

# The Daedalus Project

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by Nicholas Yee

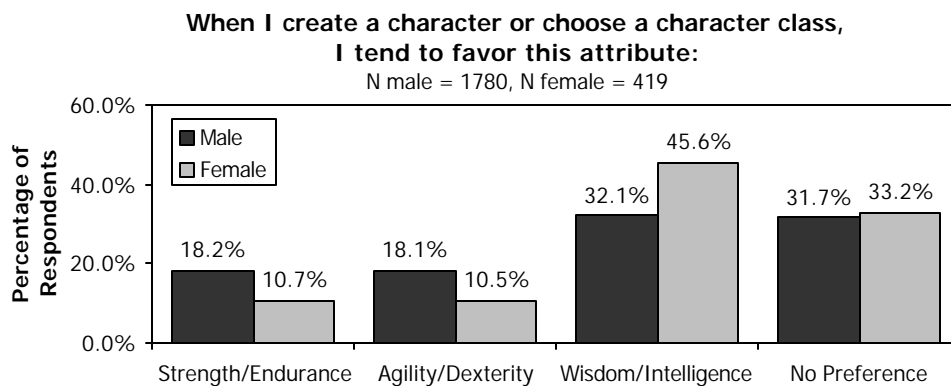
(<http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus>)

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## The Demographics of Character Creation

MMORPGs are designed to elicit personal and emotional investment. On a superficial level, we can point to the time investment that many MMORPG players put into these immersive worlds. On a deeper level, we can point to how players derive tremendous satisfaction and infuriation from their character's successes and failures. And because players are personally invested in the character and the world, every decision they make within the construct becomes personally revealing.

Let's consider a fairly crude example of getting at the complexity of projection. Most games make the character creation process as elaborate and fun as possible – an attempt to create a sense of uniqueness and individuality that is entirely yours. In a recent survey, respondents were asked to select the attributes they favored most in character creation among 4 choices. The gender differences were significant and for the most part expected.



Male players favor physical attributes that have an effect in physical combat, while female players tend to favor mental attributes that contribute to support spells and non-physical combat. Looking at the age differences, we find that younger players tend to prefer the STR/END and DEX/AGI while older players favor WIS/INT.

Favored Attribute and Age Ranks					
N = 2190					
	STR/END	AGI/DEX	WIS/INT	No Pref.	N
12-17	23.6%	21.6%	23.6%	31.3%	297
18-22	23.4%	18.6%	26.6%	31.4%	436
23-28	18.2%	15.1%	32.3%	34.5%	545
29-35	11.2%	16.8%	35.2%	36.9%	529
> 35	9.1%	11.5%	40.7%	38.6%	383

This has fairly interesting implications in terms of the individuals that make up a group in the game. The data suggests that the primary and secondary tank classes tend to be composed of younger players, while the offensive and support spell-casters tend to be composed of older players.

But the data on age differences is itself interesting. Notice that there is not much differentiation among attribute preference among players between the ages of 12-17, and that the differentiation occurs slowly after this point – the preference for STR/END and AGI/DEX decreases while the preference for WIS/INT increases.

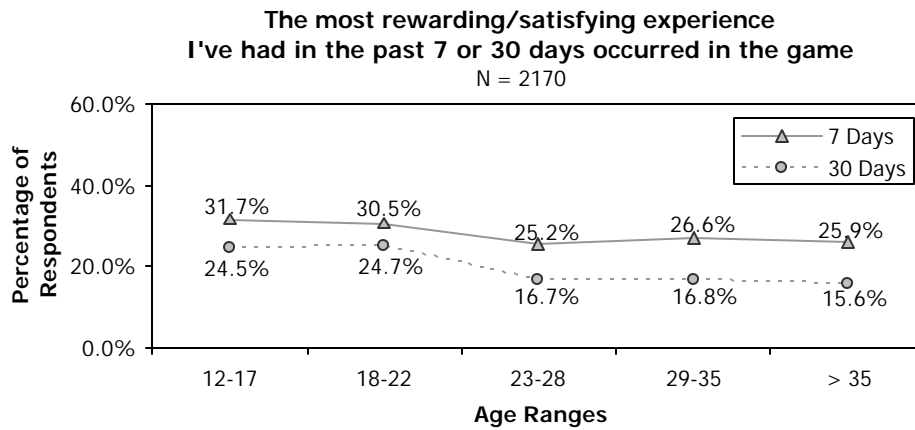
As MMORPGs become more sophisticated and allow more character customization and in-game social decisions, the ability for these environments to elicit personally revealing information increases. As opposed to traditional techniques for projective personality testing (like the Rorschach inkblot test), the MMORPG also gives us an existing computerized framework for easily collecting this data. One could easily imagine tapping MMORPGs for personality assessment and screening techniques in the future.

## MMORPGs - A Love-Hate Relationship

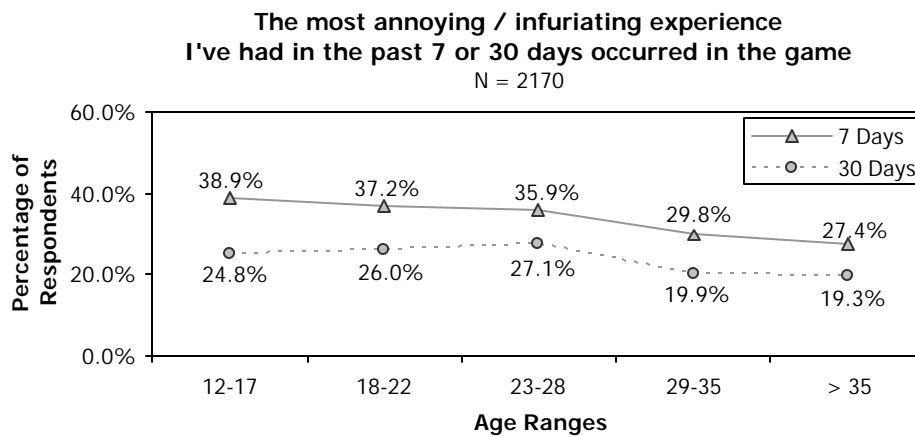
Subscribing to an MMORPG is like having a relationship in many ways. It demands a lot of time and a lot of personal and emotional investment. And because it'll inevitably make other people in your life jealous of the relationship you have with it.

But on a more serious note, subscribing to an MMORPG is like a love-hate relationship in that players can derive both incredible satisfaction and agony from their game-play. In a recent survey, players were asked whether the most satisfying experience in their lives over the past 7 and 30 days occurred in the game or in real life. On average, about 27% of players indicated that the most satisfying experience over the past 7 days occurred in the game, and 18% of players

indicated the same when the wording was changed to “over the past 30 days”. Younger players were more likely to indicate that the most satisfying experience over the past 7 or 30 days occurred in the game. There were no gender differences.



Players were then asked whether the most annoying or infuriating event they had experienced over the past 7 or 30 days occurred in the game or in real life. On average, about 33% of players indicated that the most infuriating experience over the past 7 days occurred in the game, and 23% of players indicated the same when the wording was changed to “over the past 30 days”. It’s interesting that players seem to experience more infuriating than rewarding experiences, and yet the game is still appealing. Younger players were more likely to indicate that the most infuriating experience over the past 7 or 30 days occurred in the game. There were no gender differences.

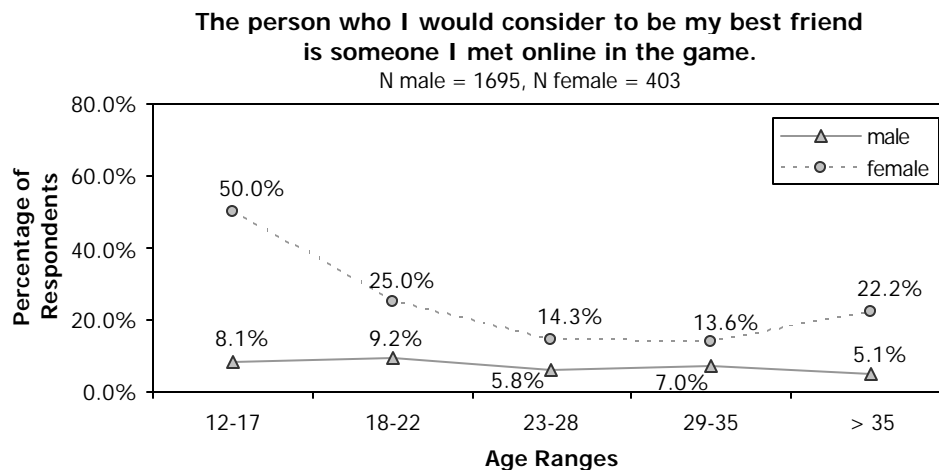


These two sets of data hint at the degree of personal and emotional investment that players put into these immersive worlds, and the degree to which they are willing to revel and suffer in these digital constructs. And ultimately, part of why MMORPGs are so seductive is because they are able to elicit such strong emotional responses from us – whether good or bad, and somehow even though there are days you writhe in agony from a fatal loss, you keep coming back for a chance at the heroic victory.

## My Best Friend

It surprises many non-gamers as well as some gamers that players can make good friends online. After all, how do you really get to know someone when everyone is pretending to be someone else? Part of the answer is that the pretense of pretending to be someone else allows many individuals to shed the guises they wear in real life, and become more of who they really are. A fuller exploration of the reasons why strong bonds form in MMORPGs can be found in this presentation. (<http://www.nickyee.com/hub/relationships/intro.html>)

When players were asked whether the person they would consider to be their best friend was someone they met online in the game, 7% of male players and 19% of female players indicated that this was the case. The age differences were quite striking. While male players across all ages tended to show a stable 5-9% range, female players revealed a striking age difference. The prevalence of this phenomenon is highest among 12-17 year old female players and then declines until it hits a trough among 29-35 year old female players and then rises slightly among female players over 35 years of age.



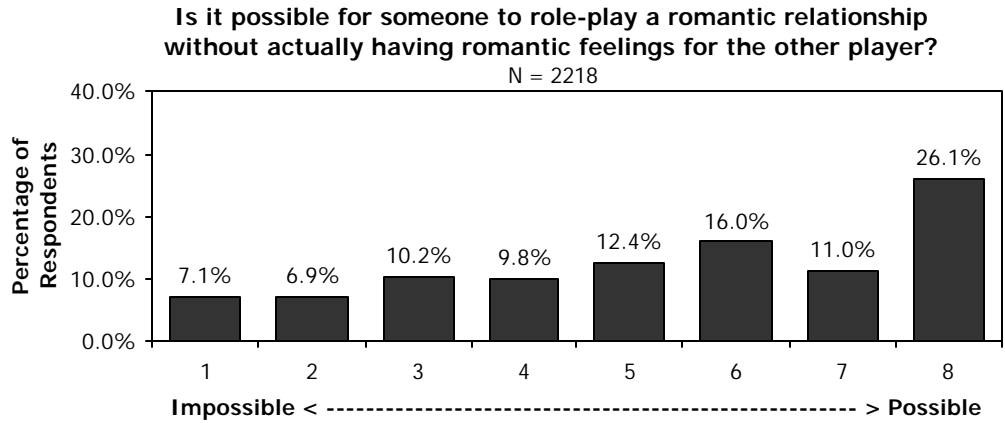
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## Player polls on 3 issues

Many interesting questions and issues arise from MMORPGs and the individuals who inhabit these immersive worlds, and sometimes the attitudes and opinions of players towards these issues are in and of themselves interesting.

The chart below shows the attitudes of players with regards to whether characters can fall in love without the players falling in love as well. While players tended to indicate that it is possible for

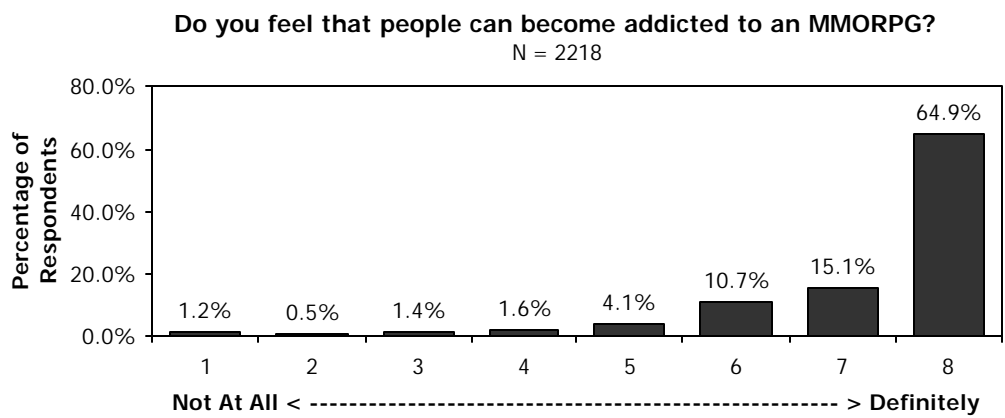
players to role-play a romantic relationship without actually having romantic feelings for another player, about one-third of players leaned towards the other side.

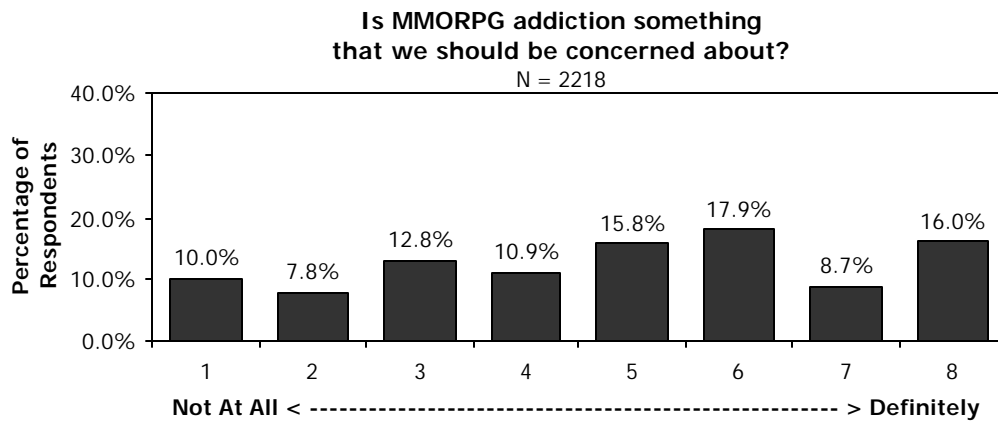


**Question to Readers:** Why is it possible or impossible for players to role-play a romantic relationship without actually romantic feelings for other players?

The following pair of charts reveals an interesting pattern. While almost all MMORPG players agree that an individual can become addicted to an MMORPG, they are in complete disagreement as to whether this addiction is something we should be concerned about. The agreement of the first chart is in complete contrast with the disagreement in the second chart.

In other words, when we discuss MMORPG addiction, the question isn't whether it exists, but whether it is more or less serious than other addictions and how much attention we should pay to MMORPG addiction in relation to other addictions we already know about.





**Question to Readers:** How serious is MMORPG addiction? Or rather, how serious could it become as MMORPGs become more prevalent? Should it be considered a real medical/psychological condition?

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### An Ethnography of MMORPG Weddings

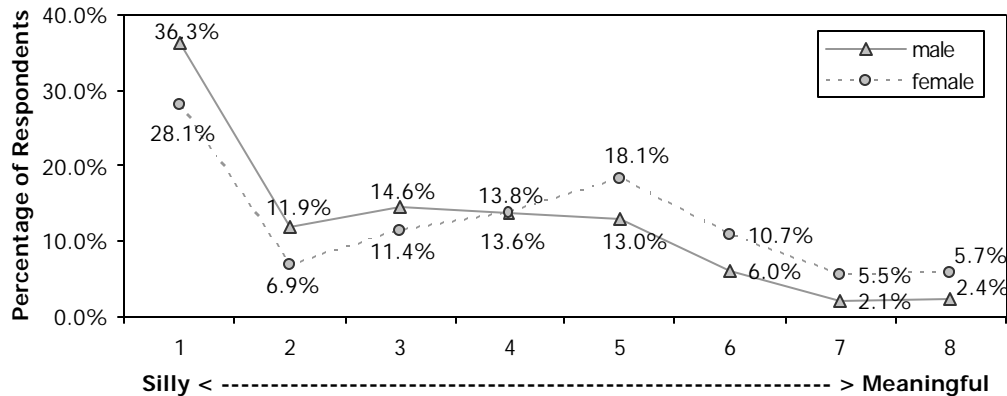
About 10% of male players and 33% of female players have married online. About 1% of male players and 10% of female players have married online more than once.

I've married someone online N = 2187		
	Male	Female
<b>No</b>	90.1%	66.8%
<b>Yes, but just once</b>	8.7%	23.2%
<b>Yes, more than once</b>	1.2%	10.1%

Most MMORPG players feel that getting married online is silly. Male players were more likely than female players to feel that getting married online is silly.

### Getting Married Online Is ...

N male = 1778, N female = 420



Part of why so many people think MMORPG weddings are silly is that they feel it is meant as a counterpart or parallel of a real world wedding, as if the digital wedding is trying to accomplish what a real world wedding does – a commitment between a man and a woman that leads to the beginning of a family. In this sense, of course the digital wedding is silly, but that's not what the virtual wedding is supposed to do. A virtual wedding isn't an attempt to hi-jack a real life ritual as much as it is a ritual that has evolved and taken on its own significance in a virtual world. In the same way that words and dialect take on their own cultural meaning and bestow cultural identity on its speakers, a virtual wedding is a cultural phenomenon that establishes a kind of digital identity for these virtual communities.

In fact, as the following stories demonstrate, a virtual wedding is a combination of social entertainment, extensive role-playing and sometimes political intrigue. Instead of thinking of a virtual wedding as the corrupt bastard child of a real world contractual agreement, the virtual wedding should be considered as an elaborate form of collaborative digital story-telling – a ritual of its own right that fulfills a completely different purpose.

The following narratives highlight the collaborative story-telling function of virtual weddings:

*My friend and I were married in game once. It was a hoot. I am female in RL and play a male char, and he is male in RL and plays a female char, so that role playing was fun. Our guild leader made everyone remove their head gear and disarm their weapons before the ceremony, and then read these very beautiful vows that she had written. They were full of Norrath imagery and very well done, I was impressed. During the ceremony attendants were role playing via emotes \*\*Sarah sniffles and looks for a handkerchief\*\* \*\*Korlon hands Sarah a piece of gnoll fur\*\* That kind of*

*thing. It was great role playing fun. Then everyone gave us gifts and we handed out the booze, and everyone got drunk and danced and made each other levitate and what not. It was very silly and fun. That guild had several weddings, and they were some of the best times I've had in the game. That guild broke up though, I miss them. Its also fun because now when we see each other in game on those chars my friend and I can be like, 'Oh damn, there's my wife. Hi honey.' \*\*rolls his eyes\*\* or some such role playing nonsense. He has another char that he role plays as my Mom, that is even more role play fun. =) [EQ, F, 33]*

*I married my boyfriend online in 1999 and we were married in reality in 2001. The wedding was held in a special chapel in the game and a 'Seer' preformed the ceremony, with much pomp and circumstance. We received specially engraved wedding rings which are blessed and cannot be lost should our characters die. A guild we often interact with and role play with arrived. Our guild is the 'good guys' guild and theirs the 'bad guys' guild. They roleplayed a small disruption, but nothing to spoil the day, and we had a really great time. Then I was kidnapped away during the feast and my beloved had to follow clues and he and the wedding guests set out in search parties to find me. After a little searching they found more clues which eventually led him to me. He had to fight his way past some of the 'bad guys' guild to rescue me and take me away to our honeymoon. It was great fun and I will always cherish it. [DAOC/UO, F, 40]*

*My first wedding was very special. I married Zexis Tal 'Daris. A GM friend of mine took us around to various places that we considered for our wedding. On a specific date, our friends and guild members met us by being summoned and a gm friend who was a cleric 'married' us. Afterwards, we had wedding cake and lots of ale etc. We had no unruly nor unexpected guests. It was a very nice experience. My second wedding was several years later after my first virtual husband had left the game. It was very romantic. He asked me to marry him at sunset on the Oasis beach. His name is Tobie Baine. The location was special, in that we were married on the Oasis beach where he had asked me to marry him. Our guildmaster married us and it was delightful. There were no special vows really, but I kept going linkdead =) No unruly guests, but interestingly, my previous online husband showed up unexpectedly and seemed to have a bit of a difficult time with this wedding. It didn't bother me and he behaved himself. Tobie and I have remained friends now since our characters were both in our early teens. They are now both 65, but he no longer raids with the group we used to raid with. He is currently in college and can't keep the raid schedule and do well in*



*school. We have kept touch by email even when one of us has taken a break. We still have a good friendship. I also remain in contact with my first husband by email and by instant messaging. Oh! Interesting story =) With my second husband, Tobie, we were raiding together the day after the wedding and I got charmed and killed him. He said that he joked that it didn't bode well for the marriage when the bride kills the groom the day after the wedding =) [EQ, F, 51]*

*Some months after we became involved IRL we married our characters in the game. It was a full guild wedding. We actually had special outfits we'd acquired (pity the male high elf cleric got to wear white while the female woodelf druid had to settle for bejeweled brown leathers-- Velious Models). I was at his place in Toronto and we had major problems with keeping two machines connected-- I kept LDing every couple of minutes. We wound up on the phone with the guildleader (who's a computer person) trying to coordinate everything. Wedding was done in increments until I LDd again. We had picked the location for ease of access, safety for guests, and beauty: the shoreline south of the port in ButcherBlock Mts. Would have preferred the dock in Lake Rathe on the RM side but it's too hard to get to. We wrote our vows in advance, and our 'best man' had a speech prepared as well. Most of our friends attended, the ceremony was performed by the guild's ArchBishop Ldara and leader, Prince Zackary. Some people gave up raids with their guilds to attend. Pictures posted on guild website (along w/ several other weddings of guildmembers who are RL couples) at <http://sofeq.sofguild.com/scenes/scenes15.htm> The rainbow of spell effects coordinated by our friend Katrinz afterwards is one of my favorite memories. [EQ, F, 59]*

Other weddings are more laden with humor:

*I've been married twice. Once to a very good friend who I met very early in the game. We were married near a large arena by a lake. The vows were strange, because normally people dont think of a pair of dark elf shadow knights to be all happy happy love love. O\_o But you know, it was your normal evil wedding with vows about walking the path of darkness with each other and slaying the innocent, ect. LOL. Followed by a drunken guild fight in the arena. (What would you expect from a PvP guild?) The second time was less fun. It was in a dull place that I didnt pick. The vows were nothing to remember. I didnt enjoy it very much. After we went to a dungeon that I also didnt pick, to camp something that he wanted. The start of a very unhappy EQ/RL relationship. One wedding I remember well actually wasnt my own, but a*

*friends. It was in a city, and a guard came by and started to attack some guests as the vows were being said, it was pretty interesting. [EQ, F, 17]*

*Highlights of the wedding? It was a cute ceremony, I guess. I got a ring that one of my alts still wears. I got married to my old guild leader, the location was the docks at Freeport. We all went and 'got a hotel room' in Freeport and started boozing it up. The funniest part: a friend of mine who didn't want me to get 'married' to this guy, sends my RL boyfriend (we weren't dating at the time though) a tell sayin 'i hope it friggin rains' and it started raining. [EQ, F, 22]*

*Yes I have been married 3 times, the first 2 times just a roleplay arrangement. The first wedding my husband got drunk and fell in some water and drowned. The second was supposed to be in my favorite place in lesser fay fairy ring, sadly before i arrived the whole wedding party was wiped out by the corrupted horse so the venue had to be changed. But the most meaningful was the third time because I had truly fell in love and now am married to this many in many different lives. [EQ, F, 38]*

And finally, sometimes weddings fulfill political purposes:

*I have married someone in game. It was partially a political move (believe it or not....) to get me into a pretty selective high end raiding guild that had closed off its application process. I got married to a long time friend. We said pagan-like vows to each other (as I wanted to roleplay it as much as possible ... and had been to previous weddings that modeled the american-christian weddings services ... that bugged me to no end ... as he is korean-american and I am jewish-american it made sense to do it this way) There was a lot of alcohol drinking and food eating. We got married in Lake Rathe....a place we both picked out. [EQ, F, 29]*

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## **The Rise and Fall of Guilds**

The management and organization of a guild is usually more work than most guild leaders initially realize. The personality conflicts, cliques, backstabbing, deliberations and other tensions that arise in the everyday management of a guild oftentimes feel out of place in what is supposed to be a form of entertainment. The following narratives highlight the experiences of MMORPG players who have watched guilds fracture or dissipate, and the lessons these individuals learned.

These stories show that guild management in MMORPGs is a much more elaborate and complex task than most realize.

One common dilemma that causes most guilds to fracture is the tension between power and casual players – the former wanting to carry out more difficult raids while the latter being perfectly happy the way things are. Eventually, this unresolved tension causes the guild to either split or fall apart altogether.

*We are a family-type guild. Our ideals are to help others, especially guild members, as much as we can, to have fun, and to not be a prick. However, since our only rule is to not be a prick, we have had a few major problems. Part of it is that we are not a very large guild and once people reach a certain level and have attained their epic, they usually leave for a higher tier guild to do things that we can't or don't do as a guild. The same issues keep creating the same problems. Mostly members feeling like they have been left out or feeling like we don't do enough high-level stuff. We have to work the issue out each time it happens and we usually lose several members. It seems that every three to six months, we lose about 30% of our guild. A couple leave because of issues they feel we don't resolve, others because they want to do bigger things than what the guild is doing. Each time we lose people or have issue come up, we have to work through it and we come out with our ideals intact. There have been a couple close calls where the guild leader was about to disband the guild. It is a difficult process made even more complicated by our wish for no rules (other than our don't be a prick rule), member's differing maturity levels (we have our most difficulty and explosive problems with college students), and everyone's different interpretation of what is wrong and what is right. [EQ, F, 26]*

*Our guild has been attempting to challenge the Sony/Verant stereotype by being a family-oriented guild that nonetheless succeeds in the high-end game. Unfortunately, we have suffered for years from the rollercoaster which occurs when a push to emphasize family values bumps heads with the need to make decisions to further military/strategic goals. We go through periods of build-up and success, then someone gets what I affectionately call 'uber disease' and loses sight of the fact that we are in our guild as opposed to another is because we don't choose to raid 24-7-365 or make the acquisition of 'Phat L3wt' our raison d'etre. During these times, people leave in a huff (although its amazing how many people \*lie\* about their reasons for leaving rather than just say they are leaving because they are unhappy we aren't moving fast enough for their taste. You sooner or later -- usually sooner -- find out the truth when*

*you see them raiding the server's uber the next day and members soon thereafter (even though they told you they were just 'taking a break from the game' but needed for some reason to untag while they did it LOL). Usually their social clique follows, and there is a period of contraction with a loss of guild capability. Followed by, of course, reflection and rebuilding with a core of old die-hards and new members. We half-jokingly refer to ourselves as a training guild at this point. Some of us are accepting that this will be ongoing and may be something that we cannot ever permanently change, because people change in their approach to EQ as they level. But we're still thinking about how we can change this phenomena, rather than do what 99% of non-powergamer folks do -- abandon raiding/high end gaming or abandon the friendship/value system that brought them together in the first place. Some of us 'old-timers' are getting weary of the cycle and the emotional toll that it takes on those who choose to remain loyal to a guild over a long period of time. [EQ, F, 41]*

Another common problem is clique formation that eventually polarizes and splits the guild along one final disagreement.

*I experienced the complete implosion of an 'up and coming' guild on my server. Basically, the guild leader took some time off and the guild began to split into rival cliques/factions each out to further their own gains rather than benefit the guild as a whole. Raids became more and more disorganized, morale became low, attendance low, and we found ourselves getting repeatedly beat by creatures we had once dominated. People began leaving in droves, and the guild eventually fell apart completely when the leader finally returned and saw the state of things. He tried to patch things up, but it was too late. The guild was soon dissolved. To this day (almost a year later) there are still people from the old guild that remain on my ignore list... [EQ, M, 33]*

*Yes. I was once in a large guild that had a smaller clique within it. This clique was made up of the guild leader and his close friends, all high-level characters who tended to be the ones who ran guild events. So when on raids, these people tended to be the ones who made decisions about who got what items that dropped. 90% of the time, it was someone in the clique who got the item. This ended up destroying the guild. There were MANY officers who weren't in the clique, but who were aware of what was going on. The guild ended up completely falling apart, and no longer exists today. [EQ, F, 33]*

*There was a few times in this guild that there was huge debates that left a negative impact on the guild. The one that sticks in my mind the most was shortly after I joined the guild, our GL was a college student that when EQ first started he played all the time. As time in school went by he realized that he needed to cut back on his play time. Some of the people in the guild felt that our GL should relinquish his title since he wasn't going to be in game 24/7 (so to speak). Our GI was a very good GI and handled all problems in a timely matter and made sure that everyone in the guild was happy. When he got wind of this dispute about his availability to the game he promptly posted a thread to our guild message boards about the situation. He asked all guild members to post a reply about their truthful feelings on the matter. The guild was pretty much split down the middle in regards to him remaining the GL or stepping down. Some of the people from the stepping down side were so offended that people were against them in this issue that it caused a lot of heated debates in game and out. Finally when things seemed to have calmed down about the situation we held a guild meeting for people to vote on the issue. Well as it turned out the people in support of our GL was stronger then what we believed and it was voted that he would stay in his position. This infuriated the other people so much that when all was said and done they all left the guild because of it. [EQ, F, 35]*

There are times when disagreement on one single issue suddenly polarizes the group. The most common issue that this centers on is loot assignment.

*Guilds are always faced with political strife. The main issue that seems to appear for most raiding guilds is the distribution of loot. Several guilds have gone to a point based system which awards points based upon participation in sucessful raids that can be used to bid on items that drop during guild raid events. However, for many guilds the point system is too complex and time intensive to be properly utilized. Some guilds use the CAWU method which basically means 'can and will use'. This method allows any player that can and will use the item to put their name in for an open roll. This system causes a lot of turmoil because it comes down to the luck of the roll. A casual player who only shows up to one or two raids can walk away with an incredible item while the seasoned veteran who spends night and day raiding with the guild goes home with nothing. Personally I believe that CAWU should be left to groups and pick-up raids and has no place in guild run raids. The system that my guild uses is the council system. In that system the guild officers and 2 randomly chosen members (a total of 6) decide from the list of those that would like the item, who should receive it based on participation, attitude, last time they recieved loot, etc. However, every*

*system can fail and has its drawbacks. Just last night we had one of our most veteran members disband from the guild because a breastplate that he wanted went to a guild member who was much younger in the guild. The belief that he had 'earned' it in his eyes outweighed the unanimous decision of the council who awarded it to the younger, and honestly more needing player. Since the veteran member disbanded last night there has been a myriad of posts, /tells, and guild chat pointing fingers and asking questions. Only from experience do I know that this will not be over for days and even weeks to come. [EQ, M , 28]*

*A guild I was once in (for about a year), split due to internal debate on the direction of the guild as a whole. Some people played a lot and put in a huge amount of effort to advance the guild as a whole, and then there were the more casual players who didnt do as much towards this. In order to advance the guild as a whole, and provide more equipment and more engaging experiences for everyone, it is generally considered that Merit Loot, ie giving certain items to the people who can use them to the greatest effect (actually merit just means giving it to a person you choose, but it's usually to the best use, or most deserving due to time put in person), is the best way to help advance your guild if equipment is scarce. Giving the Big Really Protective Breastplate to your number one Warrior who attends every fight, and is always the one getting beating up and keeping to monster from eating everyone else, is a good idea. the alternative to this, Random loot, is where everyone who attends gets to roll a dice (Everquest has a facility for this) and whoever rolls highest wins the item. In this scenario, the Big Really Protective Breastplate could maybe go to a Rogue for example (who if they are doing their job right shouldnt be getting hit anyway), or say a Warrior who might play once a week. In this example, this nice piece of equipment, which could have enabled your main Warrior to do his job even better, meaning your guild succeeds more at raids and gets even MORE loot, has now been given to someone where it will not benefit the guild in any way.*

*Most high end guilds go in for Merit loot over Random loot, as it is the only way to move the guild forward. Anyway. The casual people in my guild were all for Random loot, as it meant they might get something, improving themselves in the short term, while stopping the guild improving in the long term, where it might have provided loot for all. the people who played every day and were actually making things happen and being the living heart and soul of the guild, were more for merit, in order to equip the people in the line of fire, in order to enable the guild to do bigger and better things, and quite frankly to reward all the hard work and effort of the people who consistently*

*did their best for the good of the guild (the officers and guild leader were on the Merit loot side of things). The casual players accused the dedicated players of being greedy, officers not doing enough work to improve the guild (when in fact they were working their arses off), casual players were not pulling their weight when online, and only attending raids where they knew something would drop that they personally wanted. The leadership then offered to put up a poll of how things should advance. Everyone was given the opportunity to give ideas for inclusion in the poll for a week beforehand, so that everyone's input could be gotten. The poll was held, and the large majority was in favour of Merit loot.*

*Naturally, the very same hour, one of the people who had voted for the continuance of Random loot (know this from knowing the person, the results were anonymously displayed of course) cried that the poll was obviously rigged and the choices were unfair, even though they had had a whole week to include their own ideas (which, surprisingly, they had not). They further accused the officers and guild leadership of being charlatans, with no interest in helping anyone but themselves. Unsurprisingly, after many months of abuse, our guild leader called their bluff and said that they could run the guild any way they wanted, because he was leaving. Probably about 75% of the guild left with him, from which he forged a new guild, which is currently going strong, and of which I am a part. Merit loot is currently in use. The old guild is falling apart very badly indeed, which i am very happy to laugh gleefully about, as the cretins got what was coming to them. Incidentally, a good portion of the people left behind were the ones who enjoyed shitstirring (if this term is not used outside of England, it means to cause trouble by making snide comments, encouraging arguments, and trying to set people against each other). This was another part of why the guild split, due to constant bickering and backbiting between some members, generally started off by these individuals. [EQ, F, 22]*

Other incidents that lead to guild splintering are caused by strong personalities within the guild that inevitably causes a lot of drama.

*The first incident was that a member who was not very well liked, was accused by the guildmaster of trying to convince someone to join him in his travels after he had heard the guildmaster in guildchat ask that person to join a GUILD GROUP SOMEWHERE ELSE BECAUSE THEY WERE NEEDED THERE. No one could convince the guildmaster otherwise.. that it was not intentional. He wanted the person thrown out of the guild, but he wouldn't do it himself and had the guild council and officers met him where this*

person was and vote on throwing him out.. the vote was to throw him out, but the guildmaster would not tell him hisself.. instead he made an officer do it. That officer did not like having to do it but did as he was told and was upset by the whole affair. The very next day, the guildmaster, who I was supposed to be marrying in game soon, also let me know that cyber sex was required to be his wife. Being so upset I got my private messages and guildchat mixed up.. the whole guild heard my reply to him and one by one quit the guild. By the end of the day there was no one left in that guild except the guildmaster. A few of us were hunting together in the forrest, that guildmaster came near our location to commit suicide, to be sure we all saw his death in our info panel. He had pleaded all day that he was wrong and sorry but no one wanted to hear it, so he killed the character off. [DAOC, f, 51]

I left a guild once because the guild leadership did not seem to understand that real life was more important than playing the game (my husband got sworn at because we had plans on New Year's Day -- plans we told them about in advance when they first mentioned wanting to raid that day -- because we wouldn't change those plans to attend the raid!). I left guilds twice because the guild leadership seemed to think what they wanted for themselves was more important than the rest of the guild -- one guild leader had a tendency to cyber all the female members of the guild (and some that weren't members), all while pretending to have a 'meaningful relationship' with them and trying to hide the fact he was cybering more than just that one person. Another guild recruiter (a guild I never joined) did pretty much the same thing to recruits -- you were 'guaranteed' an in (top guild on the server) if he decided he 'liked' you.

Another problem was a guild where the leadership decided their opinions were the only ones that mattered. They would do things on the spur of the moment (guildremove or take away board access) without explanation, leaving people who were 'friends' of that person to try to find out what was going on. They would 'justify' it by saying they did what they thought was necessary for the guild... The very first guild I was in, the guild leader was EQ-married to what I later found out was an emotionally unstable woman. She would have these fits where she would decide somebody in the guild was 'against her', and would make the guildleader get rid of them. I saw it happen to a couple of other people, so I was talking to some of the other guildies about it, trying to decide whether it would be a good idea to move on, guild-wise. She found out about it, so I became her next target. I removed myself, a lot of the guild followed because one of the original members got pissed about what happened and she took him (level 20 or so at the time?) to the Dreadlands (a level



40+zone) and left him there. Two of our friends stayed, one was an officer and one of the founders of the guild. They broke a rule the guild leader and his girlfriend made up and grouped with me anyway, and the guildleader and his girlfriend and the only other remaining officer showed up, guildremoved the other founding officer and the other person. That pretty much ended the guild. That founding officer quit the game because of it. [EQ, F, 39]

Finally, sometimes it is the inability for the guild leader to realize his own ineffectualness that leads to a guild dissolving. Oftentimes, these guild leaders see any disagreement as a threat to losing power, and would react in the wrong ways to certain situations.

*Guilds can be extremely political and the officer/lead positions can mean a great deal to the people who hold them. I joined a guild as a newbie, in EQ, and was nominated to be an officer within a month of joining. I had no idea what an officer did, however I did accept the position. I learned quickly and over the next 6 months became comfortable with handling situations. Then, our guild leader had some personal problems and said she would not be playing for a few weeks, weeks turned into months and it became very difficult to keep the guild running without someone with the guildleader functions. She did come on once in a while, for a few minutes, just to say hello. But, she refused to turn the lead over to anyone else, even temporarily, and people began to leave the guild. Well, this went on for two months until we, the officers, approached a GM about having her removed as guild leader. She decided to come back then, and called a meeting to tell the members that she was back, but in her absence we all forgot how to behave like civilized people and with her help, we could all learn to play nice. We were baffled, we didn't understand where all of that came from, and frankly, we, the officers, were hurt by her words since we were the ones she left in charge. So, we began to talk amongst ourselves about what would be best for us now, and three of the officers decided to quit the current guild and begin their own. Many of the members from the old guild left to join the new. The stubborn leader turned the old guild over to her boyfriend and he deemed the guild as being 'unmanaged' from now on, and at that point, the old guild was pretty much finished. The new guild lives on, much stronger than the old, with old friends and new, a very happy ending to a very sad story. [EQ, F, 24]*

*In-guild politics has never really been an issue for me directly, as I tend to avoid officership (and thusly, headaches and responsibility) like the plague. However, I have experienced guild politics first hand. My old UO guild at one point in time had the*

*oppurtunity to merge with a group of other guilds in order to form a united coalition against our enemies. I was among the supporters of the change, however our leadership saw it as a loss of their own personal power, whether or not it was for the greater good, and so they declined. Apparently leadership and many other factions also refused to give up power as well, so the coalition never formed. And of course, we continued to lose battles regularly without each others' support. [UO, M, 21]*

To many players, it is clear that individuals bring their own personalities and management styles into the game. And sometimes, it is the personality conflicts between guild officers that leads to a slow disintegration of a guild. After all, working with people who don't think the same way you do is difficult whether in real life or virtual life. The following elaborate narrative comes from a female player who was an officer in a guild. Her account is remarkable because she demonstrates incredible insight for the attitudes and personalities of the other officers in her guild, and gives us a really good perspective of all the nuances and subtle dramas that occur within a guild.

*Guild politics were a large part of the reason I burnt out on EQ. I found that I was playing for the guild most of the time, not for my own personal pleasure and that being a guild officer had become a second fulltime job of being diplomat, psychoanalyst, paper pusher, badguy authoritarian and cruise director to ensure 'fun' for everyone else, even tho I wasn't having a bit of fun myself unless it was time I stole on a secret alt to get away from 'officerhood' I was a founding officer of a guild that fell apart, pretty much thru mismanagement by the officers.*

*The tag is still around, but the guild is a pathetic skeleton of what it once was, and the blame should be squarely placed on the officer's shoulders. The officers Ali (me) (raid point/loot officer) Fulltime working professional with a boyfriend that played EQ, but far less seriously than I did. I had a background in LARP story telling and administration so I had a first hand working knowledge of how fragile and time intensive a group like a guild is to keep healthy. From my experiences there, I felt it was incredibly important to provide a set of rules ahead of time so that when there were the inevitable conflicts, decisions didn't appear retaliatory, but would be impartial based on a set of public policies. I was the only one of the bunch that had any willingness to do the administrative aspects of things, so it ALL got dumped in my lap. I was easily spending 10+ hours a week on maintaining the raid point system and the website and raids for me were a nightmare, trying to maintain attendance with people arriving late and leaving early, run loot auctions and track raid point expenditures and be lead cleric at the same time.*

*Brian (guildleader) Bri worked in tech support, stable job, but underemployed. He had some other interests outside of the game and while he logged some serious time on line, he at least had other things in his life. Bri became guildleader when we formed mostly from his on line charisma. I don't think he ever grasped the fact that creating and maintaining a thriving guild was WORK. He just thought that he could decree things and that was that. We were a council when it came to other people doing the work but a dictatorship when it came to any personal agenda he had. He wanted everyone to be happy, which meant he was great at not committing himself to anything one way or the other and living in his own personal reality where everything was rosy and he was well loved. He could be intensely loyal and also TOTALLY irrational when he felt someone had offered slight. He made slight overtures towards something off line and romantic when my relationship was on the rocks and when I turned him down, albeit kindly and amicably, our "relationship" as friends and fellow officers began slowly deteriorating.*

*Martin (first recruiting officer) Martin, like me, was a working professional. He traveled for his job, also had a son he had custody of and an online girlfriend in the guild so his time to commit to being an officer was limited. He was the only other one in the guild that really saw the guild as a community that needed to be nurtured and maintained not just a tactical force. But for whatever reason, Martin preferred to stick his head in the sand, disappear for long periods or be on line anon and avoiding everyone rather than speak up regarding his concerns. Martin's lack of response on officer issues even early on was perhaps the first crack in the guild. Rather than getting unanimous agreement, to get anything done, we had to go for a majority vote of officers voting since Martin and Dom would be so non-responsive.*

*Dom (Main Tank) I never totally understood Dom. He played an ogre warrior and because he was generally quiet, I think a lot of us underestimated the person behind the keyboard. He was very "hippie" in his perspective: Everyone should be "happy" and free to do whatever makes them happy. We didn't need rules as it would all just somehow magically work itself out. He was loyal and responsible.. when I paid for a year of web hosting, he was one of two of the officers to actually come up with his share of it. He and Bri had a long history together in EQ and it was pretty much a given that whatever opinion Bri had on an issue, that Dom would have the same one.*

*Chris (raid officer) Chris was a late 20 something college student with an ex-wife he hated deeply and a kid he saw sometimes on weekends. Chris was a poster boy for MMORPG addiction. Other than class, he had no life outside of the game. And, I suspect, he was trying to bolster his self-esteem through the game. Chris was the one that wanted the guild to move into the top tier of "uber-guilds" and take on all the hotly contested boss mobs. To him, the guild was successful if we were able to raid whenever he wanted and not wipe out taking on boss mobs. He simply didn't grasp "community" in the slightest. He saw classes and tactics, not people behind the keyboard. Chris was also positively desperate for a girlfriend, be it on line or in real life. I suspect that a good bit of the reason that our interactions turned us into bitter enemies is that I never realized that he was pursuing me in game and that he took my character's ultimate in-game relationship with his real life roommate as a slap in the face.*

*John (raid officer) John had a lot of good qualities but he was also myopically self centered. He wanted to have his cake and eat it too, and seemed honestly bewildered when his actions had repercussions. Despite being nearly 30, he still had no clue what he wanted to be when he grew up. He'd gotten a degree, ended up managing a discount store, then decided that he was going to move cross country and go back to school for computer science, despite having no real like for the subject. Then he wondered why the girlfriend he left behind wanted to leave him. John was Chris's roommate and my character's on line husband. John understood that the community aspect of the guild couldn't be completely neglected, but living with Chris (and also having not much of a real life outside of the game) he, like Chris, needed to feel powerful and important IN the game. And that meant pushing our guild to "bigger and better things".*

*The first crucial mistake we the officers made is that we never sat down and agreed on a direction and focus for the guild. And the longer that the guild was allowed to be each officer's personal vision rather than a consensus of all the officers, the further and further the opposing camps became. Martin and I wanted an intimate family atmosphere guild whose raid capabilities did not come at the expense of the community. We wanted very selective recruiting based on the personality and personal character of the person BEHIND the screen. Chris wanted an uber guild filled with enough people that we could raid any time of the day or night. So long as it was a competently played class that he felt the guild needed, the person behind the screen was totally irrelevant. Bri and John wanted the best of both worlds. They had visions*

*of our guild challenging the 2 ruling uber guilds on the server.. but they also claimed they wanted to maintain the tight knit atmosphere. And Dom.. well, he wanted whatever Bri wanted at that particular moment.*

*Many of the people that joined the guild early on liked the fact that we raided a couple of times a week, but we weren't obsessive about it like a lot of the big name guilds. They joined us because of the tight knit atmosphere. The fact that we were honing our raid skills was a nice bonus, but definitely of secondary importance. Then Chris began working very hard on pushing the guild to bigger and better things. It made some sense initially: the officers were all 60 and working on AA points (this was pre-PoP) and seeking a bigger challenge. Bri would pretty much tag anyone that expressed an interest in the guild, so he was tagging low 50s toons while Chris was trying to ramp up for Level 60 encounters. This frustrated Chris so he started indiscriminately recruiting based solely on level & class and added people that were definitely not a good fit towards the tight knit atmosphere.*

*The second crucial mistake we made was our inability to act decisively. Because we were a council, we technically needed a majority to come to a decision. And as things deteriorated, officers either acted without consulting any of the other officers or ignored the issue on the board entirely, effectively consigning the issue into limbo. Chris would make rash threats on the server board, I would go ballistic privately to the officers (but felt that it was important that the officers maintain the appearance of unity publicly) and Brian would avoid taking a stand either way, just in case someone might not like him afterwards. So issues lingered on and guild members got disgruntled that the officers weren't responsive to them. As summer came things got worse. Chris was playing EQ pretty much 24/7 since school was out and he was wanting to raid more and more. My job was getting more intense so I wanted to raid less and less, since coming home from a stressful day at work and dealing with a stressful night of raiding in EQ, especially since there was much pressure for me to not log at 11PM EST because many times that effectively ended the raid (me being lead cleric).*

*We began losing people in the guild.. some because they didn't like the influx of new people Chris was bringing in and the new focus on high end raiding, some because we weren't doing the things Chris promised them the guild would be doing as fast as he promised them. Chris accused me of trying to sabotage his vision of being an uberguild, I accused him of making statements publicly that reflected badly on the*

*guild as a whole (and destroying a reputation for honorable play that I'd spent 60 levels creating) without consulting the other officers and trying to sacrifice the sense of community on the altar of uber loot. Martin hid his head in the sand and stopped showing up to raids or reading the officer's board at all. Bri adroitly avoided taking a stand and managed to convince himself that everything was just fine, Dom was spending less & less time on line because of his marriage and John didn't want to keep putting effort into the guild when he was getting bored with what we could do with the people that we had.*

*The final issue was a player Chris recruited (against my vehement objections) that caused enough interpersonal strife in the guild that even the officers that didn't want to take a stand on anything finally spoke up and agreed that what this player brought to the guild wasn't worth the constant headaches he caused. Chris left in a fit of pique, John left a month later claiming burn out and boredom. John ended up in the top guild on the server, I think Chris quit playing all together. But at that point, the guild was too fractured to be re-buildable. Bri was getting bored with the game as a whole and definitely with leadership, but he still wanted to maintain the status of "guildleader". Dom was pretty much MIA, Martin was actively refusing to do anything guild related (yet he wasn't stepping down from being an officer or removing the guild tag) And I was just burnt out completely.*

*More and more people began leaving for what they saw as greener pastures. I gave it another 3 months trying to get the guild back onto a healthy track, but after a while, it seemed apparent that while people were fast to complain there just WAS no way to make people happy. And the effort seemed less and less worth it. So after a lot of emotional wrestling with myself, I finally removed the tag. I started recruiting with an uberguild where I could just be 1 cleric in a CHO and leave the running of the guild to other people, but I was so burnt out on the game, that I stopped playing completely a few weeks after that. [EQ, F, 35]*