

# The Daedalus Project

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([HTTP://WWW.NICKYEE.COM/DAEDALUS](http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus))

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## The Daedalus Gateway

Over the past 5 years, I've presented these findings in a variety of formats. I settled on The Daedalus Project as a way to easily present findings, but the problem that emerged was that it became hard to illustrate themes and show the big picture using a blog format.

The Daedalus Gateway ([http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/gateway\\_intro.html](http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/gateway_intro.html)) is an attempt to provide a coherent gateway to all those findings. Also, they are meant as a set of thematic primers for people who stumble onto the site but have no idea where to start or how to make sense of all the information.

I hope The Daedalus Gateway is useful as a means to navigate through the underlying data that has been presented over the past few years. Those pages will also be updated as new findings and resources become available.

## Game Hours vs. TV Hours

MMORPG gamers spend on average 21.0 hours per week playing the game (N = 1996), and spend on average 7.7 hours per week watching TV (N = 1996). The national average (<http://www.tvturnoff.org/images/facts&figs/factsheets/Facts%20and%20Figures.pdf>) for TV watching per week is around 28, which is what the above averages add up to. In other words, this lends support to the claim that time that was spent watching TV has been displaced by MMORPG playing. Female players are on average older than male players (33.0 vs. 28.4, N male = 1587, N female = 379,  $p < .001$ ) and also spend more hours in the game than male players (22.3 vs. 19.0,  $p < .001$ ).

Among male players, age correlates positively with hours of TV watched per week ( $r = .08$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Among female players, age correlates positively with hours spent playing an MMORPG per week ( $r = .12$ ,  $p = .02$ ). With both male and female players, hours spend playing an MMORPG does not correlate with hours spend watching TV ( $r = .03$  and  $r = -.03$  respectively,  $p$ 's  $> .05$ ).

The following table shows average weekly hours spent playing MMORPGs and watching TV among MMORPG players. Of interest is the spike in play-time among female players over the age of 35. The trend among male players appears to be mostly linear.

### Average MMORPG and TV Hours Per Week

(N male = 1587, N female = 379)

|                | Male   | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
|----------------|--------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
|                | MMORPG | MMORPG | TV   | TV     | N    | N      |
| <b>11-17</b>   | 25.49  | 24.13  | 6.97 | 5.67   | 91   | 12     |
| <b>18-22</b>   | 23.46  | 22.14  | 6.87 | 6.79   | 342  | 38     |
| <b>23-28</b>   | 19.65  | 20.17  | 7.53 | 7.64   | 439  | 90     |
| <b>29-35</b>   | 19.03  | 21.21  | 7.97 | 6.78   | 396  | 102    |
| <b>&gt; 35</b> | 19.25  | 25.46  | 8.90 | 8.09   | 306  | 135    |

## Engineering Altruism

When players are asked to describe memorable positive experiences from their MMORPG game-play, many bring up altruistic events that occurred unexpectedly. These experiences of altruism typically fall into two categories. The first revolves around getting twinked by a stranger - getting powerful equipment from a higher level character.

When I was a new player I didn't really know what I was doing. My husband had played UO when it first came out but there had a couple expansions since he had quit and we both started up playing so he didn't really know what was going on either. I chose to start with an animal tamer/mage which I found out later was a difficult template for a new player but I liked the idea of being able to have pets. So I wandered around taming low-end pets and selling a few here and there to make money. One day I was leading pets to the bank to sell and I stopped to talk to a friendly passerby. The person liked the name of my horse--MyLittlePony--and shared that his wife was also a tamer. From our conversation it was obvious I was new to the game. This man and his wife gave me several full sets of armor and clothes, 10,000 gold pieces (which seemed like a fortune to me then!), runes to several great spots for taming and several other items. Then, they took me to a place where I could tame forest ostars (which sold for a lot of gold at that time) and even tamed me a high-end pet for when I was a little more advanced. Over the next several weeks we kept in contact via ICQ and they spent hours working with me and helping me find what I needed. It was wonderful to have someone take me in and show me the ropes and give me a few items to get off to a good start in UO. Ever since, when I see a new character I go out of my way to help them out--taking time out of whatever I'm doing to give them some tips or answer some questions. I tend to be that way in real life anyway so it's natural for me to extend that in-game as well. [UO, F, 28]

I was a baby ranger, just becoming active in my guild. The then-Knight General (the guild has a very peculiar hierarchal pseudo-medieval set-up) and his RL wife (ranger/druid in game) ordered me to meet him at the North Freeport bank (we're talking 4 years ago here!)... I was unsure what he wanted... but when I got there he handed me a pair of Ivy Etched Leggings (then not only the ranger quest armor but a very valuable item, especially to a level 20ish ranger!). His wife said, 'Sting would never hand these to just anyone; he thinks you're very special.' Needless to say I was very touched! And they've never been turned in for a gem reward either! From that beginning grew a friendship that spilled over into real life. The druid is now my best girlfriend; her husband

also my friend (and though a self-declared hermit always seems to look forward to my visits). I spend weekends with them as often as I can, given the 500 mile drive between us. I've learned to quilt from my friend, helped them with projects, and in general cherish the fact that a pair of virtual trousers has given me this wonderful real-life relationship. [EQ, F, 60]

From my 4 or 5 years MMOG experience I'd say that simply helping others is the most memorable thing you can do. Sometimes I would blush IRL at the amount of thanks people would give me. As a higher level player you could totally make someone day just by helping them level for a little bit, or giving them an item that was no use to you. [WoW, M, 30]

The other category revolves around being helped by a stranger in a time of great need. Typically, a lot of time investment, risk or trust is needed during these events. In real life, many friendships are solidified through a series of favors or repaid debts because they signify a sharing of trust and understanding. The difference is that crises are far and few between in our everyday lives, so it takes months if not years for those kinds of relationships to solidify, whereas MMORPGs are designed to be dangerous worlds where crises occur frequently (<http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/archives/000429.php>).

One day I was traveling in EQ and entered Runnyeye (a somewhat low level zone) and heard a message over the zone that somebody had lost their corpse. Being high level for the zone, I was able to locate their corpse and drag it up toward the zone line where it was safer. This required trust on their part since at the time I could loot all of their belongings, but I was honest. She and I parted ways without incident, but months later we met again by chance on different characters and became friends with one another. She once mentioned when we were passing near Runnyeye how she almost lost her corpse there once, and she told me the story when I pressed for it. By complete chance, we had found each other again on different characters and got along well. I just thought it was nice how a good deed came back to be fortunate for me. We're still friends today even though we both have since quit EQ. [EQ, M, 22]

It might not seem particularly major but I once lost my corpse in very difficult circumstances. Basically it was impossible for me to recover it without skills which I did not possess. This would have lost me quite a few months of developing my character. I told a 'friend' who I have never met but only spoken to in-game and she not only dropped what she was doing and came to help but also got her son-in-law to log in and come help as well. Between them they got my corpse. What got me was these people only know me through a game, will never meet me but were more than willing to help at some cost to themselves, even if only of time. [EQ, M, 53]

When I was very new to EverQuest, I had to make a trip from a newbie town (Surefall Glade) on one side of Antonica to a different newbie zone (Freeport) on the opposite end of the continent. This involved a very long and dangerous run which I had to do by myself at level 4. After a few false starts (getting mauled by a rabid bear right outside the newbie zone, and zoning into a werewolf that killed me before the zone even loaded), I finally got a good start, and made it through the first two zones (West Karana and North Karana), albeit with some difficulty and very slowly. In the next zone (East Karana), I was unlucky and had a named Cyclops spawn practically on top of me - I survived the first hit, and was prepared for a long walk back, when it suddenly keeled over and died. I scrolled back through the spam to see someone had nuked it to death.

Turns out, it was a level 50-something Druid named Shider. He buffed me up, gave me SoW, and was actually nice enough to escort me all the way back to Freeport, which took a good half hour of his time. I thanked him profusely, and went on my way. I thought that was just about the coolest thing anyone's ever done for me in an MMO. I was a complete stranger and he took time out of his day to give me a hand. Quite strangely, about a month later, I was hunting near Surefall Glade with a different character, and ran into a higher-level character camping the Glowing Black Stone (a very rare drop that came from a rare spawn just outside Surefall Glade). We started talking, and I helped him out with buffs and heals in between fights. He was there for a few days (on and off, not end-to-end), and we ran into each other frequently. Eventually, he invited me into his guild, and lo and behold, the first person to welcome me to the guild was Shider (!!!). Turns out, Shider was a woman in real life. I still talk to her once in a while, and her boyfriend and I (who also played EQ at the time) have become really good friends over the years - thankfully they only live about a 4 hour drive from here, so we get together (IRL) every so often. [EQ, M, 23]

But beyond the “dangerous world” effect, there is something else that drives altruism in MMORPGs. In the real world, modern technology and society has made it easy to deal with most everyday inconveniences (i.e, illness, travel, long-distance communication). The only ones that are hard to deal with are typically of epic proportions. It is often hard for us to help when a real crisis occurs (i.e, car accident, fire, etc.). Most MMORPGs on the other hand are designed to contain many everyday inconveniences. You need a travel ability to travel long distances. You need someone to rez you. More importantly, MMORPGs empower users to help each other. You can heal someone who is about to die. You can craft a component another player needs. You can root a mob long enough for the player to escape. Thus, MMORPGs empower players to help each other in a way that is often difficult in real life.

The following player articulates another very important difference between altruism in the virtual world and the real world.

I find people's altruism extraordinary. In RL, much altruism is met with suspicion... 'if you're trying to help me, you must want something'. Or it's dangerous to be altruistic, like picking up hitchhikers, or intervening if there is a crime in progress. But in virtual worlds, I find an outlet. I get a lot of satisfaction from performing random acts of altruism. And I'm always touched when people do the same with me. I think it taps into people's need to be needed. I'm not sure that it's clear that people are needed in RL. Certainly my husband spends so much time playing because he feels that his group 'needs' him. But I also just like making people happy... so a lot of it is about an outlet for generosity ... [CoH, F, 35]

In other words, MMORPGs remove much of the ambiguity and danger of altruism. At the same time, the game design empowers users to help each other in meaningful ways. A kind of social engineering occurs in MMORPG by restructuring the rules and expectations of how and when people can help each other. Of course, game designs don't always encourage altruism. For example, some games make players as independent of others as possible. But what is clear is that we could think of altruism as something that can be engineered by the game design.

## Faces of Grief

As Bartle pointed out in his Player Types (<http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hclds.htm>) paper, Achievers and Grievers are different points on the same spectrum - Achievers act on the world while Grievers act on other players. A factor-based model of player motivations created from player survey data (<http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/archives/000817.php?page=1>) suggests that a desire for power and control are the underlying themes that connect Achievers and Grievers. Achievers enjoy the power derived from items and abilities and the increased control these give them over the game world (faster movement, better protection, etc.). Grievers on the other hand enjoy the power derived from dominating or tricking other players and the control this gives them over other players. The underlying similarity between Achievers and Grievers is supported by survey data. These two motivations are highly correlated ( $r = .40$ ,  $N = 1995$ ).

Unsolicited or unbalanced player-killing is the most straight-forward form of griefing - it in essence deprives another player of all his power and in the process demonstrates the griefer's dominance and control over other people.

Most games (like Lineage 2) have an XP penalty when you die, and if someone targets you and stalks you while you play to just kill you multiple times, it's depressing/angering. Especially if you're a higher level. Imagine spending 10 hours hunting, having a good time, playing with friends, only to have all of the work you've done erased by one guy, who is level ridiculous, who arbitrarily decided to kill you 15 times. Granted it could just be avoided most times by logging out for awhile, but then that causes moral issues with giving into the bastard who is killing you, and letting him ruin your gaming experience for the night. And well, either way it's a lose lose in that case. You either log out, and your game for the night is ruined, or you keep trying to play, and he keeps killing you, and you lose a lot of work and effort. Although at least with the latter you don't feel like he truly defeated you. Or rather, I don't. [Lineage 2, M, 19]

Player Killing. It's the most rude obnoxious thing that folks 'say' is in the spirit of the game, but yet RARELY is even close to anything enjoyable for anyone but the PK'rs themselves. Don't get me wrong, PK'ing can be fun, when it's taken seriously and involves strategy. Sadly, it's rarely for that reason, but more often just to irritate and annoy other players. [F, 44]

Different methods of scamming and theft also demonstrate forms of power and control. In these cases, grievers derive pleasure from gaining control over the possessions of unwilling victims.

My character once owned a house in UO. I was experiencing particularly bad lag and a player (there was open PvP) who had a faster connection took everything in my house, killed my character then also taunted me about how much gold his character made off my things. At that time, the game was transitioning a new method for owning homes and anyone with a key (he also stole the house key off my corpse) could claim the house. He tried to do so but luckily, since the house was purchased by me, I got it in the end. I promptly moved it elsewhere. This experience made me HATE PvP and grievers in general and made me actually cry. [UO, F, 47]

i have been playing ultima for over 4 years now and i still remember the devastation i felt at being scammed of all the money i had been saving to buy my first house. i had been playing for around 6 mths and someone offered to sell me a house for all the money i had, as i had spent most of the previous 6 mths levelling my char i had not really been exposed to certain sections of the MMORPG community and naturally trusted the other guy. he of coarse took my money and disappeared. i was so upset i immediately cancelled my account....only to return at a later date. [UO, M, 37]

In fact, what becomes clear is that many griefers seem to prefer subtle forms of domination rather than overt forms such as player-killing. After all, the more devious and cunning the act, the more pleasure it provides. Now, griefers will gloat once the act succeeds, but the most devious acts typically require the most subtlety and planning. It is easy to kill someone. It is much harder to trick someone into willingly handing over all their gold.

This makes it easier to understand what emotional griefing is about. Instead of gaining control over someone's life or possessions, emotional griefing seeks to gain control over someone's emotions by causing them distress, guilt or shame.

I had to leave a server because of a certain player that grieved me constantly. I squelched him but he would log on other peoples accounts to harass me. He had his friends harass me also. The words he used in private chat to me were just as nasty as the actions he described and threats he made. I reported him and nothing happened. He spread rumors about me being a thief and hacking accounts. (I don't know how to hack... and I don't steal)...Why did he do this? Because I dismissed him as my vassal. I never told anyone, except him, why I was dismissing him but it really irritated him. I know that he was having a problem in his RL relationship, he told me. I almost quit playing the game because of him. Glad I thought to move to another server. Too bad I had to leave the first char I ever made in MMORPG. [AC1, F, 54]

As a newbie I grouped with an experienced player leveling an alt. He seems very knowledgeable and invited me to group with him daily. He seemed to know his way around everywhere and what zones we could handle. After a point in time he would act upset if I had other plans when he wanted to group. He accused me of using him, threatened suicide, was verbally abusive to me. I also found out he had done this to more than a few other female players. I would put him on my ignore list and he would make a new alt, he would send tells to my friends and guildmates telling lies about me, he tried to find out my phone number from my friends and brother. To this day this is only resolved because he is no longer playing the game. [F, 46]

The following narrative demonstrates just how much trouble and time a player may go through to grieve another player emotionally.

While EQ2's servers were down this past weekend, I created a character on WoW. My little pink haired gnome mage was killing tiny beasts at level 2 in the snow covered beginning zone, when another pink haired male gnome came up to her. He said 'I am lost and have lost my clothes, and I am cold'. He was wearing only underwear. I said 'I am heading to the city, follow me'. I went to my village, saw my trainer, sold some stuff, and turned in a quest or 2.

When I left the village to do more hunting, I was amazed to see he was following me. He whispered 'I love you. I will follow you forever'. And continued to follow me, just watching as I slew wolves and boars. Once or twice in a close fight, he unleashed a spell that assisted me. He continued to proclaim his love in whispers and out loud, even shouting at times, and calling me pet names. I began to play along, telling him he only loved me for my pink hair, and trying to rebuff his attentions.

He asked me to group and I accepted. He still rarely fought, but when a pelt dropped, I found that his loot settings were set to only high level loot. That surprised me, because I didn't even know there were loot settings, and being a newbie, I needed every little scrap that could be sold. We went into a very low level dungeon. I think I had leveled to 3 by this time, and came out the other side. He still did not fight much, and continued to role-play a love-struck gnome.

We came out the other side, to a bit higher zone, and he sent off his fire spell to a higher level boar. I was taken by surprise when it attacked, and while I defended myself, he stood by, and we both died. It was my first death, and you are sent to a cemetery with a wan angel. You are given a choice to be revived then, but not presented with an alternative. I asked him what to do, but he didn't answer. I chose to be revived, and he followed suit. I had been having in game movement issues.. not being able to stop running, and this happened now. I stopped myself by running into a huge tree.

Although I kept running, at least I stayed in one place! He then challenged me to a duel. Another first! I accepted. Since I was running and couldn't stop, I was unable to cast a spell or fight, and he beat me handily. He shouted 'You are too weak to be my lover' and ran off. Funny I thought. I sent a /tell LOL. He next appeared where I was still stuck to the tree, but dressed in full wizardly garb. And ran off.

To solve my running problem, I logged out, then back in. I sent him a /tell Thanking him for the role-playing fun. He replied 'You sick freak! You loser!' I was stunned and shocked. I thought we had been role-playing, but apparently he was just grieving me .. with a big buildup. He began to heckle me in /tells and /shouts. I was now stuck to the tree, but not running, and a crowd of onlookers gathered. I couldn't escape! I finally got unstuck and ran away. He appeared again, in just the underwear, saying he was wrong, begging me to take him back, declaring his love. I turned on /ignore. I felt so duped, emotionally. My feelings were of betrayal and I was very upset by his behavior. [WoW, F, 53]

**External Link:**

Grief Player Motivations by Chek Yang Foo

[http://www.itu.dk/op/papers/yang\\_foo\\_koivisto.pdf](http://www.itu.dk/op/papers/yang_foo_koivisto.pdf)

## The Transfer of Stereotypes and Prejudice

It is easy to think of the fantasy worlds offered by MMORPGs to be an escape from real world constraints, prejudices and stereotypes.

The things that affect me emotionally are not the small moments, but the epiphanies I occasionally have about how virtual worlds allow for a greater expression of human hope and potential... how people can play, be free to express various aspects of themselves, and form amazing, supportive communities. I get emotional when I think about the people who don't have anyone in RL, are the victims of RL prejudices, members of conformist communities, or in other ways can't find meaning in their real lives. I find that sad, but then am happy that they at least have some place where they feel they can belong, are accepted and needed. [CoH, F, 35]

The problem is that the more we look, the more we find that many of our real world constraints and stereotypes follow us into MMORPGs. For example, female avatars are often given both positive and negative attention by male players.

The funniest experiment about 'not being me' was to play a female character. Strange how players were nice with me. They start conversations without reasons, gave me items, money or time. Some even died to save me. I guess a lot of MMORPG players are single men, that's why. [M, AO, 34]

I never realized how irritating it can be to have to put up with unwanted advances. [EQ, M, 38]

Of course, the exaggerated female anatomy and skimpy clothing merely serve to encourage objectifying female bodies. More intriguing is that even in a world where male and female bodies are functionally equivalent, male avatars are valued higher in external markets such as eBay than female avatars of the same level and with comparable gear ([http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=415043](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=415043)).

Another player comments on how video game culture and anonymity culminate in MMORPGs to create an atmosphere of homophobia.

Really the only negative aspects in games to me, other than game play/system/developer issues, has been the atmosphere of homophobia. As a gay man it seems the computer and computer game cultures fosters a sense of hatred towards homosexuals. From the casual use of the term gay as a common put down to a handful of nasty instances of harassment by griefers and even discrimination from game companies that caused me to cancel their service. [CoH, M, 31]

Others comment on how cultural identities and stereotypes have impacted their game-play experience.

I'm an American living in Japan, and because of the time zone differences, my husband and I belong to a big Asian guild in EQ. As a result, I've experienced some really nasty, prejudiced reactions from people who see my guild tag and assume I can't speak English. There are a lot of very negative attitudes about Asian guilds in English-speaking countries--most of them based simply on stereotypes and ignorance. Participating on EQ message boards and communities, I



have often ended up very embarrassed at how rude and thoughtless Americans can be. It's a terrible feeling when you see someone from your country say that all Asians are 'faggy slant-eyed wankers,' for example. [EQ, F, 35]

In FFXI there was this "uber leet" syndrome the majority of the Japanese players had. Where they considered every American as a noob, because Japanese had been playing FFXI for a year and Americans just got it. Now in general, that's somewhat true, most of the Americans(Non-Japanese) are noobs, but the few of us who weren't were still being discriminated against for being American.

In FFXI They even helped the Japanese find out whose American and who is not. When it first came out, the translator translated things from Japanese to English, or vice versa, without any notice that someone was using the translator, but then they added a patch that put brackets around the translated words, so they could tell if your American (Using Translator). I respect and like the Japanese Culture, but that game felt like it was trying to make me be racist or something. It pissed me off to have to wait 2+ hours just to try getting into an xp team because the majority of the Japanese didn't want to team with Americans. [excerpted from an FFXI forum]

These narratives on cultural identity are particularly provocative because the stereotypes are being carried into a world where real world nations do not exist. In fact, what becomes clear is that MMORPGs are an arena in which real world prejudices, stereotypes and conflicts play out. The following narrative on a 9/11 memorial in Ultima Online highlights just how real our virtual conflicts can be.

I live in the United States, and play on an Ultima Online 'shard' located there. On the first anniversary of 9/11, a player who apparently was in the military in the real world created a United States flag from 'fabric' on a particular bridge going into the main city of Ultima, 'Britain.'

As the various players saw the flag a strange thing began to happen. Some disgruntled players surfaced and began to deface this flag, verbally abusing the ones who created the flag and those who stood by watching. They seemed to be systematically changing the patterns and colors into what began to look like the Palestinian flag. In opposition, highly offended American players, several of whom claimed certain military affiliations, began to systematically change the colors back in the attempt to restore the graphic of the American flag. Game Masters were called, but as the topic was so very emotional and nationalistic, they wound up wiping their hands of it and pretty much leaving things to the players and the intense emotions of the day.

There were sharp exchanges, threats, and challenges to 'go to Fel' (for pvp) to resolve the issues from several groups. What followed was what I later referred to as 'The Battle of Britain Bridge.' After a few initial verbal scuffles, a silent but intense competition began with several players doggedly dying 'fabric' and laying down either a pattern of orange/green/white, or red/white/blue flags onto this bridge area.

The battle went on for hours, lasting all night by my time zone. One man, who said he was a US Marine in the real world, laid down US colors into a flag pattern for nearly 8 hours straight with the assistance of a couple of others. I watched this 'battle' for hours, giving a small bit of assistance

from my convictions to 'my side' of the issue, but mainly watching the fascinating effect of real world conflicts spilling over into a virtual reality where all of us are grouped together and unaware of our 'real' identities.

I was truly overwhelmed after being a part of this unique battle and spent several days very emotionally affected by the conflict between the Americans trying to give a memorial to the fallen, and those who opposed the United States and openly celebrated the attacks made against the United States. I became intensely aware of the global nature of the online community from this point on. I have also never again felt 'safe' in this virtual world and am always now very aware that while this is a game, it is also very much a human reality, and that someone who may be what I would consider a dangerous enemy to my country may be right beside me killing dragons in Ultima Online. [UO, F, 46]

Virtual worlds do not free us from real world stereotypes and prejudices. Instead, our stereotypes and cultural identities seem to follow us even into worlds that are entirely woven from fantasy. In a world where we can be who we are not, do we learn from the prejudice and discriminations we experience, or does it merely serve to perpetuate and encourage existing stereotypes and prejudice?

## **Police States**

The issue of civil liberty has been debated a lot over the past few years, especially after the 9/11 attacks, but let me describe to you what is probably the most perfect police state that exists.

In this world, every conversation you have is automatically recorded. Everything you say or hear is stored in a large database. The name of every person you have ever talked to is noted down as well as how frequently you talk to them. The state has the ability to control how far your voice carries and whether you are able to shout at all. In fact, you are only allowed to communicate with other people using the tools provided by the state. Anything you say can be erased before it reaches another person's ear. More importantly, anything you say can be instantly altered before it reaches another person's ear. In fact, you can be coerced to say anything you never said.

The state knows exactly where you are at any given moment. It has the ability to teleport you and imprison you instantaneously and without warning. The state can change your name if it doesn't like it and provides no way for others to connect your old and new name. More importantly, the state can alter your height, your gender, your age and any other aspect of your physical appearance with a few keystrokes.

The irony of course is that we live in a democracy that abhors police states, but we choose perfect police states as our form of entertainment. Some will undoubtedly argue that MMORPG worlds are inherently fantastical worlds that have nothing to do with the real world, but as real world economies and law interface with these virtual worlds, and as we spend more and more of our time in these worlds, we have to wonder what it means when people spend on average 22 hours a week in a perfect police state.

Others might argue that players can always leave a game if they don't like it, but it is not easy for most players to quit a game because of the emotional and time investment that has been made. More

importantly, this particular critique implies leaving one MMORPG for another, in essence transferring between different police states. As more of our work and personal lives become embedded into virtual worlds, perhaps the central question becomes - what does it mean when police states become seductive and fun? What does it mean when police states are chosen as places to escape to?

As our virtual worlds take on social and cultural complexity of their own and begin to mimic many real world functions - businesses, elections, and protests - will we find more or less freedom than we have in the real world?