



Users of online games: A new culture?

new research on why people play games

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CNG Workshop 2010 – Online Games: Economic,
technological and User - Dimension – State of the art



Community Network Game project (Feb 2010 – Aug 2012)



CNG aims to develop cost-effective, efficient community-building tools for MMOG players, without changing the game logic or source code

Today...

- new user needs research to understand...
 - MMOG and massively social game users' in-game communication requirements (e.g., current in-game practice likes, dislikes, capability, potential)
- your feedback



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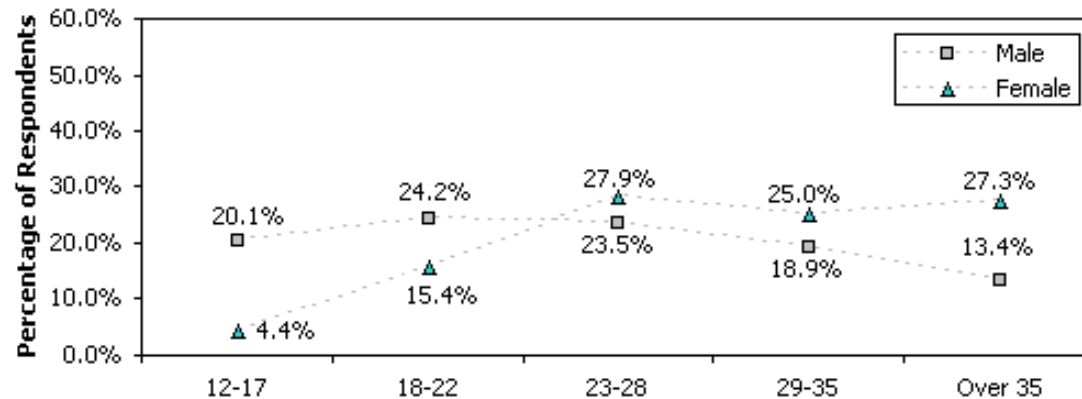


Wide appeal of MMOs



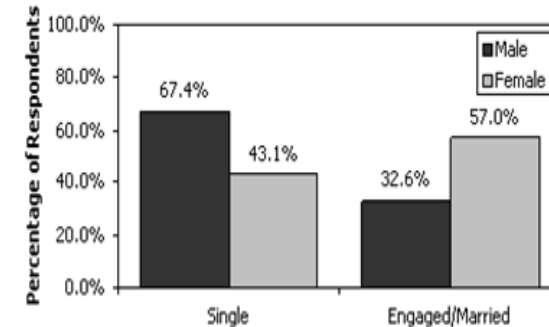
Gender and Age Distribution

N male = 2439, N female = 404



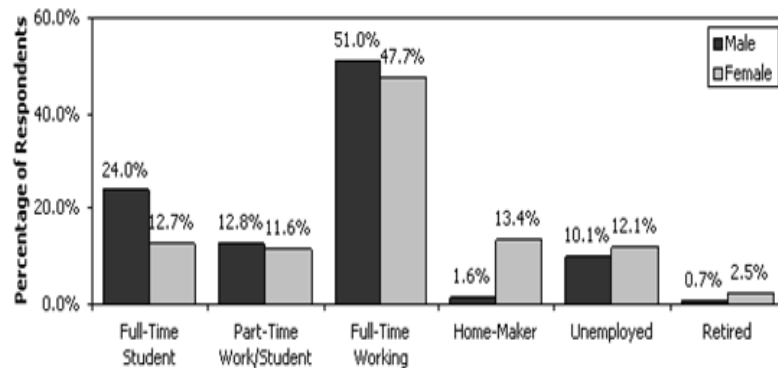
Marital Status

N male = 2384, N female = 442



Occupational Status

N male = 2394, N female = 440



Source: "The Daedalus Project" by Nick Yee, available at: <http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus>

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Interviews



- 12 interviews, ~1-1.5hrs
 - 10 male, 2 female (age 18 to 41 years)
 - Recruitment: Snowballing, gumtree.com
 - Informed consent
- Game platforms
 - PC
 - Consoles (Xbox 360, PS2, PS3)
 - Handheld (Nintendo DS, mobile/smart phone)
- Range of games (single and multi-player)
 - RPG (World of Warcraft; Maplestory, Fable, Oblivion/ ElderScrolls/ Morrowind)
 - FPS (Counter Strike; STALKER – Shadow of Chernobyl)
 - Sports (FIFA 10, NBA, 'racing')
 - mix-genre:
 - RTS/FPS (C&C)
 - FPS/RPG: (Borderlands)
- Communications with others
 - Enjoyable? Useful? Why? What? How? Limitations? Desired communications? Mock up, reactions



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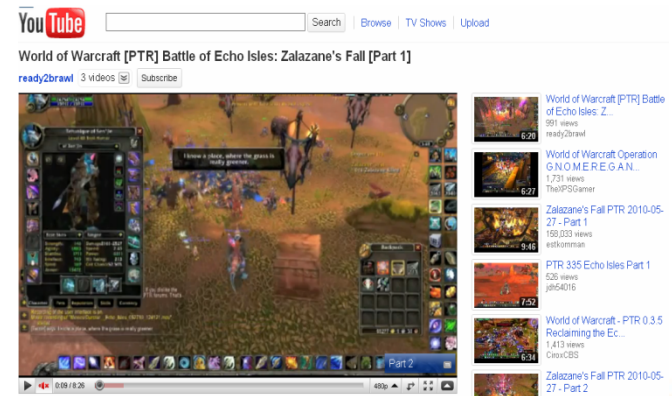
Initial findings



- User need for game communication/UGC variable
 - Game and user variables (motivation to play)
- Direct and indirect Communication
- Needs for rich communication/UGC
 - Level of disclosure, suspension of disbelief
- Creators vs. seekers
- User-control (usability)



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Motivation to game



- Hardware issues (affects game/player choice)
- Time to invest
- Challenge (process driven)
- Visible rewards (end goal driven)
- Escapism
- Promise of social interaction



“The thing that keeps me coming back is that now I’ve played it for a while, I’ve got friends, not real life friends, but in-game friends that you like to arrange to do activities with them [...] within your Guild, you get like a friend base, and when you organise things, in-game it’s like, ‘OK we can do this together’, as a group of us, you can accomplish something .”

(P11, male, 18 years)

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Motivation to game *socially*



- Game preference (genre and user issues)
- Game play preference for familiar or unfamiliar others
- Social image - confidence and skill



“If you need to play games online you need to play with friends because people [strangers] just don’t work together [...] half of them are talking, half aren’t and you don’t get anywhere.”

(P2, male, 19 years)

“one of the reasons for playing online is finding someone you haven’t played with yet, so it’s like a different level.”

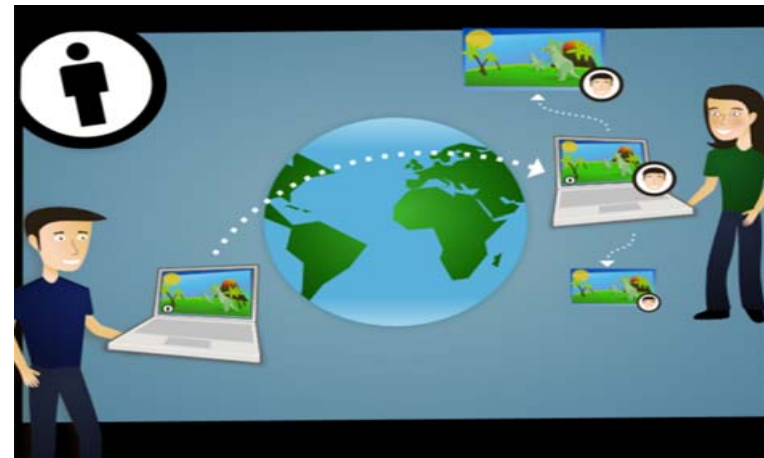
(P8, male 41 years)



Why share?



- Game enrichment (cf. computer play mode)
- Integral to game play
- Supports in-game progress
- Promotes status
- ‘Feel good’ factor of sharing



“I like multiplayer because I find AI a bit stupid in some computer games. So it’s quite nice to challenge other people and also talk to them as well – it’s also quite social.” (P3, male, 21 years)

“it’s quite satisfying knowing you’re helping other people, and if I help, I’d expect someone to help me, it’s like vice versa – I treat others how I’d like to be treated.” (P11, male, 18 years)

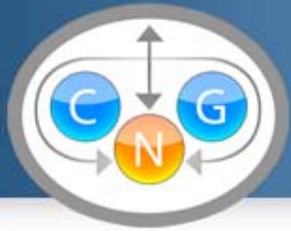
VS.

“It’s the fun of the game trying to do it yourself” (P8, male, 41 years)

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What is shared *and how*?



- Supportive information
- In-game strategy (plans, intentions)
- Tips, cheats, hints
- Identity (character, 'a gamer')
- Performance and skill
- Affect
- Game mods, add-ons
- Entertainment, humour
- Insults
- Out-game interests

(Emails) and Text chat (in-game; msn, Steam, Facebook, Xbox 'party chat', Skype, Twitter)

Emoticons, action keycodes, macros

Voice (Skype, Steam, Ventrilo, Xfire)

Google searches (text/video guides, reviews)

(non)official game forums (Steam)

Visible in-game achievements, updates

Record/edit (Fraps, in-game video editors: Halo, Street Fighter 4)

Capture (Screen shots)

Distribute (Facebook, YouTube, ea.com)

Downloads (www.curse.com)

In-game polling (raids, remove player, skip map)

Speed gaming (YouTube)

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Frustrations – unmet needs



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Frustrations with in-game comms...

- Quality of experience (speed, noise, minimising game)
- Separate chat channels (trading, parties...)
- Team organisation/coordination
- Obtrusiveness
- Usability (record)
- Privacy
- Trojans/viruses
- Pop-ups

Unmet needs...

- Convenient communication (social and co-presence, privacy, access)
- More player control, screen customisation and personalisation
- Greater scope for creativity
 - recording, audio mixing, editing, art, storytelling
- Applications that are easier to use (low effort)
- Skill matching
- One stop social and in-game information space for gamers
 - (e.g., Gamebook)
 - In-game up-to-date wikipedia
 - Reduce game disruption (minimise screen)
 - Better quality control of posted content (e.g., bugs, viruses)
- Opportunity to fill 'waiting' times (travel)
- Unpredictability ("more randomness" P4)



Live video streaming



- Easy click and stream (video and audio)
- Produce running commentaries akin to Football matches



“Seeing live matches – that would be great; that would be amazing especially if it’s tournament level. You wanna see how people play because that just might be more exciting so you could all watch it and then comment on what’s going on”. (P3, male, 21 years)

“It would enhance your gaming experience: while you’re gaming people can watch you so that you can have the personal experience of the gaming.” (P6, male, 31 years)

“If you had like live feeds into the game – it would probably be quite hard to – but if you had live feeds of things that are going on at that time in place then that would be quite good.” (P11, male, 18 years)



Playing video content in-game



- Tutorials, guides...
- Opportunity to fill waiting times (queues)
- Video sharing easier than text + screenshots



"Video is a marvellous thing: instead of either having to post an awful lot of text and a bunch of pictures, you just make a short video!" (P5, male, 24 years)

"It's a lot easier than reading the manual." (P4, male, 28 years)

"[on video playback] you could analyse what you did wrong, what you did right, and you could learn from it – what you could do differently in the future. [...] Say you're ready to go into a dungeon or a raid and you want to know the tactics for the boss and you can have the video there showing you what to do, and what you should be doing, and you can have that playing in the corner whilst you're doing it, or just before you're about to do it so you know freshly what to do." (P11, male, 18 years)

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Easy record and share



- Easy video editor
- Use case: clear capture of game bugs with distribution to GM
- ‘Trick-play’ like (always recording – click to save/rewind ‘live’ play)
- Collaborative creations



“If they give you the option to have a sort of a highlight section.” (P4, male, 28 years)

“[video creation] appeals more to people that are hardcore gamers and that want to show their skills to others [...] if you hold a tournament and you want to see a video of the final of the game play, you could record it.” (P6, male, 31 years)

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IM, rich IM, chatrooms



- Multi-way, privacy controls, costs
- Cross-platform; cross-game, 'online'
- Discrete display



“In the WOW specifically, images wouldn’t be brilliantly useful within the middle of a battle – you’re taking away a section of your screen where there could be something going on.” (P11, male, 18 years)

“...being able to actually contact people in different games so that you can get them to come over, like a little warning message that says ‘we need you!’ [...] and then you can open a little chat room, a chat message with that person if you want to ask ‘why you need me?’” (P9, male, 19 years)

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VOIP



- Multi-way (control for QoE – speed, ‘crowded’, wide access)
- Disconnection access (out-game); always on for all (persistent)
- Exceptions (gamers, time limits on exceptions)
- Easy access during high action moments
- Not dominating over in-game sounds (e.g., footsteps)

“The closer [communication] gets to face to face conversation the better [...] like saying something without having to press the button.” (P5, male, 24 years)

“while with Xfire everyone would have to install Xfire [...] everyone would have to remember to switch it on every time they are playing something [...] that’s an effort and that’s why – I would prepared to use it but not all the people and it makes it kind of pointless. With Xbox it’s there, always, and that’s what makes it easy.” (P5, male, 24 years)



Modifications



- More character personalisation; wider choice of objects
- Convenient in-game access
- Collaborative creation for users with more spare time
- Quality control of mods
 - ‘hacking’ (rights); viruses; reviews of, popularity info/polls

“[creating and accessing new items] widens your choice, it provides content that otherwise wouldn’t be available, [...] It’s really a shame that with consoles you can’t do this [...] if it would be in-game, I think it would be really good.” (P5, male, 24 years)

“Some people do have macros for certain bosses that they can access pretty easily so for certain bosses you can have macros of yells or raid warnings but obviously then that can be quite tedious if you accidentally click the wrong button.” (P11, male, 18 years)



Voting/Polling



- Vote for favourite character
- More power to remove 'troublemakers' (self-policing)
- More democratic virtual communities

"it could be quite interesting to see that [voting/polling] in place actually, you could end up with Guilds who use it like as a democracy; it could bring a whole new aspect to the game if that was introduced. I can see it implemented but how it would be used would be interesting; it's one of those things that actually intrigues me [...] You've got 'readychecks' [in WOW] but it's not exactly the same, it's just a simple, 'yes I'm ready, no I'm not' – it's the closest they have." (P11, male, 18 years)

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Advertisements



- Context-relevant
- Display whilst in-game waiting/loading
- User control (gamers' perceived as 'easy target')
- UGC – permissions and exceptions (abuse, spamming)

"I feel that as part of the game, it would stand out to me if they didn't have them in there, so for me, it's natural." (P4, male, 28 years)

"I hate pop-ups, it can really annoy you and really ruin the pleasure of gaming." (P6, male, 31 years)

"Obviously you don't want to be spammed by random people [...] it would be an easy way for people to put advertisement and flooding you with it, I definitely don't want that. There's a lot of [...] gold sellers who try to sell you in-game money for cash that already advertise that through text, if they were able to do that by picture it would make it a lot worse." (P9, male 19 years)

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Web-browsing



- Highly desirable; no need to minimise screen
- But, format issues
- browser preference, (import bookmarks?)



"I don't know technology-wise how you...I think some pages might not be able to be shown due to Flash." (P9, male, 19 years)

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In-game stats



- Simplifying complex character stats
- Stats on nearby out-of-sight players with potential to provide help
 - Colour coded (proximity, [match] skill level, quest experience character qualities etc.)

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CHARACTER INFO AND SETUP

LOADOUT **STATS**

YOUR PERFORMANCE REPORT

Class	Points	Playtime
Pyro	24	44:50:09
Soldier	46	31:54:28
Spy	21	29:41:52
Demoman	11	14:55:18
Engineer	22	12:39:32
Scout	18	10:14:49
Sniper	13	5:48:35
Medic	16	5:40:05
Heavy	16	

YOUR BEST MOMENTS

As any class:

- Most points: 47 (as Demoman)
- Most kills: 45 (as Soldier)
- Most assists: 10 (as Pyro)
- Most captures: 18 (as Demoman)
- Most defenses: 6 (as Soldier)
- Most damage: 6,156 (as Soldier)
- Most destruction: 6 (as Spy)
- Most dominations: 5 (as Pyro)
- Longest life: 20:14 (as Spy)
- Most healing: 4346 (as Medic)
- Most invins: 3 (as Medic)
- Most kills by sentry: 14 (as Engineer)
- Most teleports: 40 (as Engineer)
- Most headshots: 7 (as Spy)
- Most backstabs: 6 (as Spy)

RESET STATS

CLOSE

Join Team 1 **Stats & Rankings** Join Team 2

And Buddy

Stat	Value	Rank
User Name	Smokie	
Nick Name	Smokie	
Clan ID	31687	
Level	Level 104 Master of Anti-union Advocates	
Play Time	48 days, 16 hours	118
Games Won/Lost	1129 / 1207	
Times Kicked	179 / 131	363
Command Won/Lost		
Command Impached		132
Kill/Deaths	38238	
Ratio	1.45 kills / death	
Killing Spree	34	2085
Player Damage	23901841	
Buffs Used	13394	
Building Points	16777215	
Building Damage	39847787	
Building Destroyed	3281	
Flags Captured	1828	
Money Gained/Spent	187863193 / 194752150	
Resources Mined	705605	215
NPC Kills	35742	262
Worker Kills	4501	
General XP	1511610	123
Command XP	382557	
Medic XP	2864	
Total XP	384922	
UID	450980	

Close





In- and cross-game skill match



- For unfamiliar games, trials
- Akin to dating ('player' matching facility)



"I have the idea that if you play online you know a lot, you're very good. The game itself is boring so you need to play with other people that are in your same level or better so that you can learn or practice." (P7, female, 32 years)

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take home...



“[live video streaming] it’s cool, absolutely [it enriches the game] ...any UGC is good for the game” (P8, male, 41 years)

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Your feedback, please



- Why do people play MMO games?
 - What do they find enjoyable? Useful? Sticky?
 - Community activities: Why? What? How?
 - Limitations? Opportunities? Unmet needs?
- Your reactions to CNG?
 - Most and least convincing aspects, user experience benefits?
- Challenges?
 - Competition
 - Developer willingness to allow their game content within CNG app/frame
 - Moderation of UGC
 - Cross game social interaction
- What would you prioritise/ be most interested in?

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CNG generic requirements



- ✓ User preferences/profile
 - ✓ In/cross platform and/or game, indicator of who 'online/active' (CNG, which game)
 - ✓ Privacy settings (e.g., sharing on/off/levels: personal information, proximity)
 - ✓ Function access and layout
 - ✓ Permissions (with potential to set time limited exceptions)
 - ✓ Ad selection (incl premium opt-out)
- ✓ Unobstrusive displays (maintaining maximum game screen possible)
- ✓ Flexible interface design (user controlled)
- ✓ Easy to use

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CNG functions (summary)



- ✓ Audio/Video (click and...)
 - ✓ Live streaming
 - ✓ Record and save (intentional)
 - ✓ In-game intentional record
 - ✓ In-game video share/editor
 - ✓ In-game playback
 - ✓ Trick-play record
- ✓ Direct Communication (in/cross platform and/or game, indicator of who 'online', permissions/exceptions)
 - ✓ IM 2-way and multi-way chat with user selected players (in and out game)
 - ✓ Allow/block lists (time limited exceptions)
 - ✓ VOIP (persistent; sensitive to game audio; enhancement of user defined audio channels)
 - ✓ Other (not video) content sharing (images, objects)
- ✓ In-game information browser (Access: guides, cheats, mod/add-on creation/access)
 - ✓ Vote popularity/access stats
 - ✓ In-game stats
 - ✓ Skill matching
 - ✓ Wiki (game relevant info)
- ✓ In-game mod/add-on creation and upload
- ✓ In-game voting (e.g., 'doodle poll'-style for user defined groups)
- ✓ Targeted advertising

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