老练的钓鱼烹饪技能，在以前想来是多么遥不可及，现在却是这样轻松的事实。即使这样，脚步也不会停止，前边有新的目标，新的使命在等着我……

[5] Fairness
[6] In-group
[7] Purity

游戏是这样，而生活何尝不是?我并不是那种沉迷游戏无法自拔的玩家，我懂得游戏的乐趣，也知道游戏终归是游戏，到头总是一场空，还深切的明白生活中的也有许多乐趣，一些悲伤，些许无奈，希望，梦想……等待我去品尝，去坚持，去奋斗，去努力……游戏是生活短暂的缩影，可以较为容易的感受到成功的喜悦，奋斗的甜蜜。

我有许多美好的愿望，梦想，也想游戏那样遥不可及，可是他们不会是镜中月，水中花，总有一天也会成为现实。为目标奋斗的过程掺杂着机遇，困苦。漫长的等待考验着毅力，艰难的过程磨砺着决心，事在人为会翘起梦想，成功往往是水到渠成，如同我并未感觉到有多么艰难，反而会有种“就这样简

单”的想法在游戏中。过程中的点点滴滴会冲淡实现理想的迫切，其实很简单，认真对待每一件该做的事情，有天天上会掉下我想要的馅儿饼！

有梦想的人是有希望的，就希望就不说放弃！这是我的感受，玩游戏不再是时间和精力的付出。而我只所以能玩到今天，也离不开朋友的帮助，我并没认为玩友只是玩友，与朋友的不同在于是否在游戏中升华，从玩乐中成长。感谢在一起玩游戏的所有朋友！

Testimonial 64

Testimonial 64

Wow, to me, I don't know whether it is the [1]angel comforting my soul or just a passerby.

I had a fantasizing and I hope it becomes reality. Even though it's unrealistic, I still want it. [2]WoW has given me a spiritual feast. And I think so.

Even though I have very few friends in the game, they are all very nice. We go raiding, go sight seeing and I had a best friend who is a magician. He had been with me from 20 to 60. The PVE system of WoW in raiding always astonished me. [3]Because if is the challeng of your skill. I was blamed at first and until now I had healing that was always acknowledged by others. I'm satisfied at time even though I still need practice. And I have been AFK for almost a year. And this is almost Christmas Eve. Last Christmas and my journey in WoW was just merely beginning. And now I miss it more. WoW, this is a good name. it's not an absolute independent world. After all, the relationship between he game and the players is so close. You need the vocal command and it reflects a real player behind the screen of each computers. You can see their character and personality. Just like the professions in the wow.

I haven't had teamwork for a long time. It is more than just a teamwork in [4]school on very limited circumstances. In WoW, it emphasized more about [5]loyalty and friendship just like in the Chinese tradition.

Before that my friends were almost zero. Even though we held each other but we separated. A guild has said that you cannot play a game for a whole lifetime. But we can be lifetime friends. [6]And I think this is what the Blizzard wants to tell us. [7]After all in the difficult battlefields the concept of friendship is cultivated. After talking about the game I have to tell something about my crusade. [8]So pitiful I'm a grade 3 in high school (last year). I can only leave my good wishes after the final exams. And what will things be at that time. I dare not to think about it and I could not think about it.

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[1] Purity
[2] Purity
[3] Contingencies
[4] Education system
[5] In-group
[6] Creator agency
[7] Contingencies
[8] Education system

[9]What I want to do is to cherish the present. [10]WoW to me is a long spiritual odyssey. I have to keep walking and I should keep walking. But not now (has to study). [11]At last, I want to say to my friends in the broader sense, and my friends in the future, friends in the past who are also my classmates. We don't have many numbers, but I still hope we can live a happy life in the WoW. Because of WoW we can have mutual language. We are friends eventhough we have disagreements. But as time goes on friendship and happiness can be recreated. [12]And will never be stopped.

魔兽世界，对我来说不知道是安慰心灵的天使，还是冷淡的过客。
我曾经的幻想，希望那幻想可以变成能够拥有的梦想，尽管不切实际，但内心仍然渴望达到。WOW 给了我精神的盛宴。我这么认为。

虽然 WOW 里的朋友很少，但都很友好，一起去 ZAM，一起去小 FB 观光旅游，曾经最好的 FS 朋友——从 20 级带我一直到 60 左右……

WOW 的 PVE 系统大 FB 总能给我震撼，因为是技术的挑战，从当初被人骂来骂去，到有一天被人认可的治疗。尽管依旧需要锻炼，但那是的我已经满足。现在已经离开 WOW 快 1 年了，转眼平安夜在前，去年的圣诞，我的 WOW 旅程也不过是个开头。而今，却愈发怀念当初的远征。

魔兽世界，这个名字很好，是不完全独立在虚幻网络的世界，毕竟，WOW 与玩家的联系是那么密切，需要语音的指挥，从操作中反映着每台电脑背后的一个个鲜活的玩家，性格依旧鲜明，如同每个 WOW 的种族。

很久都没有过的团队合作，WOW 可以发挥很好，和那种只有在小学时环境限制下的团队合作相比，WOW 显得更有中国的"江湖"义气，更凸显了"朋友"2 个字。

在此之前，我的朋友几乎趋近于 0，尽管曾经拥有，但大多都以缘尽而散。

一个工会曾经这样说，"游戏，不能玩一辈子，但我们可以做一辈子的朋友。"

这样，也是暴雪想要表达的意思吧。。。

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[9] Just interesting
[10] Purity
[11] Shout-outs
[12] In-group

毕竟在难度下的作战，培养了“朋友”的概念。

说完了游戏，该说我的 WOW 远征了，至此，并不完整。

可惜现在已经是高 3 了，我只能将美好的祝愿留在高考以后。

那时候，又会是什么样呢。

不敢想，

也不能想。

我只想做好现在。

WOW，对我是一段长长的精神旅程。

我得走下去，

应该走下去。

但不是现在……

最后，提提那些我放宽定义以后的朋友~还有未来的朋友~

曾经的朋友，也是同学。人数不多，但我仍然希望大家可以一起快乐的生活在魔兽世界的世界里~

因为 WOW，大家才会有共同语言。是朋友，就算有隔阂也可以随时间而逝，而朋友，快乐，却是可以再创造，且不断创造的。

Testimonial 66

Testimonial 66

Male 20, but an old player. And a die hard fan for wow. [1]From the first day of high school until now the feeling that WoW is more than a game. It has the epic stories and endless details they all attract me a lot, deeply.

Being at a world like this, and in such a society in the WoW when you go raiding with several people you don't know. [2]When you are almost dying and seeing that the priest is casting and you realize your health is full, will you never be moved? When your team is about to be destroyed everyone is retreating and there's only one warrior says to you [3]'I will be here, you all go back' [I'll save you], will you not be moved? In your team if there's only one warlock but you are a priest you will see the warlock holding a soul stone that as important as his life and put it in your hands and left, will you not be moved? Maybe you will say 'it's just a game.' Yes, it is a game. [4]But there are so many things in the game that are more than just games.

After the long time fighting with your team and the boss fallen at your feet, don't you feel excited? When you see one of your purple equipment drop will you not be excited? [5]When all people are smiling at you and refuse to give up, are you not moved? If you are not moved by any of this I listed above then all right, you can go.

男 20 岁了 呵呵 是一名老 WOW 玩家了 虽然谈不上有多高端 ，但是确是 WOW 的忠实拥护者 从高一开始玩到现在 感觉 WOW 不仅仅只是一个游戏 它背后的史诗般宏大的历史剧情 以及 玻璃渣的无数细节上的精心雕琢都深深吸引着我，还带给我很多感动身处现在这样一个世界，这样一个社会，在魔兽的世界里当你和若干个从未相识的人一起去下副本， 当你红血马上要挂了的时候，你看见 MS 正在念咒语，然后你发现你满血的时候，你没有感动过吗？ 当你的队伍马上要火车的时候，每个人都往后跑，只有战士一个留下了，他对你们说：快跑！然后你只听见被撕碎的声音越来越远，这个时候，你没有感动过吗？ 在你的队伍里，如果有一个 SS，而你是一个 MS，你会看见 SS 拿着一个和他生命一样重要的灵魂石，放到你手上，带着满腹牢骚的小鬼，头也不回的离开时，你没有感动过吗？ 你也许会说，这有什么，只是一个游戏嘛， 是的，他只是一个游戏，可是这中间所蕴涵着的东西，你难道就只认为是游戏吗？

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[1] More than a game
[2] In-group
[3] Care
[4] More than a game
[5] In-group

当你的队伍经过千心万苦，终于让最终 BOSS 倒在你们脚下时，你的心情难道没有一点激动吗？ 当一件你的紫色装备凋落的时候，你不高兴吗？ 当所有人都冲你笑笑，然后点放弃的时候，你没有感动吗？ 如果以上这些你都没有一点感动，那么好，你可以离开了.....

Testimonial 67

Testimonial 67

First: communicate and to make more friends.

WoW is a big net game and does not look like other games. A lot of things cannot be done with a single person. You need the help of friends. The more friends we have the easier things will be. Missions, raidings, battlefields. This means you must make friends with people around you. If you have difficulties they can help you. If you play it alone then you cannot play it for a long time. This is the same with the reality. A lot of people who had never been into the real society already learned the importance of communicating and making friends.

Second: be honest.

WoW is not a chaotic world. The game world is also controlled by the rules in reality. [1]If you are not honest in the game and are cheating and committing fraud then you will be repelled. And people will all know you have some moral problems. And what you will get in the end is either changing your server or going AFK. We have a lot of examples like this in each server. If he has a good personality and always helps others he will be treated well in this server.

The third: you have to practice your skills.

No matter in reality or in game, you must have skills. [2]If you don't have skills in the battlefield it means giving away honour and if you don't have skills when you go raiding, no one will want to go with you. This is the same with employment. No matter how good looking your appearance is, without skills no company would hire you. A lot of guilds will say 'our guild wants people who have good personalities, good skills' no matter what your equipment is like.

[3]The fourth: learn to manage people in WoW

I think most of the guild masters are admirable. You can never think to manage a guild is easy. As a guild master, you must know how to command and coordinate and maintain the order of the guild. And also have to know what kind of people are needed and what kind of

[1] Fairness
[2] In-group
[3] Authority

people are harmful. I was hired by a couple of big guild masters. Guild masters must have the quality of leadership. You have hundreds of people under your control so it is not easy to be a guild master. And I can say a guild master is like a manager of a middle sized enterprise. In the United States there are a lot of job applicants being hired by saying they are guild master of a guild with several hundred people. This is far better than being a monitor in [4]school.

The fifth: [5]You have to get the sense of justice.

[6]Helping the weak. Helping the low-level players. And killing the high level players is commonly seen. A lot of missions are aimed at killing the people who disorder the world. We want to maintain the world peace. And the state bureau of the broadcasting and television want to harmonize WoW. The dead souls or the skulls in boxes make us feel like we are robbers. Is this the real harmony? Will the world become better? This is the same as covering your eyes while standing in front of a mountain and believing the mountain not longer exists. Harmony inside your [7]soul is the real harmony.

第一：教会我们要学会交流，多交朋友。

WOW 是一个大型的网络游戏，不像其他网游，很多事情只有你自己一个人是无法完成的，这就需要很多朋友的帮助，朋友越多你在里面所做的很多事情就很轻松了，打任务，下副本，下战场。这就需要你和旁边的人有所交流成为朋友，在你有困难的时候他们能挺身而出拉你一把。如果你只是一个人默默在玩那你是很难玩得下去。这就跟现实一样，很多未出社会的人树立了那么一个意识多与人交流，多交朋友。

第二：做人要厚道。

WOW 里面并不是一个混乱的世界，游戏世界里很多行为也受到现实中的规范所约束。如果一个人在里面人品不好，很贱，很喜欢骂人，黑装备，骗点卡等不良行为，那么他在里面会受到很大的排斥，只要在世界上一刷基本上这个区的人都会知道那个人人品有问题，就对他产生孤立，排斥那么他最后的下场不是转 F 就是 AFK 了。这种事情在各个服务器都屡见不鲜。如果他人品很好，很乐于助人。那么他在里面就会获得很好的待遇。

第三：要有技术：

不管现实还是游戏，你都需要有技术，下战场没技术等于送荣誉没人会和你打，下

[4] Education system
[5] Fairness
[6] Care
[7] Purity

副本没有技术人家也不愿和你去，这和现实中招聘一样，不是看你表面有多么好，装备看起来多么高端，没有技术和意识没有单位和公会会要你，很多公会招人都打这么一句："XX 公会招人，要人品好，技术好，意识好的，装备不好不要紧!"

第四：学会管理：

在 WOW 里面的公会会长我认为都是非常可佩服的(除了某些人)，不要以为管理一个公会很容易，作为会长，要招兵买马选贤用能，要会指挥，会协调各方面的冲突，还要订立各种规章制度以维护公会的秩序。他们还具有伯乐的品质，知道什么人是人才对公会有利，(本人以前就被几个大公会会长相中过)。还要有领导能力，要让几百号人听从你的号召，所以说上百号人的公会管起来时很不容易的。

所以他的含金量可以说是很高，堪比一个中小型企业的管理者的水平。在美国有很多应聘者在提交简历的时候表示自己是 WOW 中某几百人公会的会长而被录用。这个比在学校里面当什么班长学生会长用处多了。

第五：树立正义感：

锄强扶弱，帮小号驱赶敌对高端玩家这种事情很常见，很多任务都是去杀破坏世界和平的人，至于那些腐肉，骷髅头，亡灵的露骨是让我们了解它们是丑陋的，是邪恶的，我们要维护世界和平维护正义要才、清除它。版署把那些东西都盒谐成面粉袋子，难民一样的亡灵，装在皮包或盒子里的头颅，反而让我们有更深的罪恶感，我们感觉像是在抢烧人家的粮食，欺负难民，这样就真盒谐了???搞那么多名堂盒谐一个外表不好看的东西有啥用?世界就会变得美好?这就在一座山前面把自己眼睛罩住，然后就认为这个山不存在了。盒谐内心，才是真的盒谐。

Testimonial 72

Testimonial 72

Up till now I have been playing a long time, but in the end who knows. I just remember the first day of public testing, some brothers and I were waiting in the net bar, waiting for the server open. It was supposed to open at 12 midnight, but it did not open until 2 in the morning! And I let them chose a PVP server, but later when they changed the server, I was blamed for that.

I have tried several classes. Rogue, hunter, paladin, and I'm now mainly playing paladin. I never realized that I'm such a warlord enjoying paladin, which is a class you have to kill or be killed. But I regret that until now I have not tried defense paladin. Now I'm making it up, collected T4, preparing for a change to defensive equipment. I have S2 on me, which is enough for T5 raiding. And I'll not let people in the guild know that.

[1]People who devote much energy to the game must not regard it as just a game, but the reflection of another world. Though this is true for every game, WoW is at the peak. But it should not be regarded as a reason for addiction, and I don't think I am. A team member should feel guilty for not participating in team activities. [2]Sometimes a guild master like me, when unable to come, will always bear in mind how to make it up for the other members. [3]Everybody should be responsible in the game.[4]

It is interesting that no matter how much attention I give to the game, no matter how much I care about my fame in the server, I would reject all kinds of invitations in order to play in the guild. [5]For me, this is the responsibility I'm paying for everybody.

The reality is so cruel, it's just a game, you can not live on it. I'm a contradictory person. Because whenever in this case,I don't know what to do. [6]If you must blame someone, then it's Blizzard, it's earning money and adding the difficulties in battlefield, one must spend much time in it. You must keep practicing to make yourself perfect to raid.

But now for the game, I don't have a good place for it. I thought about leaving, but I

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[1] More than a game
[2] Authority
[3] In-group
[4] Maintaining unity
[5] In-group
[6] Creator agency

don't want to. But I'm so tired of playing.

Hehe, this is my feeling after playing for so long. There must be a lot of people have the same feeling.

Keep playing but it hurts.

算到现在..玩了魔兽世界也好久了..具体多久.还真没算过...反正就是记得..魔兽世界公测第一天的时候..我和几个哥们..通宵在网吧呆着等 FWQ 开放.然后说好 12 点开的 FWQ..最后凌晨 2 点才开放!最郁闷的时候.他们还在我的带领下选了个 PVP 服务器..后来大家转服的时候还为了这事好臭了我一顿!

玩过的职业也不多..盗贼(总感觉念起来比潜行者好,不和谐啊),猎人,骑士!现在就主要玩骑士了..没想到自己这么个好战分子,竟然安心于骑士这个"奶不死别人就奶死自己"的职业!哈哈.低调..低调...玩了半天属于半吊子形的.没事惩戒爽爽..带 FB 的时候.又得老老实实的洗会奶 Q.到现在还没尝试过防御骑士是一种遗憾..不过现在正在准备弥补了..暗中凑了 T4,4 件了..准备全换防装哈哈...主要是 身上穿着 S2 一套...打个 T5 级别的 FB 是稳当足够了..奶装 T4 也才换了 3 件呢...叫会里人知道了..少不了对我又是一顿削...

对魔兽投入的精力多的人..肯定现在在心中对魔兽世界的定义不仅仅限于一个游戏了..而是感觉是另外一个世界的真实反应(感觉像废话),虽然每个网游都是这个样子可是 WOW 却把这个发挥到了极点!当然,这不是说沉迷于这个游戏的原因!...我感觉我没沉迷其中!! 一个稳定团队的成员,会因为活动的没有按时参加而对其他人员心存愧疚!有时候活动的时候,团长不能即时到位..都要考虑怎么对大家进行补偿(比如我)..感觉任何人.在这个被称之为游戏的环境中都负有一定的责任!!

挺奇妙的一件事情...可能只有玩魔兽世界的才会理解..自己是多么注重自己在本 FWQ 里面的声誉,为了公会活动可以哪都不去.无视别人叫自己外出活动!..在别人眼里..这叫做不务正业,不过在我们眼中..这是对大家的负责...虽然.这样比较宅...

现实.还是残酷的..这玩意.毕竟是个游戏,玩出个花来,也不会给自己玩出吃的,每当考虑到这里的时候,我都会感觉自己是个很矛盾的人.因为..一到了这个地步..我们该怎么办呢..实话讲..我也不知道该怎么办!!要怪就怪暴雪吧...他们也是做生意的..也为了赚钱..所以把现在 FB 设置的特别高端.必须投入大量时间才能进行.

乍看平民参与的竞技场,想打简单.不过想打好就得有韧...韧怎么来呢?..刷战场...还要有风骚的操作..操作怎么来呢?...大量的练习...所以..崩溃了!!

现在心里对于魔兽.的确没有一个很好的定位!想离开..舍不得..但是继续其中又是感觉有点累!!

可能大家会说..适度是关键..不过怎么适度呢..!! 再次崩溃!

呵呵...这就是玩了这么久的魔兽世界以后对他的感想了...可能有同感的人会不少..不过没办法啊..

痛并坚持着被!

Testimonial 73

Testimonial 73[1]

The scenary in my heart.

My name in WoW is 'heartfelt love,' and I am just a normal player. I have been playing this hunter for less than a year. But during this period I made a lot of friends and [2]experienced happiness as well as sorrow, which left me with abundant of memories.

I love the rain in Stranglethorn Valley. Because in reality I could not let the rain fall on my face but I can imagine that in the game. Stranglethorn Valley is a place that changed my gaming career because it is the place I met a player named 7 and another player named Asparagus and I would not be playing until now without their help. [3]7 is patient. He will type a lot for me to explain one simple question. And I thought 7 knows everything, and he told me a lot. I remember the first time killing the SW I was so nervous and asked him what could I do. He told me what skills do these bosses have, and what should I do. I appreciated that.

Asparagus is also a very good man. Even though he always calls me pig. I am not very skilful in PK and am always tortured by the Horde. Once I was in the dark swamp and I was a corpse. [4]And Asparagus knew that and came and helped me. I was almost crying at that time even though he called me an amateur. But I knew he was such a man who would do whatever he could for a friend.

Before we went to Outland we three finished all the 5 people raiding like the god temple, Maradon, Uldaman, and we did it easily. And I remember clearly the farting princess in Maradon. I wanted to see her. [5]And when I really saw her I was laughing to tears when I saw the farting skill.

And later we went to the exotic territory. With the help of Asparagus I joined the guild for the first time. It's like in the Chinese book the Red Mansion, when the girl first went into the big house. [6]I was cautious and dared not to say a word because I was afraid to say something wrong. Finally I could do an activity with the guild but I was fearful of doing the wrong thing. [7]The first time I killed the SW I was scolded by the guild master. I felt bad but said nothing.

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1 Memory-centric
2 Peak experience
3 Care
4 Care
5 Peak experience
6 In-group
7 Authority

A player named Grape and another player named Moon mailed me and said 'it's ok, be careful next time.' And I felt so warm in my heart and swore I would never drag the feet of the team.

After playing like this for several rounds I got to know the way to go through the Black Temple and SW. When we went to the SW I got an equipment it's called the Pillar of Instinct. And it was because of getting this something very irritating happened. Someone asked me when did I get that equipment and then he said something I will never forget. The good stuff is always taken by dogs. [8]I did not talk about this with anyone else but I told myself I must be stronger and [9]I will never let anyone look down on me. I already forgot his name but I can tell him now I must be stronger than him.

After that, another man changed my gaming career appeared. [10]That was my master. He was a hunter too. He told me everything including how to carve things on walls and took me to kill the dragon in Blackwing Lair and my DPS grew from the last to top ten. And the guild master spoke highly of me and I remember once I killed a boss and I was OT, and I asked the guild master why was that …it hadn't happened before. And the guild master told me because I was too strong and next time please control your hatred. I was too happy, overwhelmed, even though OT is not something good. [11]But it was evidence that I was getting stronger. Even though my master is online less and less but whenever I talk with other hunters I will think about him. He made me step through the gate of real hunters.

The Outlands has a sky for everyone to imagine. It has all kinds of monsters and lovely animals. People getting excited when the horn iss blown. After a long wait I stepped on the boat to arctic. [12]The snow in the arctic, in the north pole and even stronger monsters, new challenges will be a new beginning. I will meet more friends. Experience more and see more.

心中的风景

我叫爱 NAME，是魔兽世界的一名普通玩家，我的这个猎人号玩了不到一年，但在这不到一年的时间里，我认识了很多朋友，也经历了很多悲欢离合，为我留下了很多的回忆。

我很喜欢荆棘谷的雨，那得风景常常让我流连忘返，因为在现实生活中我不可能站在雨

[8] Transformation
[9] Authority
[10] Authority
[11] Transformation
[12] Contingencies

中让雨尽情的落在我脸上，而在游戏里我可以想象雨水冲击身体的感觉。荆棘谷是个改变了我整个游戏生涯的地方，因为在那里我认识了小七和黄瓜，没有他们我是不可能够坚持到现在的。

小七很有耐心，常常会为了跟我讲明白一个问题打很多很多的字，而且那时感觉小七什么都知道，虽然我玩魔兽很长时间了，但我依旧是个小白，而小七却用他的耐心教会了我很多。记得第一次打 SW，我很紧张，我问他该怎么办，他就很耐心的告诉我几个 BOSS 都有哪些技能，告诉我该做些什么。我当时真的很感动，要不是他，我想我一定会被骂的更惨。

黄瓜是个很讲义气的人，虽然他老是骂我猪，呵呵！我 PK 技术很烂，在野外老是被部落虐，又一次在幽暗沼泽，我被一个部落骑士守尸，他知道后立马就赶过来帮我把那个部落赶走了。我当时真的差点感动的都要掉眼泪了，虽然他一个劲的说我水，但我知道他就是这么一个朋友有难立马支援的人。

在去外域之前，我们三个几乎把地球的所有五人副本打完了，像什么奥达曼、玛拉顿、神庙什么的，我们三都是轻松搞定，印象最深的就是玛拉顿的那个“放屁公主”，因为我以前没去过玛拉顿，很想见识那个“放屁公主”，当我真正看到的时候，尤其是她放她的那个技能的时候我都差点笑趴下了。

后来，到了充满奇幻色彩的外域后，在黄瓜的帮助下，我加入了誓言工会，那是我第一次加入一个公会，就有点像林黛玉第一次进贾府一样，我处处小心，从来不在公会里说话，生怕说错了什么，工会活动连续替补了几个 CD 也没在意，心里想总有上场的机会。终于有一天，我能够跟团活动了，可我心里又有点怕了，生怕做错了什么。记得第一次打 SW 我就被团长训了，我当时那个委屈，可是我什么也没说，当时团里一个叫葡萄的贝贝猪的小德和月亮之边的战士 M 我叫我别太在意，下次注意。我当时心里那个感动啊，心想，恩，我一定加油，下次绝不拖后腿。

就这样打了几个 CD 后，我慢慢的夜熟悉了黑暗神殿和 SW 的打法，有一次 SW 双子出了远古本能之柱，我就出分拿到了，但也因为这件装备，发生了件让我生气的事。就在拿了远古本能的下个 CD，在打幕鲁的时候，一个人问我远古本能之柱是什么时候拿的，我说是上个 CD，他回了一句我永远忘不了的一句话，他说“好东西被狗拿了”。我当时没跟任何说这件事，但我在心里跟自己说，我一定要变强，不再让任何人瞧不起。那个人的名字我现在早忘记了，但我可以告诉他，我现在已经不是他可以鄙视的了！

在那件事过后不久，另一个改变我游戏生涯的人出现了，那就是我师父，他也是个猎人，而且是个很厉害的猎人。他什么都教我，教我点天赋，教我插宝石和雕文，教我输出手法，还亲自带我去祖尔格拉布教我刷龙虎。在他的指导下，我的 DPS 慢慢的从倒数第

一前进到了前十，团长也说我打得很不错了。记得一次打双子我竟然 OT 了，我问团长怎么回事，以前不会这样的，他说那是因为我犀利了，以后要注意控制仇恨了。我当时听了后高兴的不得了，虽然 OT 不是好事，但那确实也说明我真的有变强。虽然我师父现在很少上了，但每次我去打木桩练手法，和别的猎人讨论什么输出和点天赋的时候，我都会想起他，是他让我真正步入猎人的大门。

外域有着令人无限遐想的天空，有着各种可怖的怪物和可爱的小动物，但随着北伐的号角即将吹响，人们的心也开始动荡起来。经过漫长的等待，当我终于踏上去北极的船时，心情无比的激动，北极的雪，更加强大的生物，更多新的挑战，这将是一个新的开始，我将认识更多的朋友，经历更多的事情，看到更多的风景。

Testimonial 75

Testimonial 75[1]

It has been a month that I have been playing WoW. How time flies. People may laugh at me because they have been playing for years. But whatever the time is, when I am playing I feel happy. Staying in the game is worthwhile, though many people are quitting. I will not talk about love, because there is no love but only friendship in the game. This is my principle of the game.

Chapter 1. Lost and a friend. As a greenhand the map is always the most difficult. Once I was confused in the Silvermoon City. Searching for those tunnels. [2]It was not easy for me to become familiar with Silvermoon and then new challenges came. NAME opened a dark gate for me. I had a record of not finding a way out of the darkness for two hours. And I believed that people spent longer time than I did. What motivated me most was also on the way of being lost. When I went to the gate with a friend he and his horse jumped and I also jumped. I fell into the drain pipe of darkness. There was no way out. I was struggling in the water but could not get up. [3]And he jumped into the water, a paladin, and told me come with him. Since then I trust him unconditionally and regarded him as my first special friend. Whomever helped you when you are in adversity must be your friend. Since then he gave me a lot of help and let me feel the warmth of a stranger in this virtual world for the first time. In fact, I have a distance with strangers in the game, which is the most terrible thing between people. We are used to wearing masks in games no matter what we feel. We just play it as a game or entertain ourselves.

And I think I began to understand this game and about mages from him. He told me about the mage skills and began to race with me. I was excited to learn this skill and kept pressing the button but could not run as fast as him. I was not a rival to him no matter if he was racing or PK. And I told him I will be an excellent mage and will beat him in PK, he could not stop laughing. The second friend I met was named Professional Cadaver. [4]And he is absolutely a nice guy. I was a small mage running around the map in Stranglethorn Valley and he added me. When we met LM he would inform me there was an LM and I was running around in the jungle and being killed. He came to me and asked me where were you and revived me.

So in the days with him I would just lie in the place and wait for him to revive me. And when going on missions with him and I would never check the map …just go with him. That was

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[1] Memory-centric
[2] Contingencies
[3] Care
[4] Care

so easy. He was 58 and I was 53, I could not catch up with him. And could not do missions together even though he is so kind-hearted. And he told me if you cannot do it just tell me. But I would not bother him.

Another friend was named Cigar Stub. I admired him so much. He bought the account of a 70 and did not know how to solve missions and did not know a lot of magic. [5]But he is kind-hearted. Whenever he saw me levelling so slowly and told me it doesn't cost too much and I told him I do not have money and he told me he can get me some but I refused. As a woman, I cannot rely on men. Especially a man without any relationship with me.

Later on he was 70 took me to XS. He killed the priest one by one. Really slowly for like an hour. And he said wait till the day he has all the good equipment. He will take me. I said yes with a smile on my face. In fact in the game to find someone who likes to help you this way is very lucky. It helps you to have a good attitude towards the game.

Chapter 2. Raiding teammates. The first time I knew raiding was level 10. I was low level and a new player and did not know about changing bags. I had few bag slots. Even though I hadn't picked up many things, it was full. I wanted the glittering things on the ground so much. And my friend Waffles told me to discard the things you don't need. And I did not know what things I do not need. And Waffles took a friend who was also 70 and killed countless monsters. The only thing I did is pick up things behind them. And they just told me to catch up. In the maze-like castle for the first time I realized raiding is such an exciting thing. And I began to anticipate when I can go raiding.

Days later when going to XS this become my fun. I did it so many times I wanted to vomit. But she opposed me raiding and levelling and asked me to go do missions, because she thought missions can make me be familiar with the game. And it's useless to level up too quickly. [6]And as a result I have been in level 30 for a very long time.

And another friend took me to XS. That was the first time in a serious sense I went raiding. Even though I did a lot of stupid things, such as missed my teammates, they went into the city and I was outside the gate. And my friend sighed, you don't need to do anything, just stay away. Click the blizzard storm. And then I knew I would only need one magic to go raiding, that is the blizzard storm. [7]Raiding you must need good friends. Once I added several strangers with Professional Cadaver but they could not kill and went offline. And I just

[5] Care
[6] Just interesting
[7] In-group

realized they offline and online again and again but only go on missions elsewhere. People like this in games must be the same in life. [8]No responsibility, these kind of men are the same no matter in games or in real life. Try to be a man.

It was a torture to go to the temple. The first time I went there I was almost desperate. There was a big hole in the middle and Waffles ordered us to jump. I refused. But Waffles told me I will save you after you die. And then I jumped. I wish I had captured that moment of my jumping.

It's been a month and time went so fast. I didn't make many friends. Some just head-nodding friends, some never talk. I have been thinking I would only add some real good friends, those who can warm your heart. Those after seeing their names online you cannot help smiling and talking with them. These are real friends worth having. And all the rest are merely passersby. Do not let too many passersby fill up your friends name list.

I kept flying in the game, looking for someone who never appeared in the game. [9]It's like a poem from the Indian poet Stray Bird: 'I flew all the places but could not find you.'

So, I could only walk along waiting for you.

[Chinese not included]

Testimonial 76

Testimonial 76[1]

[2]Once there was an old hunter and a young hunter. The young said to the old, you have such good equipments, while I am gray. And the old hunter said I have something gray – opening the friends list, they are all gray.

Finally, I have to say goodbye to wow. It's going to end after playing for 4 years. I do not want to keep my account by selling it, it is not because I want the $. I want to kill the thought of coming back again.

I remember the first time playing wow it was the last year of high school. I saw a friend who was a killer in the game. One day I skipped the class and went with him playing wow. At that time they were playing MC. They killed the two rock men at the gate for an hour. I thought wow is a game that you can only gain joyfulness from killing. Later I borrowed his account to AS and was killed by many people. I thought warrior is so weak. Actually he has quite good equipment, the windsword and the box shield. After the college entrance exams and back from my travel, I started playing the magician which was actually his minor account. After I went to level 10, after playing for a week. I AFK. When I began my college life people in my dormitory were all playing WoW and I officially started my game in WoW. The first account of mine was in 9th district, the sunwell. I played a warlock. And I believe that was the best time of our dormitory. And I made friends with two players in that district. All members of our dormitory went to the deathmine well. We had no T (tank), only DPS. Only 4 DPS and a boob. Tank was rock and my blue fat man, and we met enemies for the first time. But eventually kill them 5 vs. 5. Later a rogue of 70 chased us to offline and a friend asked me for the medicine and I refused to give it to him. And there were too many things I could not think about.

When I was level 15 in the 9th district I met a 70 druid. [3]Said nothing but gave me 200g. and told me you will inherit the [4]spirit of the Alliance. At that time I was realized I won the lottery, but did not understand the deep meaning of what he said. Nor did I remember his name. I wanted to say thank you. If I can go back I would never take this $. [5]I would tell him stay with me and fight together. And then I met another old player who is a magician.

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[1] Memory-centric
[2] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[3] Costly sacrifice
[4] Purity
[5] Material vs. moral/spiritual

He helped me cultivate my skills as a warlock. [6]I will never forget the days you took me to the eastern kingdom. Even though you always take me the wrong way. How are you, you must be working now and busy because I cannot find you.

In the winter holiday I went back to the kings valley in the first district and had a priest. [7]Here I knew my master. He taught me how to PK. And I also knew 'wildbrother' and these two people are all so funny.

And later our dormitory went to the 10th district 'magister's terrace.' Actually we don't' want to come here but were fooling around, someone told us that in this server very few horde player and only ally players. When we reached there we realized it was exactly on the contrary. But it is in this server that I realize that the ally is so powerful, even though the ratio is unbalanced. The allys to the tribe is 1 to 4. I experienced the sacking of city and succeded and was elected as a raid leader and made friends with a group of interesting players. [8]I will not forget the night we killed the boss. The voice of my command was so loud in the netbar I said 'fuck!, keep killing! Do not stop!' this 10% left, 5% left, yes we did it. And my voice attracted a group of WoWers around.

The most memorial thing is my teammates in the old guild. We sacked a city. [9]Even though I was so cruel to you but you still listened to me. You told me the power of team [talking to his friends]. It is because of you persevering players I realized whatever difficulties I met we can do it. I want to say thank you to you, my old guild members and would also want to say sorry because of my rudeness. But I could not get in touch with you now. Only wish you a good life in the game and a good life in reality. Though I left the 10th district, but I believe nobody will leave in our guild. Because our heart was connected. Because of the riot in Xin Jiang. So I left WoW for a while. But I was so concerned about your development. After you pass the sunwell I telephoned and sent my congratulations to you. [10]And we opened the second guild, third guild, fouth guild, fifth guild, I realized our guild is getting bigger. While it's getting bigger it's also getting harder to manage. Later the guild was dismissed. I had nothing to say and I do not want to say anything. Then I went to the 3rd district and I saw a friend named SOMETHING, he is a guild master. After seeing his guild is managed so well I had to reestimate him.

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[6] Shout-outs
[7] Authority
[8] Authority
[9] Authority
[10] In-group

August 31st, 2010. The opening of WLK. After the levelling I reached 80. Then it's endless raiding. I realized something is missing. In the beginning it's people cannot be summoned for activities and then relized I'm already a j[11]unior and do not have much time to play every day, and then it was my friend received the damned decision from the school – the guild was dismissed. I went to a new guild and began my PvP. And then my equipment was getting better. I opened a TOC with one of my friends. And in the YY he said he wanted to sell his account. I asked him why. He said he found his parents are getting older and I was silent. I went back to my account in the 1st district and 9th district and knew no one in my friend list. I felt so lost, back to dormitory, lying on my bed. My roommate was watching a movie and a line popped out. 'though we all chose to leave and then no regret, someone will carry on our legend. I decided to leave the WoW world which has witnessed my four years. I opened my account, went back to the forest and saw a warrior of level 4 being chased by a group of monsters. [12]I went there and killed all the monsters and only left golden spirit light (effect in game) and I gave him all the gold I have. He said I don't want it. I said, it's a gift. And he received it. I told him the will of the alliance is inherited by you. I salute to the captain I met four years ago and the captain said 'dismissed,' a veteran from 2006.

有一个老猎人和一个小猎人，小猎人对老猎人说。你装备真好啊，都是紫的，我还是灰的呢。老猎人说，其实我也有灰的，打开好友栏，全是灰的.

终于，要跟 WOW 说再见了.玩了 4 年的游戏终于要结束了.我决定不是把我的账号封存，而是卖掉，并不是因为需要那点钱。而是为了彻底断了 WOW 的念头.

我记得我第一次玩 WOW 是在高三的时候，那时候我一个同学玩的很厉害，有一次我和他逃晚自习去玩 WOW.那时候他们正在打 MC。门口 2 石头人灭了 1 个多小时。我便认为，WOW 时以死而达到娱乐的游戏。后来我借他的号去打 AS。被 N 个人群杀几次。变认为战士不强，老死。（实际上他当时的装备很强力，风剑+虫子盾）

后来高考完了，我旅游回来，我也在我这个同学那个 F 一区国王之谷玩了个 FS（实际上世他小号，我帮他练）。然后被公共 CD 的圈圈搞到晕，在我一个星期玩到 10 级的光荣成绩后，果断 AFK.

到了大学时代，同宿舍的人都在玩 WOW，于是我才正式开始自己的 WOW。我第一个自己的号在 9 区太阳之井。我玩了一个术士。其实我认为在 9 区才是我们 518 宿舍最快乐的时光，并且，我在 9 区认识了 2 个确定我 WOW 目标的玩家。我仍然记得我们 518 宿舍集体下死亡矿井。那怎么能是一个灭字了得？没有 T，只有 4 个 DPS 和一个奶。T

[11] Education system
[12] Care

就是盗贼和我的蓝胖子。那时候管子很想要以套黑暗迪菲亚套装。我记得我们 24 了还在死亡矿井里帮他刷，最后也没刷满。加基森的南海，我们见到了第一波敌对玩家，手忙脚乱的居然 5V5 搞定他们，还守尸体（刘潇想的）。后来来个 70 的盗贼把我们守到下线.还有管子问我要低级药水我不给他。佳佳打血色始终奶不够。乱七八糟，好多好多，就是想不起.....

在 9 区我 15 级左右的时候，我遇到一个 70 的德鲁伊，什么都没说，只是交易了我 200 金。然后对我说，联盟的意志将靠你来流传。当时我只是觉得自己中大奖了，却没有在乎道他的话中所含的深意.很可惜，我没有记住这个德鲁伊的名字。我只能在这里谢谢你。但是，如果让时光倒流，我绝对不会是接受着些钱的。我会对他说，留下来，和我并肩作战！

后来，我遇到了老你，老你是个老玩家，带我做了一系列我术士的职业任务（他是法师）。我永远忘不了老你哥带我跑遍大半个东部王国带我旅游的日子。老你说话总是带东北味儿，尽管老带错路，副本喜欢对着元素生物羊开，但是还是会不停的说我二。老你，你还好么？可能都工作了吧？每次上 9 区的号都找不到你。可能忙吧.

[Paragraph removed]

后来。们 518 集体来到 10 区布鲁塔鲁斯，实际上我们不想来的，这要归功于我们陈啸同志的忽悠神功.说此服部落玩家极少，联盟比怪还多。我们过来发现完全是相反的。升级的时候被杀到吐，每次去野外都是部落 7,8 在做任务.基本都是在升级的路上墓碑成线.但是同时也是在这个服，我看到了联盟是无比强大的，尽管人数比例如此失调（联盟部落比 1:4）。我经历了屠城（成功），也当上了第一个 RL（riad leader).还认识了一大帮有意思的玩家.我永远都忘不了我带领我的团队 DOWN 掉伊利丹的那个夜晚，我指挥的声音充满了整个网吧.“艹，打啊，别停，TMD，给老子打，打，还有百分之 10%，5%，过了！过了！”我的声音引来了周围一群玩 WOW 的人，还好风云给力啊，红手出主手 D 刀.

让我最怀念的还是我的那帮杀戮工会老 1 团的战友啊。我们一起屠过城。一起打败副本门口的大量部落。尽管我对你们态度极端恶略你们还容忍我继续指挥。是你们教会了我团队的力量。有了你们这些坚毅的玩家让我仿佛看到了无论多大难度的事情总是可以办到的。我在这里给我的老团员们说一声，谢谢。也同时说一声，抱歉，请原谅我的在带团时候的粗鲁。但是如今你们都基本联系不上了。我只能在这里真心的祝福你们游戏愉快，生活顺利.尽管我后来离开 10 区，离开杀戮。但是我相信，杀戮工会的人没有解散，因为我们的心，连在一起.

后来由于新疆的那个事情，我们的网络断了.我也因此离开了 WOW 一段时间。但是我

也很关注你们的发展，你们过了太阳之井，我打电话给老男人向你们发去祝贺。杀戮开了 2 团，3 团，4 团，5 团。我觉得我们的工会太强大了。
但是工会强大的同时，也是到了难管理的阶段。后来，杀戮解散了，我没有什么说的。也不想说什么.

于是我就来到了 3 区符文图腾投靠了陈啸同学，看到我们的工会发展的有模有样。于是我不禁重新审视了他。陈啸同学还是很强力的.哈哈。
2010 年 8 月 31 日，WLK 终于开了，经过疯狂的冲级，我到了 80。然后是无限刷副本,我突然觉的少了什么。

先是工会开不起活动，人心不齐。后来发现自己的时间也不允许天天玩游戏。大三了.....后来就是陈啸同志接到那个该死的学校决定。工会解散了。我加入新的工会。开始打我的 PVP。

后来我的装备也很强力了。我和唐杰那鸟人开了个 TOC.3 次没过老 1。于是不打了。YY 里面，唐杰说要卖号。我问他为什么.他说，他回去发现他的父母老了很多。
我沉默了.

我又上了我 1 区和 9 区的号，发现好友栏里面零落这几个人，然而一个都不认识.
我很失落，回到宿舍，我静静的躺在床上，舍友正在看电影。有句台词突然冒了出来。
既然我们都选择离开，那么就不必留恋，还有人会继续我们的传奇！

我瞬间释然了，于是我选择离开我玩了 4 年的魔兽世界。
我打开我的账号，回到了艾尔文森林。看到有个 4 级的战士正在被 1 群怪猛追。
于是我赶了上去，华丽的切掉他身后的怪物，只剩下一片金色的圣光。
我把我身上所有的金币都交易给了他，他开始不要，我说送你的。他这才接受。
我对他说，联盟的意志，将由你来流传！
我对着 4 年前我接到第一个任务的 NPC 维里副队长满怀敬意的敬礼。
维里副队长说，解散！06 年的老兵。

Testimonial 78

Testimonial 78

[1]Four years of the sour, sweet, bitter, spicy. Four years of equipment and materials. [2]Four years of fame and titles. Four years of gaming time were all covered on the 30yuan game cards and back into dust.

[3]WoW gave us more than a game, a lot more. Some are players have been playing since the official database testing. Some are players who stepped into this game with friends. Some people can't leave the game even if their account is stolen. The joy of the game is that great. How many people have been shocked by the beautiful pictures of the game? The iron castles covered with snows and the green Darnassus and the vast Thunder Bluff, the cold and chilly Undercity. The history of WoW shocks every player. Arthus left his friends for his people. The little elves chose to sacrifice themselves to protect the world tree. Levelling up makes me happy and the missions make people sigh. The flame dancer, good wine and the pet and QUEST and wishes of children, the perfume of lovers, none of the tasks are the same. There's no stupid levelling mode to make players feel as if they are in the dangerous environments of the real society. What should we do? We have teams. We have guilds. We have friends. [4]Unity, courage, toil, [5]management, wisdom, leadership, are all [6]brought to us by this game. Chinese games come in like waves. They post sexy girls to attract players and they are free of charage. But WoW has never been replaced. The game card of 30 yuan brings us the right attitude towards money. It is not indispensible. It is not omniscient. Naaru did not forget us. Even the people who have been forgotten or have gone to find Arthus. We who chase the teaching of [7]holy light should not have hatred and no right to interfere with the government. At last we have seen the hard work of the servers bring the game into China. Business is business. No matter if it's a Taiwan server or a US server or the others, this is the sorrow of our nation. We have such a vast territory and we have always been open to imports. And now even the tiny Korea is mocking China. [8]This is the wrong thinking of a group of people which leads to a bad result. It's just like mage opens the wrong portal. But we have no way to change it. The way we deal with the flood is not block it but guide it. And this is how things are supposed to be. [Poem about leaving Cambridge][9]:

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[1] Peak experience
[2] Authority
[3] More than a game
[4] In-group
[5] Authority
[6] Transformation
[7] Purity
[8] Just interesting
[9] Art

I'm coming silently just like the way I'm leaving. I wave my sleeves do not take a piece of cloud.

There is more than a cloud that leaves and more than a game that comes. Arthus took more than new challenges but old memories when you realize that the grey friends but you still cannot have 25 people. Have you ever thought about giving up? Everytime I think of this I ask myself: am I playing the game or being played by the game? When you found out your teammates are going everywhere did you feel like it was cheating? Spicy, sour, sweet and also the sad separation. I have thought about changing games but after all a game is a game everywhere. [10]But it is more than just a game. The simple ID card in the game represents not systemized zeros and ones but also the shadow of ourselves. This is life, this is a game. [11]It's more appropriate to say that I have found another self in a parallel world other than addiction. After all, the players are always the weak groups. [12]We cannot change the cruelty of the reality. So we just indulge ourselves in the game.

And find out the innocence of childhood even though that is just a wish with little hope, with little possibility.

4 年的悲欢离合 酸甜苦辣
4 年的装备材料 宠物坐骑
4 年的声望荣誉 头衔名称
4 年的游戏时间 点卡金币
都掩埋在一张张 30 圆的点卡下
至此烟硝云散
魔兽世界给我们的并不只是游戏
还有很多
有的是从公测一路披荆斩棘的老玩家
有的是跟朋友一起踏上外星球旅行的油条
为什么有些人即使被盗号了还依依不舍
游戏的乐趣是伟大的
多少人被游戏的精美所震撼
白雪皑皑的铁炉堡 郁郁葱葱的达纳苏斯 广袤无垠的雷霆崖 冰冷凄凉的幽暗城
魔兽的历史令人感到震撼和扼惋
阿尔萨斯为了自己的子民众叛亲离 小精灵们为了世界之树不惜牺牲自己

[10] More than a game
[11] Existential
[12] Just interesting

升级是快乐的
一个个悲欢离合的任务邻人唏嘘不已
火焰舞娘 美酒坐骑 无头糖果 儿童愿望 情人香水
没有千篇一律的任务
没有 NC 的升级模式
身处犹如现实社会的危险环境
我们应该怎么办
我们有团队 有工会 有朋友
我们讲亲情友情爱情
为了装备 亲兄弟 明算账
团结 勇气 勤劳 操作 智慧 领导能力
都是这款游戏带给我们的
国产游戏一波一波又一波 美艳的 NC 女 诱惑的免费
唯有魔兽世界屹立不倒
30 圆的点卡 带给我们的是对金钱的正确认识 不可没有 但不是万能
“纳鲁没有忘记我们”不管是“特别迟”还是“忘了开”即使被遗忘的人也会去找阿尔萨斯
我们追寻圣光的教诲 不应心存仇恨 无权过问政府的言行
至少我们看到代理们的努力 生意就是生意 不管是 TF 美 F 还是其他
其实这是一个民族的悲哀 泱泱大国 从古以来都是已开放的姿态来迎接外来事物 而现在连个小小的韩国都耻笑中国
这是一群人的错误的想法导致一个错误的方式从而引出的一个错误的结果 好比 FS 开错了门
但是我们没有办法改变 只有引以为戒
大禹治水 不是堵而是引 事实本应如此
轻轻的我来了 正如我轻轻的走 我挥一挥衣袖 不带走一片云彩
走的不只是云彩 来的不只是游戏
阿尔萨斯不光带来的是新的挑战
还有旧的回忆
当你发现曾经暗淡的好友纷纷在线
但却还是组不齐 25 人的时候
可曾想过放弃
每每有这种念头涌上时 我会默默的问下自己
是玩游戏 还是被游戏玩
当你发现曾经的战友各奔东西时
有没有感到过一丝凄凉
辛酸苦辣 悲伤离合
也有曾想过换个地方的时候
毕竟 游戏到哪里都是游戏

但是 又不仅仅是游戏
简单的 ID 不仅代表着有规律的 0 跟 1
还是自己的身影
这就是生活 这也是游戏
与其说是沉迷
还不如说是平行世界的里一个我
算了 玩家永远是弱势群体
既然我们无法改变残酷 没有希望的现实
就在小小的游戏里
找回那一点点孩提的纯真
即使 那只是一个近乎飘渺的愿望

Testimonial 79

Testimonial 79

I can't remember when I started playing computer games. I played a lot of games but was not an expert at any of them. I played hard and not hard and they are not everything. Most of the time I played because my friends were playing. It is no fun for one person to play the game even though I hate levelling and love the good garments and weapons.

It has been a long time since the game was created with various styles and designs. The curious players stepped into the dream designed by others[1] and forgot their own dream. Forget who I am. If someone at this time were to tell me it is better for you to go back to your own world you will get the real happiness, I would reply: in my real world I already forget my name. In the world where life comes and death goes the people cannot go back if they forget their names. Of course I could not forget those who have gone so far with me. They will accompany me for a lifetime. My friends please do not say I'm too addicted to the game. Sometimes the game is like a good dream on your pillow. This is our nature. But the game varies due to different ways of playing and leads to different types of joyfulness. Ok I am taking a nap.

[2]Playing WoW I was motivated by some excellent design in the game. For example on the road to Theramore Island it's just like the muddy roads in my hometown, with the vivid pictures of shrimp and fish jumping out. Or like the statue of the Goddess of the Moon in the forest made things around her into dew that dropped into my heart. [3]Maybe you will realize a childhood dream, do something you have never done.

[4]I always think that playing a character in the game is playing the soul of a person. When you are playing the game with your heart the departing and reunion of your soul will have bound with the soul of the character and you will realize the nature and the character of human beings.

Maybe it's just like the story of TBC. When the devil hunter said how dare you run into my world. After all, it is an invasion and you will pay for that. Love me, love my dog. For WoW, I have some dissatisfactions but I have to say that I love it. [5]I love WoW eating my money. The biggest regret is that the game has used up precious time I could have spent with my

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[1] Creator agency
[2] Creator agency
[3] Just interesting
[4] Purity
[5] Just interesting

lover.

WoW does not like a hidden warrior in China. The game absorbed some cultures and customs of other places around the world. And the best illustration of this is the translation. I want to say when can we play the WoW without translation? [6]I do not want the Germans in the game play Chinese kung fu and speak Chinese.

If not too addicted in the game, I dare to say WoW is not life. There is no sex in WoW. There is no real enemy but only friends and the roles they play. It's only a small part of life. [7]It exists because my friends exist in there. [8]The people play WoW because it is the realization of their childishness or innocence. We are happy because our friends are playing. Thank you!

不知何时,我玩上游戏,玩得类型虽多,就是玩得不精,一知半解,大玩小玩,不玩可矣!大多时因为朋友在玩,我才玩,现实中一个人玩真的没意思!尽管我是多么地厌烦练级,喜欢好的衣物和神兵利器!

游戏很久就有了,其类型设计众多,感到好奇的人,走进了别人设计的梦而忘了自己原来的梦,忘了我是谁!要是这时有人对我说:"你还是回到自己原来的世界去吧,你才会真正得到幸福!"而我说:"可是我在自己的世界中早已忘了自己的名字,在哪生之悠悠,死亦碌碌的世界中,忘了名字的人是回不去的!当然,我又无法忘记一起走过风风雨雨的他和她呀...她们一直在陪伴着我,伴我一世情!"朋友们别怪我这样说太痴迷于游戏,有时候,GAME 如美梦就在枕边!只是我们天性如此,因各人选择其玩法的不同,其乐趣也不同罢了,呵呵^^我睡了一会!玩 WOW,我感到众多游戏中 WOW 的一些其用心设计感动了我,比如过塞拉摩岛路中,如同家乡断了小桥而泥泞的小路,还有点点鱼虾跳跃的生动画面;又如月光林地中的碉像女神,手起千象.幻化起林间月光灵气,汇成一滴小水珠,坠入心田...也许就能成就你儿时一个想体现而童真的梦---做你从未做过的事!

一直我都认为,玩一个游戏中的人物就是玩一个人的灵魂,当你用心玩这个游戏时,灵魂的生死离合,会以你自己的灵魂绑定,而从中体现出人的本性和人格!

也许像 T B C 宣传片中恶魔猎手伊利丹说的＂你们尽敢闯入我的世界...＂＂闯入＂毕竟是侵犯，必定要付出代价！当你真正喜欢一个人的时候,你会爱她(他)爱的,对于 WOW,我内心中虽有不悦的地方,但我还敢说是比较喜欢玩的!喜欢 WOW 吃掉了我不少心疼的 RMB,更大的余憾，W O W耗费了我陪伴心爱人宝贵的时间...在这里我只能用＂喜欢＂

[6] Just interesting
[7] In-group
[8] Just interesting

二字代替于本应文言规范用词的＂不满＂二字，因为＂喜欢＂更能体现于行为人现实中的动向！

ＷＯＷ不像中国式有着隐侠般，回头望去流落远方山河还未知，一起归隐的经典′而是全西方，间中吸纳世界其它地方一些风土民情，这方面最明显的是代理方译本国语言适合国情关系！其实我多想说，何时我才真正学会看不用译过来ＷＯＷ的语言呀，而不用搞到游戏中角色＂德国人＂都很会流利地说中文要中国功夫！

总之万里通秋雁．风月古今同！只要不太沉迷于游戏我就敢说，ＷＯＷ不是生活，ＷＯＷ中没有性，没有真正的敌人，只有着朋友和朋友扮演的角色，只是生活的一小部分，它的存在只是因为有朋友的存在而存在！玩ＷＯＷ的人，是一个人不甘于自己寂寞的童真体现... 因为朋友在，而我才乐！谢谢！

Testimonial 80

Testimonial 80

At the end of the world.

I have been thinking of a question for a long time. When WoW is disappearing like some other games, what's going to happen? [1]This question is like the topic where would you choose to AFK? Which has been discussed over and over again. I did think if one day I have no regret of leaving of Azeroth I will go back to the monastery in the northern country. And I will salute the NPCs and leave.

I once thought Azeroth will become a classic world and will be talked about for generations and then would be long forgotten. Just like a hero with honour grows old and dies with glory.

This is a beautiful ending. At least I think it is. All the things in my memory are about beauty and warmth.

There is an end in the WoW world. I mean the territory of Azeroth. When walking to the border of this land it will be cut off by the mountains or by the endless sea or there will be a formless wall to stop you from going to the other side of the world. When you are walking to the border it seems there is no better road than going back. But we do not mind. [2]The jail was designed[3] so well that we do not want to go back to the real world. Because here we can realize our tiny dreams hidden in the bottoms of our hearts and there will be no one who cares about the meaningless borders.

[4]The WoW is more than recreation or entertainment to the players. [5]It's more like a conveyor of spirit that releases the bonds of the real world. The addiction to the game comes from wanting a good life. Just like the Christians overcame difficulties by their own will under the guidance of God.

However, this beautiful willpower that we have long been relying on will someday collapse. And it will be torn up by the mighty power and the feelings we will have in crying is not something the business giants have time to feel.

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[1] Just interesting
[2] Just interesting
[3] Creator agency
[4] More than a game
[5] Purity

There is an end in our world. When you are walking to the end and there's no way back what will be your choice? And there's no more forest, no more plateau. And there will be no more starry nights, no more clean ponds, no more dim castles with cooperating teammates, powerful weapons, familiar characters. There will be no more running or regret of being killed. No more laughter in the UT, when all of them disappear, only will the ALT and F4 remain.

I think when the pillar that holds your spiritual world collapses there must be rain touching your cheek. Even though the WoW disappears we can open another door in the life and give our restless souls work.

When WoW comes to an end, it's not the end. Just like my countrymen struck by the earthquake a year ago, we can hold up our sky by our hands. And I believe this must be a new start. I would like to use this essay to commemorate the people killed by the earthquake and also the game that we love.

The time of this article written is May 13th 2am in the morning.

魔兽世界鉴定书

请花上几分钟时间思考一下在你的生活中魔兽世界占了怎样的地位。 可能魔兽世界对于生活和学习中的压力来说是一个很好的排解, 亦或是它给你枯燥无味的生活带来了不少刺激和热情. 也许在成就和征服游戏世界的过程中你从其中得到了很棒的感觉, 又或者 你认为这种"征服感"使你远离了现实生活中重要的职责. 这是一个没有简单的对错的问题, 当然,所以，请我手写我心 ，并告诉我"山口山"对你的生活到底有多么重要. 最好是告诉我只属于你自己的魔兽故事以及你的游戏世界和你的现实世界是怎样互相影响的！ 请至少用中文写半页纸，谢谢！ - Will (rghornbeck123@gmail.com).

当一个世界走到尽头

很久以前想到过一个问题：当魔兽世界和当年的大话西游一样没落时，会怎么样？

这个问题类似于被讨论过很多遍的"你将选择在哪里 AFK"之类话题，我确实是想在某一天如果确实对艾泽拉斯的一切不再留恋时，会回到北郡修道院，向那些矗立在那里的 NPC 一一/敬礼，然后离开。

我曾经觉得艾泽拉斯会作为一个经典的世界在我们口中流传很久，然后慢慢被我们遗忘。就像一位立下赫赫战功的英雄，带着荣耀的历史老去，死亡。

这是个很美的结局。至少我们对它是心存眷恋的，记忆里的一切都关于美好，关于温暖。

WOW 的世界存在尽头，我指的是艾泽拉斯的地域。走到地域的边境，你或会被高耸重叠的山峦横断，或会被一望无际的大海阻隔，或者直接有一堵无形的墙拒你于另一个世界之外。当你走到边境，除了原路返回似乎是没有另一条更好的路的。然而我们不介意，这个牢房被设计得如此之好以至于我们流连于这里的一切而不想返回更自由的真实世界，因为这里能够实现我们心底一直埋藏的那些小小的梦想，于是也就不再有人关心那无所谓的边界问题了。

无论如何，魔兽世界对玩家们来说，不仅仅是娱乐，更是一种解放于真实世界的束缚之外的精神寄托。我们对它的依赖来自于对更美好生活的向往，就像基督徒们在上帝的指引下凭借意志力克服困难一样。

然而，这些美好的念想，我们存在已久甚至不觉得它存在不稳定性的精神寄托突然一瞬间垮塌了。而且是被强大的外力硬生生地撕裂。痛彻心扉而不得哭的感觉，恐怕不是那些忙着角力的商业巨头们有时间体会的吧。

我们的世界原来也是有尽头的。

当你走到世界的尽头，而后退无路的时候，会选择什么呢？

不再有茂密的森林，辽阔的平原，深邃的夜空，透彻的湖水；不再有幽暗的地宫，默契的战友，强大的道具，亲密的角色；不再有赶路的匆忙，AH 的计较，灭团的遗憾，UT 的笑声；不再有，当这一切不再有，我们是不是只剩下了 Alt+F4？

我想，如果一个维系着你精神世界的支柱崩塌了，一定会有另外的雨露抚摸你的脸庞。即使 WOW 没有了，我想我们一定能够在生活中开启另一扇门，去安放我们躁动的灵魂。

当一个世界走到尽头，这并不是结束。就像一年前的震中同胞们一样，崩塌了家园，还有我们的双手撑起自己的天空。我想，这一定是一个新的开始。
谨以此文，悼念 5.12 故去的同胞们和我们最亲爱的魔兽世界。

樱空舞草草于 5 月 13 日凌晨

Testimonial 82

Testimonial 82

I made the second dranei Shaman which reached level 80 in this server. I feel a slight bit of regret as well as happy.

The endless TBC brought to most WoW players an endless supply of small accounts. [1]As the chief of the main team of the guild I had to leave my major account alone and practice with the shaman which the team needs. As to who will be the number one on this server, this is something the students cannot imagine. When it was only 16 hours to open the server at that time I was 74, the highest one in my server was 77, and there's no doubt the mage was enjoying all the advantages because there is a huge bug here. I believe every server should have a mage to lead to the highest level. I do not understand why at that time I can stay up all night for leveling maybe it was a sense of responsibility for the team.

On September 2nd it had been two days since the server had opened and there were people who got to level 80, the first gnome and warrior. I remember clearly I was doing the serious missions at Zul'Drak, I was 77. Someone said in the guild channel 'Windsprint, you are the highest level shaman' and I checked it, it was true. There was also a shaman with the name 'The Old Horse' who had level 77 and all the rest were 75, two levels lower than us. Was this the reward God gave me? And I felt like I was taking drugs and all the fatigue due to the sleeplessness of the last two days disappeared. And on September 2nd I was mad and was going crazy. When I was busy with the missions I keep checking the levels of the others and when they went offline I would feel joyful and when they got online I got nervous again and the result of this was that at 11pm on September 2 when they got offline once again I could not hold it up any longer and fell asleep on the bed and forgot to set the alarm and when I woke up at 10 o'clock the next day my rival was one level ahead of me. And I could not describe that feeling. Eventually I went to level 80 an hour later than him

When I reached 80 the old players all congratulated me and when I said on the YY that I feel a little regret that if I didn't fall asleep I would be perfect they all said I'm going crazy and indeed I've been devoted too much to the game. Yesterday I checked the used game cards in my drawer. I have more than 50 in there, and I failed two subjects last semester[2]. [3]But every Saturday I go online and lead activities. I feel satisfied when people are laughing and chatting and the main team of 25 people raid the Sunwell. And some professors might say that I need electricity treatment and I know I have been too addicted and I hope I can arrange my time reasonably.

After all I'm a junior student and have one last year of my college life and I do not want to live in regret about college.

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[1] In-group
[2] Education system
[3] Authority

作为一个服务器第二个到 80 的萨满和德莱尼，我在为到达 80 而高兴之余也不免有一丝遗憾。

无尽的 TBC 给大部分 WOW 玩家带来的最多的可能就是无数的小号了，作为工会主力团队的指挥，我不得不忍痛割爱放弃了我的圣斗士大号而先练萨满这个团队必备的职业。对于轰轰烈烈的服务器第一人成就的争夺，我这个学生党是根本不敢有丝毫幻想的。在距开服仅 16 小时的时候，全区第一人诞生，那个时候我才 74 级，我们服最高才 77，而且毫无疑问的，因为破碎这个地方的神级 BUG 的存在，法师占尽天时地利，我想各个服务器都应该是法师大军领先冲级大军。怎么说呢，我现在也不明白当时到底是什么样的动力能让我通宵一晚上练级，或许是作为团队指挥的一种责任感吧。

9 月 2 号，开服已经两天，陆陆续续有人拿到了 80 第一盗贼，第一侏儒，第一战士等等的成就。我记得很清楚，当时我正在祖达克纠结背叛那个系列任务，77 级，公会频道突然有人来一句，“NAME（NAME），你现在是等级最高的萨满额”，我查询了一下，果然如此，当时有一个叫“NAME”的萨满和我一样 77，其他的人都比我两低了 2 级以上了，难道这是老天给我的奖励么，这个时候我像突然注入了兴奋剂一样，连续两天的睡眠不足带来的疲劳也好像已经消失。努力啊努力，2 号那天我整个人像疯了一样，忙于做任务的时候总要不停的打开查询列表查看对手的情况，当对手下线时我就惊喜不已，等过了一会一看上线了我又绷紧神经，但这样带来的结果是 2 号晚上 11 点左右，当对手再一次下线时，我也终于支撑不住了，爬上床就睡，闹钟都忘记设定了。第二天直到 10 点多才起来，赶紧上线一看，对手已经领先我一级了，当时那种感觉真是无以形容啊。最终我比他晚了一个小时到达 80。

到达 80 的时候公会的老团员一片恭喜之声，当我在 YY 说出那点遗憾并有点自怨的说 2 号晚上不睡觉就完美了，他们都说我已经走火入魔了。确实如此，玩 WOW 我已经倾注了太多的心力。昨天看了一下抽屉里用掉的点卡，有 50 多张了，上学期也挂了 2 门，但是每当我周六上线带团活动时，带着我们主力团 25 人尽情碾压 Sunwell，大家有说有笑，我就觉得特别的满足。用某些叫兽的话来说我应该接受电击治疗了，我也知道自己沉迷太深，但愿以后我能合理的分配时间，毕竟大三了，真正的大学生涯也就这最后一年了，我也不想在大学里再留下遗憾。

国际惯例 一区银松森林 萨满 樱之殇 圣骑士 追风小队 其他小号就不报了

Testimonial 84

Testimonial 84

Prelude: Many people are addicted to the [1]friendship and love in the game no matter whether it's China or the foreign countries. So the research on these emotions has to deal with the differences between countries. In my next installment I will mention why the game will lead to so many complicated emotions among the players and I will discuss why the game makes players express their feelings freely. The game provides the [2]spiritual sensations that they lack of in real life. [3]These two make the game more like a society.

The emotions in real life sometimes will be constrained because of circumstances and influences of the environment that we have to control ourselves when we want to express something. The emotions in real life were sometimes un-expressible or we don't have the ability to express them. We are being bullied by life and we cannot or dare not to release them in front of others. [4]In life we want to take care of or love someone but because we don't have enough money or we have other troubles that make it so we cannot help. In the game it is different.

[5]If being bullied you can revenge whomever you want to. No one can control you, not even your guild master. The biggest deal is that your account will get deleted. That's the most severe punishment. [6]You can help others whenever you want. It's only 30 or 40 kuai you can save someone. People can express their feelings and emotions unlimited – expression is a component of communication. And the game enables you to freely express yourself.

Maybe you are not rich in reality but spend little money [7]you can experience being a boss and enjoy all the praise and all the vanity and in real life maybe you do not have real love but if you devote a little more in the game you can enjoy love. The game provides the players the real [8]spiritual sensation they lack of in the real life (having powerful equipment is also a spiritual sensation).

Above all, the emotion that people have in the game is for making up the real emotionS that are not enough in real life.

[AUTHOR'S SECOND INSTALLMENT]

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[1] In-group
[2] Purity
[3] WoW is like real life
[4] Care
[5] Fairness
[6] Care
[7] Authority
[8] Purity

Prelude: I will discuss why WoW is still successful even though it has been TBC for so long. And as for the outstanding features of the game they're better discussed by foreigners because they have experienced the complete WoW and I will not talk too much about that.

The popularity of WoW in China is incredible. Even the government interferes with the TBC and the people have to think about this phenomenon.

In the interview with many other players many people say that they harvest friendship and love in the game. This is true because people when they have enough communication they will have emotions spontaneously. But these game emotions make some people ignore the real emotions in life. Maybe we can analyze the reason in the following aspects:

The first is adolescence. Being different from other countries, the situation in china makes the adolescents here more longing for communication with others. They do not have enough leisure time or various recreations like the foreigners. [9]What they have is the pressure to study. They rarely communicate with their classmates and some of them hardly talk to their parents. And it is horrible for someone who cannot communicate. It will cause extreme anxiety or even horror. [1011]But the highly social features of the game made them feel that they are still in this world and not isolated, so they are more willing to exist in this world of WoW.

Middle ages. The pressures of one's middle ages are enormous. People have parents and kids in their family and they have leaders and also subordinates in companies. They have to switch themselves frequently to stabilize their lives. They have to change their faces so often in order to get along. When they are scolded by their leaders they must be polite, and they must also be cruel to their children if they behave wrongly. Sometimes they themselves do not know what kind of character they have. They are unsatisfied with this society but have no way to release. And then the WoW satisfies their demands. [12]Spending 100 kuai can make you be the boss in the game. You can enjoy being flattered and you can do whatever you want in the game regardless of the consequences. You can say whatever you want to say. You can have the American freedom. [13]In conclusion, because of the special situation in China people have to find the sense of existence in the game where it is better for communication than in the real society.

This is why the TBC will last forever in China.

题记：在探讨人们为何着迷于 WOW 中的感情前，我们有必要先清楚 WOW 的与众不同之处，只有这样我们才能清晰的认识到 WOW 是如何让人产生感情的。

[9] Education system
[10] In-group
[11] Existential
[12] Authority
[13] Existential

网络游戏的盛行以不是一年两年的事了。但之前的游戏都未像 WOW 一样持久的大面积的受人喜爱。或许我们对比下游戏中玩家感情产生的过程就能找到答案。

友情

WOW 中的友情是泛滥的。游戏本身就要求玩家长期的融洽的精准的大面积的配合。就像学校的一个班级一样。你必定会认识班上的每个同学。比如大家技能之间的衔接，专业的互助，职业间的互助等等等等。你总有一天会由于某个原因需要与他们合作。

爱情

WOW 的爱情的普及程度不算高，但其中不少爱情都爱着爱着就真爱了。这和它的社会性强密不可分。玩家们会在不知不觉中表现出真实的自己。比如经常带人下 FB，经常让装备的人一定不会刻薄。装一次两次没难度，但从 STSM 装到 NAXX 就几乎不可能了。

成功的满足感

这种成功的满足感是 WOW 最有人的地方。他与过去的游戏不同的是，强力不再顽固的靠时间累积，强力不会受到现金的过分影响。强力的装备（相对而言的强力）必须要玩家亲自努力。这无意间就把所有人拉到了同一起跑线上了。在现实中不算成功的人有了第 2 次征服的机会；在现实中不失败的人有了第 2 次努力的机会；在现实中失败的人有了成功的机会。这就是有人会为了游戏而辜负现实的原因，他们渴求成功的快感。大多数人都喜欢并敢于接受挑战的。而胜利的人也必定付出过努力。毕竟拿到 FD 的绝对不会是 RMB 小白玩家。

题记：许多人都沉醉在 wow 中的友情与爱情中，无论中国还是外国。所以对于这些感情的研究不得不排除掉国情的干扰来单独对待。下文“游戏能让玩家自由的表达自己的感情”与“游戏提供了玩家现实中缺少的精神享受”中的“游戏”特质优秀的高仿社会性的游戏，这种游戏的与众不同和他们为什么能让玩家们产生那么复杂的感情我会在《WOW 别样之处》中提到。

现实中的感情有时会受到环境的影响使我们想宣泄时不得不控制住自己；现实中的感情有时会受到生活的约束而表达不出来，或者说没能力表达。我们在生活中收了气，我们不能或不敢在那些人面前侧地发泄；我们在生活中想关心爱护某个人时，或许我们囊中羞涩，或许我们另有苦衷，我们时常不能伸出援手。

但在游戏中不一样。

收了气你想刷谁就刷谁，没人能压得住你包括 GM，大不了封号！要帮助某人时，只要你想，几十块钱就能救人于水火。大家能没有限度的表达自己的感情。表达是交流的一个组成部分。游戏能让玩家自由的表达自己的感情。

现实中或许你不富裕，但只要花点钱你就能过会大老板的瘾，享受各种虚伪的夸赞；现实中或许你没有收获到爱情，但只要在游戏中投入点专注，你就能享受到爱情的妩媚。游戏提供了玩家现实中缺少的精神享受。（装备的强大也是一种精神享受）

综上，玩家沉迷在游戏中的感情中的原因是他弥补了现实感情的不足。

题记：我更多的阐述了 WOW 在中国长期 TBC 依然成功的原因，至于 WOW 在游戏上的突出特性最好由国外的同学来分析（毕竟他们经历了完整的 WOW），在此我就不多提了。

WOW 在中国的普及程度令人难以置信，就算是在政府打压进入无尽 TBC 时代也一样。这不得不让人三思。

在对许多玩家的采访中，许多人都说在 WOW 里他们感受到了友情和爱情。这点不假，毕竟人只要交流多了自然会产生感情，但这种游戏中的感情至于让一分部分忽略现实中的感情生活吗。或许我们能在下面分析出原因。

青少年

和其他国家不同，中国的国情使青少年们对交流极度渴望。他们不想外国的孩子那样有丰富的课余时间有多种娱乐途径，他们有的只是更多的学习压力。他们大多数在学校里只与同班同学交流，部分人几乎不与家长交流。这使他们的交流严重匮乏。而这时，一个没年龄代沟的交流媒介出现了——WOW。缺乏交流是恐怖的，这会使人产生极度的焦虑甚至恐惧。而 WOW 的高度社会性让他们感到了自己还存在于这个世界中，还没有被孤立。所以他们愿意在 WOW 这个世界中存在。

中年

中年人的压力是巨大的。在家上有老下有小；在公司尚有领导下有下属。他们要频繁的切换自己的姿态来维持生活的稳定。被领导骂时要棉条，孩子做错事时要适当的凶狠。他们有时自己都不知道自己是怎样的性格。他们对这个社会有着各种不满但没有发泄对象。这时 WOW 满足了他们的需求。在游戏中花个 100 来块钱就能让你当回想撒的老板，就能让你享受下被人谄媚的感觉；在游戏中你想怎样就怎样，反正不会有后果，一切在现实中不敢说的话你都能随意说，你有美国式的自由。

综上，由于中国的特殊国情，使人们在缺乏交流的社会中不得不在一个交流最真游戏的中寻找存在感。这就是万年 TBC 依然能在中国流行的原因。

Testimonial 86

Testimonial 86

I have been playing this game seriously. I have been working hard in this game and I believe I am devoted to this game. I consider myself a strong player in this game. But this is not what I'm supposed to be happy about. The thing that makes me happy is that I do not give up the responsibility in real life because of this game. I'm more of a PVE player because I do not have many friends in PVP. In PVE I do not have much talent but my DPS is high enough. I belong to the group of players who like to get the pets. The reason why I'm doing this is that I am a TBC player. I was leveling while others were exploring. When other people are doing first downs I'm still leveling. I do not have a chance to experience the excitement of a first down. And it was boring days to be exploring. I still love the feeling of achievement from getting new equipment. But doing it once again with my second account I will say no to that. I have a deeper understanding of this game so I'm not so addicted to it. I go for the pet just for fun. Just like the people who have dogs.

However, if there is a chance I still love to go to kill the boss that I have already killed several times with my classmates in real life. Because I believe this is a way to enjoy the friendship.[1] But in this process I will emphasize more on the procedure rather than the equipment. I am aware that over-enjoying the game is like taking drugs. Please notice that I say 'over' enjoying.

我有认真玩过这个游戏

我有努力玩过这个游戏

我有为这个游戏付出

我在这个游戏中算得上比较强力

但这不是值得庆幸的地方

值得庆幸的是我没有为他放弃对现实的责任感

我是个偏向 PVE 玩家，PVP 没有现实朋友的陪伴所以没达到什么境界

在 PVE 方面，我天分不高，但我现在的 DPS 打的还是很高的

我属于蛋疼玩家，刷坐骑刷 BB，做成就的那种

之所以这样是因为我是 TBC 玩家

[1] Material vs. moral/spiritual

别人开荒我在练级，别人 FD 我还在练级

没机会体验 FD 的刺激，开荒的感觉还体验过的，很郁闷的日子。。。

我对拿装备的成就感还是很喜欢的

但重练小号再来一次却完全不乐意

我对游戏的理解很深刻所以没怎么上瘾

刷坐骑刷 BB 刷声望只是为了散心而已，就像养狗的人习惯散步一样

不过

如果有机会和现实中的同学一起开个公会然后去开荒 FM 过 N 边的 BOSS 我还是严重想去的

因为我觉得这是享受友情的一种方式

不过在这个过程中我会更在意进度而不是装备

我很清楚过分的享受游戏中的快感就是吸毒

我说的是过分

Testimonial 89

Testimonial 89[1]

The joy of WoW was more than instancing after I reached 70, it was also about the stories and missions on the road. Every NPC has their own story. Their own emotion. And it moves me to keep on waiting in this freak version of the game. I do the quests one after the other, with all my heart, again and again, using different accounts. Alliance or Horde, using different classes and characters with different levels, I visit unknown corners of the world to learn their stories. This is the fun of the game. After leveling just looking at the sceneries besides the road and the little flowers at the corner of the wall.

Some people say the accounts are fast food accounts because they come in so quickly. I think fast food is not so terrible. What is terrible is the fast-food attitude towards the game. [2]You do not think too much about the game or your skills and management. Even if you reach the 70 with the best weapons you are no more than a passerby of the game.

I remember my paladin in the Alliance was leveled through endless axe grinding and whenever I met the enemies my first reaction was hearthstone. Have you experienced that type of feeling of waiting and doing that for 10,000 years?

I remember when my hunter was doing a mission for the epic bow. I waited for 3 months to get the leaf in order to kill the four devils. In order to kill the four monsters I ran and ran to get my corpse again and again. And each devil was surrounded with corpses with arrows on themselves. And I used up whole bottles of the potion and used up all my gold like running water.

I remembered the shaman of the Horde had run through half of the map and searched every corner just to find the goddamn NPC.

I remember my mage of the Alliance went across the Horde territory from one place to the south sea at the gate waiting for a warlock.

I remember my warrior of the Horde. I met a level 60 hunter at a crossroads who was going to an NPC and I raided him stabbed him with the knife. All I remember is revival, rush, death, corpse run, and revival and death again and again.

I remember once when helping get my classmate his weapon a group of people gave him the buff and put it all over his head. [3]There was a rogue interfered with us and we organized a group and caused a fight between the Alliance and Horde.

I remember we fought for honor on the three battlefields. We did not go across the server but only for the honor of our own. The first time we were fighting for three days. All the NPCs

[1] Memory-centric
[2] Material vs. moral/spiritual
[3] In-group

except the leaders were dead or had died and every time during the raid for each cemetery when the leaders of our enemy were being killed the sounds of cheers overwhelmed our servers.

I remember the first time we sacked the city; I was a shaman of Horde. Following the guild master, I rushed into the castle of the Alliance and I did not know the road I was just following the guild master[4] and when he gave the order I added blood and died and ran into it once again.

I remember someone in the guild shout 'someone is killing our leader.' [5]The guild master gave the order and opened the door to go back and protect our leader. A chaotic fight, many people were offline and went online again. And the server stopped working. We won the victory, and our pride was indescribable[6].

I remember the time I was in the Horde and heard that Sar was killed. I felt endless pain. And the group of people was shouting and screaming when a whole guild rushed in to Ironforge like a kamikaze.

I remember a time when 40 people were exploring the MC and fell down at the feet of the boss. And there were endless corpses around the boss. And the white bones were scattered everywhere on the ground. In the end it was the main team that started the final combat.

I remember our MT piled up to 300 and the whole group added the firehose buff. A group went inside and a group went outside and also added the buff into the raid and were destroyed, ran for their corpses and did it again.

I remember at that time there was an orange hammer the guild master gave it to a shaman and the biggest joy for us was to watch the shaman with the orange hammer lying on the ground.

I remember that when we explored in BWL the little red dragon stopped the dreams of endless guild masters from moving forward. I followed one after another guild master who was stopped by this red dragon. [7]And in the age of MC we finally went through the red dragon and at that moment we were all weeping all over our faces.

I remember that when we explored the TAQ the princess and the king killed us and because there were too many times when we felt disgusted with being killed that eventually our group was dismissed and everyone could tell what each class needed to do at every stage.

I remember when we raided the NAXX a group of people had already finished the mission and organized a group and went dying inside just to have a look at what was in there because our guild cannot reach into there.

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[4] Authority
[5] Authority
[6] In-group
[7] In-group

I remember when the TBC was open and the NAXX instance was removed, our guild master told me that our dream in the NAXX is broken. Even now I cannot reach there but can only imagine it through pictures.

I remember when TBC was opened and we explored KLZ and we were killed again and again by the prince. The voice of the boss is still echoing around in our ears.

When we were exploring the storm prince, picking up the orange weapons on the ground, there was an[8]indescribable excitement and some people picked up the weapons for the first time and used the hearthstone.

We remember the TBC exploring the YMM in two stages. Monsters everywhere. Endless chaos and we didn't know what to do.

I remember when we were exploring the BT and every boss required us to study, to think and to fight whole-heartedly.

I remember when we explored the SW every boss and every monster witnessed our sweat and tears.

I remember that when we were doing the mission of Love and Family there was Tirion and in the end we see Tirion kneel in front of his son and say 'what have you done to my son' [9]I cried all over my face.[10]

Do you remember the scream from that paladin hostage in Stratholme? 'I die with no regrets, I wish only that the holy light would brighten the earth forevermore.' At that moment I was so moved by the [11]spirit of the holy light that I joined the Alliance just so I could create a paladin and feel the tenderness of the holy light.

Do you remember the Onyxia quests? The Alliance players were so moved and cried for the old general[12]. The Horde players searched all over Desolace for Rexxar.

I remember the instance called the Blackrock Depths …endless people got lost inside and finally they had to go back home. There were endless bosses and roads even now I haven't gone through yet.

Do you remember the Deadmines quests? Those pitiful, poor people were so oppressed by the nobles of Stormwind. I felt complicated emotions for them. It was more than just sympathy[13].

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[8] Peak experience
[9] Care
[10] Peak experience
[11] Purity
[12] In-group

I remember when the door of AQL opened. The Alliance and Horde were all waiting at the gate for the appearance of a hero. A magnificent scene is still in front of my eyes. One scene I can never forget.[14]

I remember that inglorious couple in the monastery. The leader killed his father and after being killed a female priest came out and cast sleep and then follows those classiclines: 'Revive my warrior' and 'I'll fight for you my lady.'

Remember the dark-haired man in the ruins of AQL? Those crystals and that familiar scream when he falls over and he's screams 'I lost.'

I remember the tiger and the dragon in ZG and remember this miserable but once glorious giant monster tribe. Like a sun setting, they struggled again and again in order to revive their honor. The tear of a giant monster.

There are too many, the sunset of Lordaeron and the sunrise of ALX, too many things that if you've never seen then you missed the real things of WoW. I'm not bragging but just saying WoW is a game with too much content. Sometimes I realize the real world inside and I am just a lotus floating.

WOW 的乐趣不止在升到 70 后的副本，也在升级路上的故事与任务，每个 NPC 都有自己的故事，自己的感情，正是他们让我感动，让我还能在这个畸形的版本里等待着，我一遍遍做着那些任务，用心，用不同的号,LM 的，BL 的，用不同的职业，不同的等级去走遍那些不曾知道的角落，体会那些故事。这才是 WOW 的乐趣，升级之余，看看路边的风景，墙角的小花，那也是一种乐趣。

像那些让带出来的号，正是被我们说为快餐的快餐号，其实快餐不可怕，可怕的是快餐的心态，一个任务都不会做，不去研究，技能和操作如何上的去，即使到了 70，得到最好的装备，那你也不过是个 WOW 里的过客。

记得当年我的 LM 的骑士是一斧子一斧子砍上来，碰到敌对阵营的第一举动是点起我的一个宏，无敌+炉石。那种万年奶的痛苦你感受到过吗？

记得当年我的猎人为了做史诗弓任务，苦等了 3 个月，拿到了叶子，为了弄死那四个恶魔，费劲周折，一遍遍的跑位，跑尸体，每个恶魔的周身满是尸体，满包的弓箭，用完了一包又一包，满包的药水，流水一样的 G 没的那就快。

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[13] Care
[14] Peak experience

记得当年我的 BL 的 SM，位了那 4 个 TT，跑遍了小半个地图，翻遍了每个角落，只为找到那几个该死的 NPC。。

记得当年我的 LM 小 FS，为了去血色，从铁徒步穿越红字怪区的 ALX 跑到南海，穿过 BL 领地，在门口和一个 SS 为等再一个人好拉人而苦苦等待。

记得当年我的 BL 小 ZS，在十字路口碰到一个 60 的 LR（60 年代）屠杀 NPC，一帮小号像潮水一样向他冲锋，法术抵抗，拿匕首捅，我只记得复活，冲锋，死，跑尸体，等复活，复活冲锋，死，跑尸体。。。

记得当年为了同学的祈福杖，一帮人组队帮他清场，药水的 BUFF，贴了一头，有个 Z 捣乱，我们组了个团，接着引发一场 LM 和 BL 的大混战。。。

记得当年 ZG，ALX，大奥，3 大战场上的反复推动，为了荣誉而战，没有跨服，只是单纯的为了自己阵营的荣誉而战。第一次大奥打了足足 3 天，所有 NPC 除了双方老大全死，骑兵出了一次又一次，突击队，机器人，大树，大石头人，一次次的出击，抢占每一个墓地，当对方老大被打死时候，全服务器欢呼了。

记得当年第一次屠城，那时我是一 BL 的小 SM，跟着团长，冲进 LM 铁炉堡，不明白道路，只会跟着团长跑，团长说打，我就加血，然后稀里糊涂的死掉，然后跟跑尸体的跑进去。。。

记得当年打本时候，会里突然有人喊，有人在杀领袖，团长一声令下，开门回家保护老大，一场混站，无数人被卡掉，登上，卡掉，FWQ 当机。我们胜利了，那时我们心中的自豪。

记得当年听说萨尔被杀的时候（那时我是 BL）心中无尽的痛苦，一帮人集中在奥，无数人在怒吼，一个个团队，送死一样冲向了铁和暴风。。。

记得当年 40 人开荒 MC，一次次倒在 BOSS 的脚下，拿个 BOSS 身下，没有数不尽的尸体。TB 团在 MC 门口的大混战，满地的白骨，最后是主力团出动大决战。。。

记得当年为了推到老 10，大螺丝，我们的 MT 堆到 300 多火炕，然后全团去黑上加火炕 BUFF，一队进一队出，加好，进本，团灭。跑尸体再灭。。。

记得当年老 10 出了橙锤，团长给了个 SM，然后那个 SM 洗了增强，我们最大的乐趣就变成了看橙锤 SM 躺在地上，于是地板王诞生了。。。

记得当年开荒 BWL 那条小红龙挡住了我们无数工会前进的梦想，我跟随一个又一个的团长止步在这条红龙面前，记得在全民 MC 的时代，我们终于过了红龙，那一刻我们泪流满面。

记得当年开荒 TAQ，公主，双帝，让我们一次次的活动，灭到恶心，灭到团散。灭到每个人都能说出每个阶段所有职业应该做的事情。

记得当年 NAXX 开本，我们一帮人早早做好门任务，组团进去送死，只是为了看看里面的样子，因为，我们的工会打不到那里。

记得 TBC 开后 NAXX 的 FB 被移除时候，我们会长跟我说，我们开荒 NAXX 的梦想灭了。直到现在，我依旧不能触摸那里，只能从图片上抚摸那些让我心动的 BOSS 和掉路。

记得 TBC 开荒 KLZ，馆长前的一次次灭团，被王子一次次点倒。。。GLR 和 MSLD 的一次次灭团，一个个 BOSS 的声音如在耳边回响。

记得 TBC 开荒风暴王子，那一次次的飞天，一次次的捡起地上的橙色武器，那激动的无以名状，还有人第一次来捡起东西直接就炉石回沙了。。。

记得 TBC 开荒瓦 MM，2 阶段满眼的怪的，无尽的混乱和不知所措。

记得当年开荒 BT，祖母，F4，蛋蛋，每个 BOSS 都让我们每个人费劲全力，研究，思考。。。

记得开荒 SW 机器人，蓝龙，布胖，双子，穆鲁，蛋蛋，哪个 BOSS，哪个小怪不集中了我们的汗水与泪水。。。

记得做老弗丁的爱与家庭系列任务，看到最后老弗丁跪在自己儿子面前说看看你们对我儿子做了什么的时候，我泪流满面。

记得在 STSM 里面的那个人质的呐喊吗？我死不足惜，愿圣光永远照耀大地！那一刻我被圣光感动了，建立了我第一个 QS 号，进入了 LM，只为感受那一缕圣光的温柔。

记得黑龙 MM 门任务钥匙的系列任务吗？LM 的系列任务，让人感动的落泪，无数泪水为那个老将军而流。BL 的系列任务，为找到雷克萨，在凄凉之地跑断了腿。

记得黑暗深渊这个 FB 吗？无数小队在里面迷路，装备死红，最后只能炉石回家，里面无数的 BOSS 和弯路，到现在我也没有走全过。

记得死亡矿井的任务链了吗？里面只是些被暴风贵族压迫，而走投无路的可怜人，同情还是其他，心里五味陈杂。。。

记得 AQL 开门的时候，LM,BL 在门口一起等待英雄的出现，那个宏大的场面至今仿佛在眼前，只要见过一次，一辈子都不会忘记的。。

记得血色修道院里的狗男女吗？莫格莱尼，这个杀害了自己的父亲的领袖，被杀死，然后，一个女牧师出来了，打不过咱们，接着一招无视所有技能的大睡眠，然后就是那经典的台词“复活吧，我的勇士！”“为你而战，我的女士”。。。

记得 AQL 废墟里的狗头人吗？那一个个水晶，那个熟悉的呐喊，倒下后的“我败了”的那声充满无以名状的呐喊。..

记得 ZG 的老虎和龙吗？记得那些流浪在世界各地的巨魔营地，那个痛苦的，曾经辉煌过的巨魔部族如夕阳残破，老沃金的叹息，巨魔部族一次次为了恢复昔日荣耀而战，而挣扎，看着赞达拉部族的落雨，一个巨魔的泪。。

太多太多了，洛丹伦的日落，ALX 的日出，闪金镇的小牛，太多的景色你没看到，你错过了 WOW 真正的风景，这不是在炫耀，而是在诉说，WOW 是个有太多东西的游戏，有时候我真真感受到了里面的世界，而我只是那里的一朵浮萍。。

Testimonial 94

Testimonial 94

At this age which has no heroes and no legends, individual lives become meaningless. And with the time going faster and faster and we cannot stop it and cannot control it, many people began to have the idea to refuse growing up. They want to go back to the old times, but the time tunnel behind them has already closed and shut off.

But the appearance of WoW was like an opening of a new time tunnel.

It can take you into a forested world which has dangers as well as miracles. In this world it has trees, magic, endless joys and friends. It's like a precious seed you sow in your childhood that grows out from the soil and becomes green. Forgotten but never disappeared, this group of people with their dreams went beyond the limits of age, sex, religion and districts and allied in this world. They went back to the arcaded forest that is forbidden in their deep hearts and began searching for their dream world.

[1]WoW is a reflection of a real world.

[2]It's another fair society. It's a society that is away from reality.

The world in Azeroth is just like this real world. It has its own unique history.

[3]In this world everybody is equal. Even though everybody is still weak, as in the real world, and only teamwork can solve the tasks that one cannot do alone. And this world is very fair. No matter whether you are an adult or a child we are standing at the same starting point and obeying the same rules. As long as you have ability, wisdom, and perseverance you shall see your victory in the game you honor.

In the real world we are being educated on what can be done, what cannot be done. But in games we can spread out our wings and do what we want to do, what we love to do, and we don't need to worry about the dilemmas in the real world. And we can fill up the void we have in the real world.

[4] In this magic world because we need to cooperate we became generous and love to help. Because of the low-punishment of death we became brave and ready to [5]sacrifice. Because of the powerfulness of the monsters we began to treat others with broad minds.

Life is just like a dream and time waits for no one. We live this kind of mood. Being poor, being rich, gaining or losing, all these are just fleeing clouds. Think about it. No matter if it's yesterday

[1] WoW is like real world
[2] Fairness
[3] Fairness
[4] Care
[5] In-group

or today or tomorrow, if you feel good and happy then it is a good day. Let us play the game. Let us have more love, [6]purity, trust, sincerity and happiness in WoW. And the slogan of WoW 'do something you've never done before.' [7]To change the world starts with changing yourself. Being a little simpler or a little more direct or casual a little more playful, a little cooler, a little stupider.

在这个没有英雄、没有传奇的年代，个体生命变得无限卑微，每天伴随着时间的高速旋转，无法停止更无从把握，由于很多人便产生了拒绝长大的念头，渴望重回远古的过去——可惜，时光的大门已经在身后关上。

而魔兽世界的出现，就如同突然打开了一扇时光之穴的大门。

它可以带你进入到一个充满危险和奇迹的丛林世界，在这个世界里不但有参天的古树，神奇的魔法，而且有无数的欢乐和无数的朋友。它就像是童年播下的一粒弥足珍贵的种子，在阳光下破土，静静生长，生机盎然。虽然曾经遗忘，却从未消失。于是，一群拥有梦想的人，超越了年龄、性别、民族、地区的阻碍，大家一起在网络这个虚拟的世界结成联盟，回到了内心深处的远古森林，开始了寻找梦中世界的苦旅。

魔兽世界其实就是一个真实世界的投影……

它是另一个公平的社会,远离现实的社会……

艾泽拉斯的世界就如同这个真实世界一样，有着自己独特而连贯历史的世界。

在这个虚拟的世界里大家都是平等的，虽然在这个虚幻的世界里一个人同样是弱小的，只有团队的配合才能完成一个人不可能完成的任务。但这个世界又是非常公平的，无论你是成年人还是一个小孩，大家都站在一个共同的起点,遵守同样的规则,只要你有能力、有智慧、有毅力就一定能见证自己的胜利,获得属于自己的荣耀。

在真实世界里，我们从小就被教育什么事能做，什么事情不能做……而在游戏里我们可以放开手脚，做自己想做的事，做自己爱做的事。可以不用为现实的困境而担忧，填补自己在现实中的空虚。

在这个魔法的世界里，因为团队职业互补的需要，我们变得乐于助人慷慨大方；因为死亡的超低惩罚，我们变得英勇无畏，乐于牺牲；因为怪物的强悍，我们变得开始善待他人胸怀宽广。

[6] Purity
[7] Transformation

时光无情，人生如梦，其实人活着是一种心情，穷也好，富也好，得也好，失也好，一切都是过眼云烟，想想，不管昨天今天明天能豁然开朗就是美好的一天。

让我们一起游戏吧，让这个魔法的世界中更多点爱、纯洁、信任、真诚与快乐。

哈哈！魔兽的口号就是：做你从未做过的事！

改变世界从改变自己开始吧。

简单一点。直接一点。随意一点。游戏一点。酷一点。傻一点。

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