In computer veritas

Flaming as a form of toxic online disinhibition and its triggers in World of Warcraft

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Abstract

Being active in an online environment has become part of our day to day life. The protection of anonymity, invisibility and lack of authority on online platforms ranging from social media to gaming, allows people to act uninhibitedly in a setting often populated by foul language. Acting in an offensive manner while being online has been the subject of various studies, which range from behaviour in e-classrooms, to flaming used as means of entertainment, to cyber-bullying. This thesis examines the occurrences of offensive language usage in online gaming, specifically in World of Warcraft, and attempts to identify the triggers that lead to hostile communication within the game and to map the manner players act in flaming settings. A chat log analysis was used to comprise a list of most frequently utilized offensive words. A questionnaire was applied in order to collect data regarding players evaluation of these words, their mind set when in flaming situations and their reactions to and motivations of offensive behaviour. The research results show that, in flaming settings, players choose to either take a reactive stance and remove themselves from potentially offensive situations, or to act proactively and flame back or get the “flamers” punished. Furthermore, the results show that there are certain words, emotes and situations that are generally directly linked to volatile occurrences. In conclusion, gaming is no stranger to the shortcomings being online entails and a more balanced threshold for offensive behaviour acceptance must be re-established.

Keywords: flaming, offensive behaviour, online gaming, World of Warcraft
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### Table of content

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 2
Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................... 3
Glossary .......................................................................................................................... 6
1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 8
1.2 Aim and research questions .................................................................................. 11
1.3 Outline of thesis .................................................................................................... 12
1.4 Relevance of study .............................................................................................. 12
2.1 Background ........................................................................................................... 13
2.2 What is World of Warcraft? ................................................................................ 15
2.3 Communication within the game ......................................................................... 16
2.4 Emotes .................................................................................................................. 18
2.5 Chat in action ...................................................................................................... 20
3. Previous research .................................................................................................. 23
4. Theoretical framework ......................................................................................... 27
4.1 The concept of flaming ....................................................................................... 27
4.2 The Online Disinhibition Effect ......................................................................... 28
4.3 The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance .................................................................. 31
4.4 Research questions ............................................................................................. 32
5.1 Methodology ........................................................................................................ 34
5.2 Limitations of research design, issues of reliability and validity ....................... 37
6. Presentation and analysis of results ...................................................................... 40
6.1 Question block one ............................................................................................ 40
6.2 Question block two ............................................................................................. 43
6.3 Question block three .......................................................................................... 47
6.4 Question block four ............................................................................................ 54
6.5 Question block five ............................................................................................ 55
6.6 Question block six ............................................................................................. 57
7. Conclusions and discussion ................................................................................ 61
Appendix 1. Questionnaire ...................................................................................... 70
Appendix 2. Figures .................................................................................................... 77
Appendix 3. List of emotes ......................................................................................... 109
Table of Figures

Figure 1. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of being
online? ................................................................. 40

Figure 2. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of playing
World of Warcraft? ......................................................... 41

Figure 3. While playing World of Warcraft, which of the following words would you be ok
with being called? .......................................................... 44

Figure 4. In which of the following situations you feel that it is ok to call someone
retarded? ................................................................. 46

Figure 5. Have you ever been flamed while playing World of Warcraft? ......................... 47

Figure 6. Have you ever flamed someone while playing World of Warcraft? ............... 51

Figure 7. The person who you are flaming (being rude/offensive against) usually .......... 51

Figure 8. When you are flaming someone, do you sometimes take under consideration the
possibility of them getting hurt by it? ........................................... 52

Figure 9. When you get annoyed and think of flaming someone ........................................ 53

Figure 10. If you notice a player being rude to another player, you usually ................. 54

Figure 11. Would you rather someone used /spit on you or called you retarded? .......... 56

Figure 12. Do you feel it is easier to use emotes instead of actually writing something to
someone? ........................................................................ 56

Figure 13. You feel most offended when you feel that someone attacks ...................... 58

Figure 14. How do you feel the language used in World of Warcraft has changed in the
past 5 years? ..................................................................... 59
Glossary

Addon = Interface modifier that allows the customization of game experience.

Avatar = The graphical representation of a player in a game, can be a person or creature.

Cba = Can’t be arsed.

Character = see Avatar.

Class = Professional archetypes. The most typical class types are: close-range damage, ranged damage, healing, crowd control, support.

DPS = Damage Per Second, also damage dealer or damage dealing class.

Dungeon (instance) = A copy of a particular dungeon for a group of players, parallel worlds which let different groups of players explore the same content in separate instances.

Emote = An entry in a text-based chat client that indicates an action taking place. It can be accompanied by sound and animation.

Epic mount: Epic = A class of items or equipment that are very powerful and difficult to acquire. Mount = An animal or a machine that players can ride or fly on which increases movement speed during travel.

Expansion = An addition to an existing role-playing game, tabletop game or video game. These add new game areas, weapons, objects, and/or an extended storyline to complete an already released game.

Gank (Ganking) = Refers to one player being overwhelmed and killed by a large group. Can be either by a group of other players doing player-kill or a group of NPC monsters. Typically has the connotation that the other people had an unfair advantage (in number or level).

Group kicked = Excluded from the group.

Guild = An organization of players. Most of the time guilds are supported by in-game systems that allow for sharing of resources, experiences, and information with other members.

IRL = In Real Life

To level up (Leveling up) = To progress to the next level of player character abilities, often by acquiring experience points in role-playing games.

Main = The primary character of all the characters a players has.

Newbie = A new, inexperienced player to a particular game.

Noob = The pejorative form of newbie.

Patch = Any alteration to an existing game ranging from a fix of a simple bug to new graphics, architecture and sounds.

PuG = Pick up Group – a group assembled on the spot for a quest, a PvP battle, or an instance.
/popcorn = Illustrative of the expression “pass the popcorn”, suggests a by-stander stance while watching a conflict take place, much as a person reacts when watching a movie at the cinema.

Quest = A quest is a task given to a player character that yields a reward when completed.

Questing = The activity of completing quests.

Spammer = A person who sends an overly repeated message or large useless quantity of text in a Chat channel.
1.1 Introduction

*What are you looking at? Get the fuck away already!* This type of language and much worse is encountered more and more in all corners of the online communication realm. General or targeted, spontaneous or planned, sarcastic or downright malicious, systematic or one time event, online offensive behaviour is encountered with a great frequency ever since the usage of various social media platforms became almost an everyday necessity.

The title of this paper, *In computer veritas*, is a reference to *In vino veritas*, the Latin saying which translates to *In wine lies the truth*. Just like alcohol makes people act uninhibited and reveal feelings and opinions that they wouldn’t otherwise disclose, research on the online disinhibition effect indicates that people get the same unrestrained feeling from using the computer (Suler 2004, Joinson 2007).

In order to exemplify the way that offensive language is used online, I will present three cases of encountered online offensive behaviour. The first one is of Lizzie Velásquez from Texas, USA, a girl who has very often been the target of mean comments regarding her physical appearance. Then I will present a case from Sweden, where Julia, a girl who questioned a big store’s choice of merchandise, became the target of online hateful messages, rape and death threats, and finally a case from Uppsala University, where a student made inappropriate comments about his professor.

**USA, Texas.** “Do the world a favour and kill yourself”, “I would go blind if I saw her on the street”, “Kill it with fire”, “Looks like an alien escaped Area 51, will give 500€ to anyone who captures this monster alive!” These are just a few of the comments that Lizzie Velásquez has to deal with on a daily basis. Lizzie was born in Austin, Texas with a very rare medical condition that makes her unable to gain any weight. She has zero percent body fat and the most she has ever weighed was 29 kilograms. She is blind in one eye while having limited vision in the other. In 2006, when she was 17 years old she stumbled upon an eight seconds video on YouTube with the title “World's ugliest woman” which contained pictures of her and had over 4 million views. In only a few days, the video got thousands of comments from people wondering why her parents kept her and how is she able to look in the mirror each day without ending her life and asking her to move to a remote place where she wouldn't inconvenience anyone with her hideous looks. In an interview for BBC Lizzie reveals: “I cried for many nights - as a teenager I thought my life was over. I couldn't bring myself to talk to anybody about it, I didn't tell any of my friends, I was just so shocked that it had happened” (BBC News 2015).

**Sweden, H&M.** Coming closer in time and space is an incident that happened a few years ago in Sweden when a young girl questioned H&M's decision of selling Tupac t-shirts and left the
following message on the Facebook page of the famous clothes retailer: “Hello H&M. Yesterday I went in your store and saw that you were selling a t-shirt with the face of a convicted rapist and are marketing it like if it's something cool. Selling a t-shirt with the face of the Hagaman (a Swedish sexual offender convicted for multiple rapes) would have been just as okay?” Almost instantly, her message got numerous replies, most of them malicious ones wishing her to get raped, die by stone throwing, drowning or by hanging (SVT 2013). Some of the messages were: "Retard, go commit suicide", "Fuck off, I hope you get raped", "Please shoot yourself", “Do you want to feel humiliated? If so, I happily piss on your face”. This scandal drew a lot of media attention and social involvement from people who were condemning the type of hateful comments that Julia received, but also H&M for not removing them immediately. Soon, the story was picked up by the international media as well. The Wall Street Journal considers that H&M had a “clumsy response” to the threats Julia received and characterizes the comments as “nasty” and “threatening”: “H&M encouraged commenters to use civilized language, adding that they would remove comments that were unpleasant or contained swear words, they didn’t for a full month after the initial posting” (The Wall Street Journal 2013). Some of the questions that arose during the debate were: who are the people writing these comments and why is their reaction so violent, do they really mean what they are saying, are the commenters simply young and uneducated or is there a more complex issue at the root of all this?

These are just two of the increasing number of cases where internet hostility is displayed in abundance. Whether people actually mean the message that they are conveying or if their threats are empty ones, the receiver of the comments is equally affected. As for the possible explanation that the people behind these types of comments are young and uneducated, this is not the case according to the final case of this introduction.

Sweden, Uppsala University. On the Facebook page of a program within the Information Systems Department, a student talked about a teacher saying that “I think that we are nice people who make the conscious decision of not slicing her to death”. Everything started with a student who was denied a higher grade and complained about it on the Facebook page of the program group. His entry got multiple replies culminating with the one presented above. Anneli Edman, the Director of Studies of the department and the person responsible for taking care of this type of cases, said that the level of aggression of the comments accelerated rapidly and it got more out of control with every reply posted.

Concerning the reasons why the comment was posted, the Director of Studies is still unsure: “We wanted to understand why he did it but he couldn't explain what happened in him in those moments. It seemed that he didn't really want to look back at it and try to find the reasons. He said that he didn't really know too well why he did it and that he just got more and more frustrated as the
comments piled up. In a way, it was group pressure of who wrote more aggressive, more specific and more offensive comments”.

Regarding this case, Anneli Edman believes that in an online setting people abandon their better judgment too easily about what to post and that this is related to the possibility of commenting anonymously and to the fact that people don’t see the reaction that their message has on the person that it is addressed to. She concludes by saying that “it is crucial that we have a better understanding of the internet and its climate in order to avoid stepping in traps that might lead us into an online conflict either as the victim or as the aggressor”.

Regardless of age or level of education, more and more nasty and flaming comments make their way over the internet. If years back we could talk about peer pressure into taking up smoking for example, now there seems to be the case of peer pressure and earning your fellow colleagues’ appreciation by actively trying to harm other people online and taking pleasure and pride from doing so. When and how did words stop matter? Is it okay to say anything as long as you don't really mean it? Has our threshold for online trash-talking and flaming lowered so much that words lose their meaning and we are in a state of everything goes?

So far, we identified occurrences of offensive behaviour on social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube. Here, users must create an account in order to post a comment. This account could be entirely based on false information, it might reflect a different gender, age or country of residence than the subscriber’s real ones, however its existence is a prerequisite for any and all activity on these online media platforms.

Yet, there are corners of the online realm where interacting with other people doesn’t require the mere setting up of an account, regardless of its level of accuracy. One example for such a circumstance is online gaming. Here people from all over the world who have purchased a game that requires access to the internet can interact on a specific platform generated by the game developers. In this setting, players don’t have to create a profile, or submit any personal information in order to interact with others. For example, one of the most popular online games at the moment, judging by number of subscribers and years of existence, is World of Warcraft. WoW, in short, is a massively multiplayer online role playing game, whose very being is tightly entwined with its ability to provide a communication platform focused on player interaction. In order to play the game, aside from buying it and paying a recurring subscription, players have to customize and name at least one avatar which becomes the character they log into the game with and use to interact with both the game content as well as other players. When creating their character, WoW subscribers must choose an unique name, which becomes their online identity. The name length must be between of 3 to 12 letters, which cannot
include special characters or spaces but can include accented letters. As such, it remains entirely up to the player to choose whether their online persona hints in the least or not to their name and background as well as resemble their actual appearance.

Even though the chosen avatar features and name speak to player originality and imagination, they give no personal information on the player’s actual age, name, gender, education or background to the other subscribers. The only place where a WoW subscriber is required to give personal information is on their account on the game website, which is used to manage the subscription and payment details, but that one is entirely private and as such inaccessible to other players.

The fact that people who play World of Warcraft can choose to be completely anonymous made this game a well suited platform for my research into uninhibited online behaviour, specifically offensive language usage and flaming, reflected in this paper as the use of insults and profanity with the intent to induce harm. Here I analyse the different factors that lead to online disinhibition in an environment where both anonymity and invisibility are a given due to the very way the game is set up.

1.2 Aim and research questions
This thesis aims to analyse offensive behaviour in World of Warcraft in order to identify the triggers with the most flaming potential. Also, it aims to analyse how do WoW players act in hostile settings and the potential of game embedded features to defuse or inflate volatile situations.

In an effort to shed some light as to what makes people display offensive behaviour while online, specifically while being engaged in online gaming, this thesis addresses three main research questions. This thesis will investigate how World of Warcraft players choose to act in an offensive setting, which triggers lead to flaming and to what extent the slash command emote function offers the means or even enables players to release their tensions. I intend to outline what is nowadays acceptable to communicate while playing World of Warcraft and to identify the main triggers that make people react out of line. Also, by looking at the relationship between offensive language and the usage of the emotes function, I want to investigate a possible connection between the two.

In order to address these questions, chat logs from the game were collected and analyzed and the findings served as base for creating a survey. With the aid of the snowball effect sampling method and posting the survey on the major World of Warcraft fan sites, a total number of 124 World of Warcraft player respondents were reached.
1.3 Outline of thesis
This thesis is composed of four main sections of study. The background portion of this thesis is dedicated to contextualizing the research problem by offering an overview of the rapid increase of internet coverage and online activity and by showing the existing trends in internet usage. The background is followed by an overview of previous research both on online offensive language and on World of Warcraft which highlights that even though the game has been put under the microscope by many scientists along the way, there is a gap that my study can fill since none of the existing research looks at communication within the game from a flaming point of view. The next section is dedicated to the theoretical background. This portion highlights the way in which being online allows people to speak their minds protected by the anonymity wall, invisible to their chatting partner and uninhibited by social rules and consequences. First a thorough explanation of the concept of flaming is given followed by a presentation of the main theories used in the paper, the online disinhibition effect and the theory of cognitive dissonance.

The next section depicts the methodology employed and offers an outline for the empirical work. Here I motivate and discuss my method of choice, going through its advantages and challenges. In the presentation and analysis of the results I go over the findings of my study while linking them to the research questions and theoretical background in order to form a complete circle for my analysis. The final section is dedicated to formulating my conclusions, including a few final inferences, to summarizing the study as well as pointing out the possible future uses of my research in a broader context.

1.4 Relevance of study
Even though the internet itself might be a platform that could encourage or even enable people to act in an offensive manner, I argue that it is extremely important to understand how this medium works. If we want to try and dim the aggressive flame in the online discourse, we have to find out exactly what the triggers are. It is beneficial to understand if our online presence is influenced for the most part by outside factors like anger or frustration from our day to day life or if the game itself gives us the push in the flaming direction. By looking at the occurrences of offensive language usage and its possible link to the features of emotes, we can begin to identify patterns that warn us as users, but also the game developers about the connection between the two. Once we understand the triggers, we can begin to protect ourselves from getting to the point where flaming people becomes a practice, unregulated, unsanctioned and unstoppable.
2.1 Background

Today, more than 42% of the world's population has access to the internet. This represents a 7% increased from 2014. The global spread of internet connections happened fast and it grew from one billion in 2005 to two billion five years later and reached three billion at the end of last year (Internet Live Stats 2015). According to ITU, there are 4 billion people at the moment without internet access and 90% of them come from developing countries. As for Europe, the Internet penetration passed 79% this year bringing it to the highest value in the world, followed by America where two out of three people have access to an internet connection (International Telecommunication Union 2014).

When it comes to Internet and social media usage, statistics show that the use of various social interaction platforms continues to grow. A total of 29% of the world's population is active on at least one social media site. Compared with 2014, a 12% increase was noted in the monthly active user category totaling over 2 billion people logging on their country's most active social network. While for Europe and USA the most used social media site is Facebook, reports show that over half of the Internet users in 2015 use two or more social interaction platforms, a 10% increase from the previous year which speaks at the same time about the increase in usage of sites like Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and LinkedIn (Pew Research Centre 2014).

Last but not least, applications like Whatsapp, Viber and Facebook Messenger also had a considerable increase in users, declaring millions of new active users every month (Wearesocial 2015).

Going back to Europe, the EU's statistics report Eurostat 2014 shows that Sweden together with Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Finland and The Netherlands dominate the top of the internet user list, with more than 90% of their population having access to internet.

In Sweden, 91% of the population over 12 years old has access both to the internet and to a computer while 88% has an internet connection at home. In the 6-65 age category , a 90% internet usage habit was noticed while if we narrow it down to the 12-55 age group, the statistics go as high as 100 percent. 80% of young pensioners and children under six years old and 30% of the people over 75 years old use the internet while 90% of the people ages 12-45 are using the internet daily. (Statens mediaråd 2015).

According to the same report for 2015 released by Statens Mediaråd, half of the two years old children use the internet. At the age of three, 3 out of 4 go online, while at age seven the percentage reaches 90. As for daily use, statistics show that every fourth child between the age of 2 and 3 years old and every third child between the ages of 4 and 6 goes online every day.
When it comes to the need of being connected to others, interact and communicate, 58% of children in the age group 9-12 use at least one form of social media and the numbers go up to 91% in the age group 13-16 and peak at 95% for the 17-18 category.

The statistics presented here offer context and help establish a pattern in internet usage, showing that people spend more and more time online and that they feel the need to stay connected even when they are not at their computers. If 5-10 years ago, shutting down your computer meant completely going offline, these days we are in a permanent online mode. The computer is not the one and only mean of being on the internet anymore as smart phones and tablets allow us to stay connected no matter when or where and communicate either in real time or in an asynchronous form. As such a typical day could have a person switch between smart phones to tablets to laptops to desktops in order to mark their presence on social media, to check multiple email accounts or to log in several online games, from Facebook games to console and PC games.

When it comes to online gaming, the particular branch this thesis is investigating is the massively multiplayer online role playing games. The MMORPG’s genre developed from MUD’s or Multi User Dungeons. MUDs were text-based games meaning that the players were highly impacting the direction that the game was taking by deciding what quests to complete and which way the storyline would go. In this type of games, characters were gaining levels and upgrading their armor by completing quests and defeating monsters. The big difference between MUDs and MMORPGs is that in the latter, multiple players could be online in the same time in the same online world.

The first MMORPGs started to appear in the late 90’s with games like Ultima Online and Everquest, while in the first years of the 21st century new and more graphically detailed games like Final Fantasy, EverQuest II and Guild Wars were launched. However, the most successful game from this genre to date is World of Warcraft which at its peak went over the 12 million subscribers mark compared with for example EverQuest who had at its upper subscriber limit only 500.000 subscribers.

Statistics show that in July 2014, there were approximately 23.4 million active monthly MMO subscribers worldwide. The year before, the total profit on a global scale generated by this type of games summed up to 14.9 billion U.S. dollars. Activision Blizzard, the company who created World of Warcraft, reported for 2013 a total revenue of 912 million U.S. dollars (Statista 2014).

As we can see, the time we spend online translates into huge revenues for the main actors of the gaming industry. As such whether a person is online or not, is not the question anymore, but rather which of the many available platforms they choose. In this setting, it becomes imperative that we investigate and analyze closer our online behaviour.
This chapter laid out the background for the issue at hand, providing context regarding the accelerated spreading of internet accessibility both from a geographical and an age point of view. Furthermore, background of online gaming and statistics about worldwide number of players and the annual gains of the gaming industry were given.

The next chapter is dedicated to the previous research made in this field. Here I will map out what has already been addressed when studying World of Warcraft and evaluate whether or not there is a need for my study.

2.2 What is World of Warcraft?

“World of Warcraft is an online game where players from around the world assume the roles of heroic fantasy characters and explore a virtual world full of mystery, magic, and endless adventure” (World of Warcraft official forum 2015).

World of Warcraft is the most played Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) with a player base estimated at 7.1 million players worldwide. MMORPG's allow thousands of players to be online in the same virtual game world at the same time. This type of games requires an internet connection in order to play and cater to both players who want to play alone but also to those that enjoy playing with others. Even though one can opt for playing alone, most of the advanced content of the game is designed for groups of players who face the most difficult monsters together.

World of Warcraft is based on the Warcraft series of strategy games and “it builds on and expands a legacy of more than fifteen years of epic storytelling. The world is home to a vast number of races and cultures, led by kings, chieftains, lords, ladies, archdruids, and everything in between. Some of people share bonds of friendship reaching back thousands of years; others are sworn enemies with long histories of bitter hatred” (World of Warcraft official forum 2015). Out of the many kingdoms and tribes within this virtual world, the most important two factions are the horde and the alliance and their specific races. Fighting for the horde are the orcs, taurens, trolls, forsaken, blood elves and goblins while the alliance heroes are the humans, gnomes, dwarves, night elves, draenei and worgens. There is one more race, the pandarens, who represent the balance between the two factions and may join either of them. Every player gets to decide how their character will look in the character personalization screen and pick out a class to play opting between the hunter, druid, mage, warlock, rogue, monk, warrior, death knight, priest, shaman and paladin. Within the game, every player fulfils a specific role based on the class that he chose. While for example mages and warlocks are considered caster classes who deal damage but are vulnerable to attacks from monsters, warriors or druids can take on the role of
“tanks” or protectors of the group who force the monsters to attack them instead of any other players and in return they need to be healed by classes like priests and monks.

The game is ever changing, adding more content either through patches or through a new expansion every other year: The Burning Crusade, Wrath of the Lich King, Cataclysm, Mists of Pandaria and the current one, Warlords of Draenor. With every new expansion the maximum level increases by either 5 or 10 levels and new continents are being revealed containing thousands of new quests and adventures.

When creating a new character, a player must first choose a realm that they want to play on. Since WoW has millions of active players, they are allocated to different servers which are divided into four categories based on what type of game play they allow: Player versus Enemies (PVE) where players can't engage the other faction's players into battle unless both parties agree to it, Player versus Player (PVP) where fighting opposite faction's players is enabled by default in the open world, PVE-Role play (PVE-RP), same rules as the PVE servers with the addition that role-playing is mandatory, PVP-Role play (PVP-RP), same rules as PVP servers, but also role-playing is mandatory. When choosing a RP server, be it PVP or PVE, players fully immerse in the story-line of the game, becoming one with their character, thinking and speaking like their character is actually who they are and as if the online world is the real world. For example, these players can wander in the world, saying that they are out for a walk to clear their heads and plan revenge against a faction leader who wronged them.

Even though from level 1 to 100 one can choose to play completely alone, the great majority of the content designed for maximum level characters is group oriented. Once a player reaches 100 (if not even before) he/she will most likely look for a like-minded community that shares his/hers values and interests. These are called guilds and they make it easier for the player to group up with others in order to complete all the content destined for the level 100 players like dungeons (completed in 5 man groups), arenas (2-5 player versus player groups), raids or battlegrounds (10-25 man groups) or massive open world player versus player battles (2-40 players).

2.3 Communication within the game. Layers of chat.

“At its core, what makes it such a fun game is that you share this world with thousands of other players at the same time. Chatting with other players, forming groups, joining guilds, and most importantly, making friends is essential if you want to get the most out of World of Warcraft” (World of Warcraft official forum 2015).

Within World of Warcraft players have a plethora of ways to communicate with each other. When using the chat function of the game, players can choose what information regarding their identity
they want to disclose. As such, some decide to keep their complete anonymity while others reveal their real names and other personal information. Depending on the target audience, the number of people involved and the type of activity performed, fourteen channels of communication were identified.

The **whisper** channel is the most private way of communication provided by the game. It is basically a two way conversation channel visible only to the two players involved in the chat.

The **say** and **yell** channels offer limited radius message spreading. When a player says something in the say channel, only players close by can see it and as such reply to it. It is quite common for conversations between strangers to spark via the say channel. The yell channel also has a limited radius, but it reaches further than the say one. However, yelling is often considered rude, especially when players overuse it.

The **local defense** and **general** chats are available to all people in a certain area of the game world. The main use of local defense is to warn players and coordinate in the event that other players attack their region or city. The general chat is also zone based and can be used for example by players who ask for help with certain quests.

**Looking for group** and **Guild Recruitment** are two channels that were implemented in the game with the purpose of allowing players to find other players with the same objectives and aspiration. In the first channel's case, players can use it to find a group for a harder difficulty quest as for the second one, players browse through it until they find a guild whose recruitment message seems most appealing.

Capital cities are huge hubs for players to buy and sell items, to train professions and visit their class trainer. Once in a capital city, the **trade** channel is available to all players on the server who are also in a capital city and is used to advertise merchandise, trade it against other goods or to buy consumables and equipment.

When in a group of 2 up to 5 members, players can use the **party** channel where everything that any of the members says is viewed by everyone in that party. Players use this channel when grouped for a dungeon to coordinate themselves easier or simply when wanting to be in the same group with friends and “hang out”.

When in bigger groups, ranging from 6 up to 40 players, a new form of communication becomes available and that is the **raid** and **battleground** (used for player versus player encounters) chats. Similar to the party chat, everything being written in the raid chat becomes visible to everyone in the raid. Forty players is the biggest sized group that the game has to offer and the raid and battleground chats are mainly used to coordinate players, decide on positions during an encounter, tactics and healing assignments.
When in a guild, players can use the **guild** chat where everyone in the guild can see and respond to what is being written. This channel is used to greet players who come online, to ask people in the guild for help, advice or to simply discuss aspects of the game or personal life.

The game also offers a channel for guild members with a certain rank to use. This is the **officer** channel that only players ranked “officer” in the guild can use. This channel is mainly used by the top management in a guild in order to discuss players’ performance, tactic changes during raids, decision making and anything guild related.

Lastly, players can create **custom channels** and ask their friends to join. The owner of the channel can also moderate it by inviting more members or removing them and they can also choose to password protect the channel to prevent others from joining.

It is worth mentioning that players can be involved in more than one channel at a time. One can talk in whisper while simultaneously carrying a conversation in say and one in the raid channel. Players can also at any moment choose to leave any of these channels at will.

### 2.4 Emotes

A special form of communicating within the game engages the use of a variety of emotes. There are 235 emotes that players can use in the game, but for the purpose of this paper, I will only list the most used ones (a comprehensive list of emotes can be found in the Appendix 3). An emote is a way for a player to communicate an action without actually saying something directly. Some of the emotes available come with a special animation and/or sound. Emotes can be used either on their own or targeted to another player. For example, typing `/kiss` will allow everyone in your close proximity to see the message “You blow a kiss into the wind.”. However, if you have a player targeted, everyone will see this message instead: “You kiss `<target>`”. A number of emotes are illustrated in the screenshot below while being used both with and without a target (in this case the targeted player is named Bullfu):
However, there is a wide range of emotes available that allow players to express their disappointment, anger and disapproval of another player. One of them is the /spit emote that generates the message that someone has spat on you. A short list of the most unpleasant emotes available is presented below and the complete list can be found in the appendix section:

/anger  You raise your fist in anger at <target>.
/frown  You frown with disappointment at <target>.
/glares  You glare angrily at <target>.
/gloat  You gloat over <target>’s misfortune.
/mock  You mock the foolishness of <target>.
/pity  You look down upon <target> with pity.
/regret  You think that <target> will regret it.
/rude  You make a rude gesture at <target>.
/spit  You spit on <target>.
/slap  You slap <target>.
/taunt  You make a taunting gesture at <target>. Bring it!
/threaten  You threaten <target> with the wrath of doom.

Looking at this feature of the game, I question the need for these potentially offensive emotes within the game. Just by writing a simple command, we can convey an offensive message to someone letting them know that we spit on them or that we consider them cowards or that we want to engage in a fight with them.
2.5 Chat in action

Now that we established that communication is a core function of the game, I will present a conversation which took place in the trade chat channel. The conversation is mainly between two players: Mugentus and Juicyblunth, but a number of other persons are involved. Mugentus is annoyed because someone (Deaglon) posted a false advertisement in the trade channel, trying to trick other people into buying a service that didn't really exist. As a reply, Juicyblunth tells him to get an addon (an interface modifier that allows people to block certain messages and players) and calls him a retard. From there on, people on the server take sides either against Juicyblunth for calling people retards, or against Mugents for being a “crybaby”, “retard”, “bitch”, “3 years old” and more.

12:10:58 [Deaglon]: WTS Lich King, Yogg-Saron, Deathwing, Ragnaros boss kill lockout 500 g each, come get your epic mounts today fast and easy without clearing the whole raids, whisper me for more info
12:12:45 [Mugetsus]: stop trying to scam ppl
12:14:53 [Juicyblunth]: get the badboy addon, retard
12:16:11 [Mugetsus]: i'm not gonna answer because its like ppl like u who want to start to argue
12:16:30 [Juicyblunth]: nah i'm just saying if you're sick of the spammers, get the addon
12:16:39 [Juicyblunth]: getting mad in chat wont make them stop
12:17:52 [Mugetsus]: starting to tell me i'm a retard and install a addon isn't helping...
12:18:11 [Mugetsus]: replying like that is even stupid
12:18:36 [Juicyblunth]: if u dont think installing the addon isnt helping i dont know what to tell you
12:19:35 [Thinkpynk]: no need to call ppl retards tho
12:19:39 [Shushoe]: maybe don't be such a cry baby
12:19:58 [Thinkpynk]: retard is like the new "hello" these days...
12:20:06 [Nervyn]: yup :(
12:20:15 [Juicyblunth]: okay maybe i should have said mentally challenged, but whatever he gets the point
12:20:22 [Mugetsus]: you shouldnt be calling ppl retard for no reason
12:20:47 [Móonmoonpow]: It usually means that person has problems themselves
12:20:58 [Galeny]: ^
12:21:01 [Thinkpynk]: wow you're bringing a bit of irony into it too. makes you feel smart and funny, Juicyblunth?
12:21:16 [Juicyblunth]: im so stoned i dont even care bro
Looking through these fifteen minutes of conversation raises a lot of question marks. First off, what from the comment that Mugetsus first made, asked for the response he received from Juicyblunth? Basically, if a player doesn't want to be bothered by someone who is actively trying to trick other players for money, should, instead of standing up to the scammer, simply chose to ignore it on the principle of “what I don't see can't hurt me, ignorance is bliss”. If the said person doesn't do it, then they deserve it and shouldn't complain about it. We can easily compare it with day to day activities where society is pro-action and the Police is always trying to get people to be vigilant and report any wrongdoings they encounter. Instead, Juicyblunth's way is to cross on the other side of the street and close your eyes until the perpetrator has finished his wrongful act.

Secondly, can it be a case of peer pressure even among strangers? It is obvious that multiple people joined both camps but what was it that made them chose a side? Some felt like Mugetsus shouldn't take offense in being called a retard. In addition, him reacting on it makes him weak, immature and a little girl. Others felt like bad words are being used without much consideration for the person on the recipient side and that people shouldn't call others retards for no reason.

This brings us to another question that rose up from the statement and then the agreement to it from another player that retard is like the new "hello" these days... The two camps here are diametrically opposed. Juicyblunth, Shushoe, Xkeniwa and Cubik are in agreement that the use of the
word retard is not so deleterious. The overuse of bad language and insults made us so accustomed to seeing them written down that we ourselves begin to utilize rude words as the norm, or at least that's what the three aforementioned players seem to believe. Pointing out any reality that doesn't go along with theirs is creditable with a plethora of name calling like “don't be such a cry baby”, “mentally challenged”, “Gonna cry about it? Be a little bitch about it?”.

On the other side are players like Thinkpynk, Mōonmoonpow and Blackzaphire who defend Mugetsus and stand up to the others by pointing out that there was no need to call someone retard just because he wanted to try and stop a scammer. Towards the end of the chat log, some players react to the hostility shown and state that it wasn't a pleasant exchange of words and ending with a comment from a gamer saying: I wish all could be nice and kind towards each other :)

Can we talk about the medium itself being at fault here? The internet is a platform that welcomes all ages, sexes, opinions, religions, education levels and sexual orientations. From an age exposure vantage point, the Internet reaches toddlers and is pushing its way through the late years of retirement. Are we in an overall infant era of the internet where due to the lack of any real rules and to the possibility of staying hidden behind the walls of anonymity and invisibility, we act out and behave like the parents aren't at home? What do we elect to do with this freedom, what do we choose to paint on the white canvas that the internet offers?
3. Previous research

Acting in an offensive manner online is not an uncommon phenomenon any more. Selfe and Meyer argue that “heated, emotional, sometimes anonymous, venting is a common, if not universal, feature of computer-based conferences” (Selfe and Meyer 1991, 170).

Present more and more in internet discourse, the use of offensive language has been taken up by various researchers interested in understanding it. Reinig, Briggs and Nunamaker performed a study called “Flaming in the electronic classroom” where they defined flaming as “verbal attacks often characterized by profanity, obscenity and insults intended to offend either persons or organizations” (Reinig et al. 1997, 45). They made a comparison between the frequency at which flaming occurred in the e-classroom compared with a traditional classroom and noticed that disruptive communication was more often present in the case of the electronic classroom.

“Flaming in electronic communication” is another study that looks at the use of offensive language in computer mediated communications. Here, the authors Alonzo and Aiken look at the reasons behind flaming from the Users and Gratification Theory perspective and conclude that “high levels of assertiveness and sensation seeking predicted flaming, and males tended to participate more in the activity than females did” (Alonzo and Aiken 2004, 205).

In “Flaming on YouTube”, three Dutch researchers studied user behaviour on this platform and found that the use of offensive language is extremely common. Some of their findings showed that people prefer not posting any videos for fear of being flamed. Some evidence of using flaming for entertainment and as a tool for expressing disagreement was also found (Moor et al. 2010).

Offensive language was also analyzed in relation to cyberbullying which was the subject of the study called “Anonymity and roles associated with aggressive posts in an online forum”. Here, the authors noticed that cyberbullying attacks are almost always accompanied by the use of offensive language to insult or threaten the targeted person. They also analyse the dynamic between three types of forum posts authors: the bully, the victim and the defender, and notice that anonymity is a crucial tool for cyberbullies who use it “to reduce the ability of the victim to defend themselves and to shield the cyberbully from social consequences” (Moore et al. 2012, 861).

Looking past the mere effects of anonymity in online interactions is the paper “Effects of anonymity, invisibility and lack of eye-contact on toxic online disinhibition” which studies the extent to which these three factors lead to flaming by examining the answers of 142 participants. The study revealed that the lack of eye contact was the top contributor to the negative effects of online disinhibition (Lefler and Barak 2011).
Three American researchers, Johnson, Cooper and Chin, looked at the connection between anger and the “antinormative hostile communication of emotion” referred to as flaming in online discourse. In their paper “Anger and flaming in computer mediated negotiations among strangers” they found a link between the two especially when one of the parties involved felt unfairly treated or experienced frustration with the limitations of the communication channel itself (Johnson et al. 2008).

One of the most recent studies on flaming has the title “Flaming? What flaming? The pitfalls and potentials of researching online hostility” in which the author Emma Jane looks at the last 30 years of research done in the field of hostile communication, including cyber bullying, online stalking, online violence, trolling and flaming and advocates for “a scholarly shift which conceptualizes online hostility as a broad field of inquiry whose horizon is an ethical one” (Jane 2015, 84).

World of Warcraft is as much a game of content and challenges as one giant platform for human interaction and communication and the players interactions made for a promising ground base for research.

World of Warcraft has been at the center of researchers' interest for many years now. There have been thousands of papers written on it, from various angles and perspectives. Papers like “Going to school in World of Warcraft” (Ekenberg and Wiklund 2008) and “On the horizon: Scalable learning: From simple to complex in World of Warcraft” (Steinkuehler and Thomas 2009) look at the game as an educational tool, identifying a series of noteworthy properties that make the game an intricate and scalable learning environment. In the same category falls the link between WoW and second language learning. Studies like “Affordances for second language learning in World of Warcraft” (Warschauer et al. 2012) and “An eco-dialogical study of second language learners' world of Warcraft (WoW) gameplay” (Newgarden et al. 2015) identify a series of affordances for language development and socialization within the game. As such, the fact that WoW promotes goal-directed, collaborative action between people with various command levels of the target language allows the game to be perceived as a safe space for learning. Here, the players are immersed in the specific speaking environment and have various options for engaging in a form of authentic communication either through reading or writing but also, in the case of voice chat channels, speaking and listening to the target language.

When talking about traffic data and user behaviour, there have been multiple papers that stress the importance of internet traffic measurements. “Analysis of World of Warcraft Traffic patterns and User behavior” (Kihl et al. 2010) is one of them and the authors consider that is it crucial to make these measurements in order to comprehend the way that Internet is being utilized and also how this type of software might impact the network. In the same line of thought falls “Monitoring and Analysis
of Player Behavior in World of Warcraft” (Sužnjević et al. 2012), a paper whose authors developed a tool that allowed them to collect data about the amount of time that various players spent online, how often they logged in the game, what activities they preferred as well as their in-game location.

World of Warcraft and race is a topic that also has gotten a lot of attention from the researchers. “Race-Based Fantasy Realm: Essentialism in the World of Warcraft” (Monson 2012) and “What Makes an Orc? Racial Cosmos and Emergent Narrative in World of Warcraft” (Packer 2014) investigate the topics of racial essentialism and ethnicity within the game while pivoting on collective emergent behaviour and demographics.

World of Warcraft has stirred the interest of psychologists over the years making the topic of “World of Warcraft and alcohol: A secret love story?” (Thorens et al. 2012) and “World of Warcraft: A Family Therapist's Journey into Scapegoated Culture” (Jordan 2014) that looked at the prospect of using it as a possible treatment for PTSD and Social Anxiety Disorder and other aspects of both individual and group therapy.

Narrowing the existing research to communication within the game we find the paper “Online communication and social well-being: How playing World of Warcraft affects players' social competence and loneliness” (Mandy et al. 2013). Here the authors conducted a survey with 790 respondents that found that teenagers who play WoW show an increase of social competence and a decrease of loneliness.

In “Communication, Coordination, and Camaraderie in World of Warcraft”, (Chen 2009) compared the chat logs of two long nights of playtime in the game, one from a relaxed raid gathering and one from a night governed by failure to defeat the monsters that the raid was facing. He concludes that even though there was more tension and frustration in the second night, the group managed to recover from the poor performance thanks to their desire to preserve their camaraderie.

Lastly, in “Surveillance and community: Language policing and empowerment in a World of Warcraft guild” (Collister 2014), the author examines a community that describes itself as a safe space for women, LGBT and other players who have difficulties with finding a community where they feel included and at home. She noticed that this particular community had strict rules set in place against the use of offensive language and she also made a comparison between the guild's regulation versus the one implemented by the owners of the game.

Even though a great number of papers written around the topic of WoW include aspects of communication and language, to my knowledge, there are no studies made from the vantage point of this thesis. While the online disinhibition effect is well known and the effects of the toxic disinhibition are quite often talked about, there is no study that maps the occurrences of the usage of offensive
language nor one that attempts to identify the triggers that lead to hostile communication within the game.

In this chapter I mapped the state of current research related to both offensive language online and to World of Warcraft and showed that there is a clear gap that my study can fill. In the next chapter I start by defining the concept of flaming. I continue with presenting the work of John Suler on The Online Disinhibition Effect, who argues that certain aspects of the online communication sphere make people act unhindered, sharing and sometimes over-sharing, expressing their blunt opinions with less regard for the feelings of their interlocutor and in the most extreme cases, being overly aggressive and bullying. Following Suler, I take a closer look at the theory of cognitive dissonance which provides the tools for better understanding the players’ inclination to distort the truth in order to preserve their self-esteem.
4. Theoretical framework

4.1 The concept of flaming

Flaming is predominantly described as a form of hostile or offensive communication where disrespectful, rude and insulting words are being employed in order to provoke others or inflict harm (Lea et al. 1992; Reining et al. 1998). The term flaming is usually associated with belligerent intentions communicated through a wide array of vulgar and obscene words intended to inflict harm to another person, in most cases as a result of uninhibited behaviour (Sproull and Kiesler 1992, Reining et al. 1998). Since the early 80's, researchers used the term flaming in correlation to a number of manifestations of uninhibited behaviour like “expressing oneself more strongly on the computer than one would in other communication settings” (Kiesler et al. 1984,1130) where, empowered by their anonymity, people allow “the expression of strong and inflammatory opinions” (Siegel et al. 1986, 161).

Several research papers observed that flaming has a higher occurrence rate in computer mediated channels than in face to face communication (Kiesler et al. 1985; Sproull et al. 1986; Siegel et al, 1986; Orenga et al. 2000).

Further studies show that the lack of social cues in online communication, compared to face to face interaction, is the main culprit that leads to flaming incidence (Sproull and Kiesler 1986; Hiltz et al. 1989; Reining et al. 1998). Computer mediated communication allows the participants to share their feelings unhindered by any fear of social consequences or judgment (Sproull and Kiesler 1991; Pinsonneaut and Heppel 1998). Gary Chapman points at the fact that in an online written environment there are no visual cues nor is there a bond between actions and social consequences that would transfer into the offline life, which allows people who are separated by countries or even continents to engage in flaming without the fear of bodily harm (Chapman 1995). Also on the geographical distance point of view, Patricia Wallace notes that “It is easier to attack someone if they are out of sight and far away. We can't see the injured and pained expression on their faces, and we feel so far and more immune to a counter-attack” (Wallace 1999, 126). Looking further than the lack of cues informing of facial expressions like smiling or frowning, Sara Kiesler and her colleagues theorize that flaming could be a consequence of de-individuation, or of the hindrances encountered online in coordination and feedback. Lastly, it could be a direct result of abiding to a particular set of rules and norms linked to the online/computing subculture (Kiesler et al. 1984).

In attempting to identify the reasons behind flaming, researchers looked at it from a great variety of vantage points starting with demographic to psychological (Kitchens 1998). While some
looked at differences between the two genders and concluded that men show a higher inclination towards a flaming behaviour (Aiken and Waller 2000), others proposed that the propensity to flame is caused by hostility (Reining et al. 1998). Researchers have also suggested that flaming is directly linked to disinhibition (Pinsonneault et al. 1998) and anonymity since “when people believe their actions cannot be attributed directly to them personally, they tend to become less inhibited by social conversions and restraints” (Wallace 199, 124-5).

4.2 The Online Disinhibition Effect

John Suler talks about how people online say and do certain things that they would not otherwise in their day to day life. Online, he says, they feel more relaxed, away from the social pressure of behaving a certain way, they feel like they can open up and say exactly how they feel without adding any filters. This is what the online disinhibition effect is about and Suler divides this phenomenon into two completely opposite categories: benign and toxic.

*The benign disinhibition* refers to those occurrences when people share their dreams, fears and hidden wishes while showing acts of kindness, getting involved into charitable actions, taking time out of their lives to help others.

*The toxic disinhibition* refers to the dark side of the internet: rude behaviour and language ranging from bullying, trash talking, flaming, threatening others to even crime and violence (Suler 2004, 321-25). Suler warns us though that the line between the two is not always very clear and that some situations might be considered benign from one point of view and toxic from another, as the distinction between the two is sometimes hard to make.

Regardless of classifying certain online disinhibition as benign or toxic, Suler is interested in finding out what exactly causes it. In order to find out, he came up with six factors that together led to its creation.

*Dissociative anonymity* refers to the peace of mind people get when thinking that their actions in the online world can not be traced back to them. When online people decide what, if anything, they want to share about themselves, they can hide their real name or post under a false identity all together from a different country or even continent. That being said, we live in a world of technology and the more we learn about anonymity, the more we realize that there is no such thing. However, for the less tech-savvy out there who do not want to spend their time tracking down a computer's IP and so on, they only get the information that people want to divulge. Suler thinks of dissociative anonymity as one of the main factors that leads to the online disinhibition effect: “When people have the opportunity to separate their actions online from their in-person lifestyle and identity, they feel less vulnerable about
self-disclosing and acting out, (…) they do not have to own their behaviour by acknowledging it within the full context of an integrated online/offline identity. In fact, people might even convince themselves that those online behaviours <are not me at all>” (Suler 2004, 322).

The dissociative anonymity applies to World of Warcraft quite well seeing as, when in the game, people know a player by their screen name and nothing more and there is no way for a player to find out another player's identity or any personal details unless the said person decides to share it. Even though the majority of communities in WoW use a voice communication software for an easier coordination during big gatherings in game, players can simply opt for not speaking at all if they fear that their location might be identified due to the other players recognizing their accent. Simply put, unless someone wants to share his name, sex, age, location and so on, there is virtually no possibility for someone else to discover it.

The second factor is invisibility. Suler is of the opinion that invisibility gives people courage online in expressing what they feel when they feel it. Even though some aspects of invisibility overlap with anonymity, the physical invisibility increases the disinhibition effect because people do not have to pay too much attention to how they look when typing a message and maybe even more important, people do not have to see how others react when reading their message: “Seeing a frown, a shaking head, a sigh, a bored expression, and so many other subtle and not so subtle signs of disapproval or indifference can inhibit what people are willing to express” (Suler 2004, 322).

Invisibility is present in WoW too. Any form of written communication within the game allows the players to remain invisible to one another. The only type of face-to-face communication available in the game requires the players' avatars to be in close proximity of each other for the “say” and/or “yell” channels to become usable and visible. Even then, they are able to see only the avatar that the player created to represent himself/herself and not the actual person.

Asynchronicity is the next factor and it refers to fact that when posting on a forum or sending an email, the communication is asynchronous. Some can reply within the hour, others in days, weeks or even months. Suler believes that people display a more disinhibited behaviour when they do not have to handle or deal with an immediate reaction from their interlocutor and that in some cases, people can experience the urge to physically run away after sending a message that is very emotional or personal.

Most of the communication in World of Warcraft happens in real time in the various forms of chat that the game provides. However, players have the possibility to send in game e-mails to each other which represents the only form of asynchronous communication that WoW has to offer.
The fourth factor is **Solipsistic Introjection** which is the result of the lack of social cues coalesced with the form of communication (written). Suler believes that it “can alter self boundaries” to the point where “people might feel that their mind has merged with the mind of the online companion” and where “reading another person's message might be experienced as a voice within one's head. Of course one may not know what the other person's voice actually sounds like, so in one's mind a voice is assigned to that person” (Suler 2004, 323). Suler opines that consciously or not, people might even imagine their interlocutor looking in a certain way based on the messages exchanged between the two parties and that sometimes people assign voices and images to others based on their own expectations and needs. To some extent this is similar to the way we picture a character in a book and get really disappointed when the actors chosen to play the characters in the book do not look anything like we imagined them.

Since World of Warcraft communities have both voice communication options and a dedicated forum where players can share pictures of themselves in real life, it is common that people post or verbally communicate their reaction to seeing or hearing someone for the first time. In quite a few cases, people's reaction is “You really do not sound / look the way I imagined”.

The second to last factor is **Dissociative Imagination** which points at the fact that “consciously or unconsciously, people may feel that the imaginary characters they created exist in a different space, that one's online persona along with the online others live in a make-believe dimension, separate and apart from the demands and responsibilities of the real world” (Suler 2004, 323). The idea that everything that happens online takes place in a completely different world where the real life rules do not apply, may allow people to behave without any inhibition while not having to carry over into the offline world any sort of accountability or feeling of guilt for their online actions and behaviour.

The game in itself splits from reality starting with its very name **World** of Warcraft, not the real world but a secondary one. Even though the game has built in place some mechanisms that encourage and even award players to spend time offline, the great majority of people on role playing servers choose to fully immerse in the storyline of the game. There, players do not act or talk like real life people. Instead they embrace the life of their character acting like it is their own, not wanting to go outside of their barracks because it is raining outside (outside in the game not real life) or speaking only in appropriate game language.

The last factor is **Minimization of Status and Authority**. Offline power and authority do not transfer online. In an online environment people like the idea that everyone is equal and has the right to express their opinions freely regardless of their social, cultural or financial status. Suler notices that people in the real life are not always willing to speak their mind when they feel like their opinions
might upset an authority figure because they fear the consequences that might arise. Online however, “in what feels more like a peer relationship – with the appearance of authority minimized – people are much more willing to speak out and misbehave” (Suler 2004, 324).

World of Warcraft offers a lot of leeway to its players. However, there are rules set in place by the game developers that allow players to report other players if they witness them breaking the rules. For example, there are strict rules against racism and cursing other players. If reported and found guilty, a player might be denied access to the game (get his account locked) for a short or long period of time based on his/her offense up to being banned indefinitely. That being said, there is a wide range of small offenses that are in between and even if they would get their account banned for three hours, players sometimes feel it was worth it just so that they could get to say whatever they wanted to say.

Now that we found a link between the factors leading to online disinhibition and the World of Warcraft users, we can move on to checking how the toxic side of it might be explained or excused by players. In order to do so, we take a look at Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance.

4.3 The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

According to Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), we tend to align our behaviour with the image we have of ourselves. This means that if we act aggressively, or react out of place in a certain situation, we will want to convince ourselves that our behaviour was justified and that the situation we were in demanded such a response. Festinger claims that we do not like our actions and our self image to be out of sync to the point where we feel tension and pressure to try and set the two back in line. Since we can not change what is already done, we will instead work on our perception of the event in question and will succeed in exaggerating the circumstances until they warrant our aggressive reaction to it. This process can occur every time when we treat unfairly someone who didn’t actually deserve an out of place comment from our side and even when the said person did not deserve any retaliation to begin with.

This brings us to the concepts of retaliation and over retaliation which have been the object of studies for decades now. Scientists were interested in pinpointing what exactly qualifies as a “worthy and fair” response to a certain level of aggression and what level of retaliation was fitting. Studies showed that the most infuriating insults were the ones against one’s character, competence or psychical appearance (Martin et al. 1996, 19-26).

Patricia Wallace explains retaliation as one's reaction towards someone who acted in a malicious fashion. This reaction is a response which can be in the form of words or actions, equally harmful.
However, Wallace warns against over-retaliation which is an out of proportion reaction towards someone who “merely stepped on your toe” (Wallace 1999, 123).

Even though, in online games such as World of Warcraft, the need to realign one’s actions and self image might be dulled out by both the medium's nature as a fantasy realm as well as the disinhibition mechanisms at work, there are still indications of such behaviour which suggest that players act under its umbrella. One such example occurred in the guild the author is part of, when a member behaved rudely in a raid composed of strangers and, when asked about it by the guild master, proceeded to blow the circumstances of his rude actions out of proportions in an attempt to justify them and keep his self image intact to himself and the other members of the guild.

4.4 Research questions

After looking at the six pillars that the Online Disinhibition Effect is based on, it is clear that World of Warcraft players benefit from their protection. However, in the context of always being shielded by them making it easier to lash out, what is their attitude towards other players? I propose here the first research question: **How do World of Warcraft players choose to act in an offensive setting?** What is considered flaming by World of Warcraft players? Do they choose to retract from flaming situations or engage in them? Do players act in a reactive or pro-active manner in such situations? Practically, in my research I aimed to establish a list of the most flaming words used in World of Warcraft and to confront the players with it in order to extract their behavioural patterns in flaming situations, which words are acceptable and which hold the most potential for inflating a situation. In order to extract the ways players find more suitable to act on their flaming impulses, my research focused on analyzing what players describe as acceptable situations for flaming others and how they justify their behaviour.

Moving on to the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance applied to flaming and combining them with the affordances that computer mediated communication offer, I found it crucial to investigate the **how** and **in what way** of the flaming triggers and actions. Here I propose the second research question: **What are the main triggers that lead to flaming in World of Warcraft?** In an effort to outline the flaming triggers in World of Warcraft, a list of potentially flammable words and game embedded features was comprised. This list was used in several forms in my research in order to create an hierarchy of these situations, words and emotes. The results thus obtained, correlated with analyzing players’ actual foul language experiences, were used to extract the main triggers for offensive language practices within the game.

Furthermore, are these triggers spilled from the offline life into the game or are they contained within it? In case of the latter, are there any embedded features in World of Warcraft that can act as
triggers for offensive behaviour? This leads to the last research question: To what extent do the existing features of the game, specifically the slash command emote function, offer or even enable players to release and vent their dissatisfactions? Some questions in the survey were formulated with the specific purpose of establishing whether or not the emotes are used instead of actual flaming words and if so to what extend do they provide the same release of tension as offensive language would have. I also included several emotes with inflammatory potential in all the lists with words and situations that were used to extract the triggers of foul behaviour and to compose the hierarchy of most offensive actions in game.
5.1 Methodology

I have been playing WoW for 8 years. My subscription was always active and throughout all this time I have been part of a raiding community that raided 3-4 times a week in sessions of 4 hours. Logging in the game for at least a few hours each day, I accumulated along the years a lot of hours of observations. However, it is one thing to play the game for fun and a completely other thing to study it from a researcher's point of view. This is why, when I embarked on the journey of writing my master thesis, I started first collecting some data and analysing it. The initial step of the data collection was intended to provide context for the rest of the paper. Regardless of my personal opinion as a WoW player, I wanted to get with utmost accuracy an overview of the language usage within the game.

The methods employed in the thesis were a combination between qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the quantitative side, a survey was conducted. On the qualitative side, content analysis was used to go through the chat logs and extract a list with offensive words and it was used also to interpret and analyse the answers to the open end questions of the survey (Krippendorff 2013).

In this regard, during the months of February, March and April, I have collected thousands of chat log lines and analyzed them in the search for offensive language (flaming). The intention was to establish the existence and usage frequency of words of an offensive nature within the game. The chat logs were collected during February and March 2015 from two public channels, trade chat and raid chat of The Maelstrom EU, a European server with a total player population of 11.472. The trade channel was chosen because it is the most used by players outside of a structured group, like a guild or a dungeon group, and also because it is accessible by any player without restrictions. The raid groups communication on the specific raid channel, open only for the members of the raid, was analyzed in order to capture the way players behave in common goal oriented groups. The intention was to cover both the most used, open to all mean of communicating as well as the most specific one, and observe the occurrences of foul language usage in both a loose chat and a strictly goal oriented one.

A manual word frequency count was performed and the offensive language found was divided into three categories based on the gravity of the insults.

**Mildly offensive.** Here were included insults against one's skills as a player or the ones which show someone's unfamiliarity with the game. An example here is “noob”.

**Offensive.** Here were included insults against one's intelligence as well as vulgar words. Examples of words in this category are: “retard”, “idiot”, “cunt”, “bitch”, “pussy”.

**Highly offensive.** Here were included insults against one's race and sexual orientation as well as instances where death was involved. Examples of words included in this category are “nigger”, “faggot”, “go kill yourself”.

34
However, it was the frequency of occurrence and not the specific category that a term belonged to that was used to comprise a list of the most used offensive words. The categories helped in shaping the content analysis for a better understanding of the nature of the top found words and was used to outline a possible balance of their disposition from least to most offensive.

It is important to note that the content analysis performed here was a simplistic one meant to offer insight for the survey and it was not a complete research strategy. I was not looking in depth at the communicative context or at the relation between the users involved in the texts. As such, the context analysis wasn't meant to be used on its own and analyse links between causes and effects, it was only intended to provide an overview of the foul language used in World of Warcraft.

Thus, the content analysis allowed me to make a list of the most used offensive words ranging from “noob” and “bitch” to “faggot”, “nigger” and “cunt”. While going through the data, I noticed that in some raids the language was very civilized, in others players were merely engaging in conversations, while in other raids, everyone seemed extremely confrontational, using foul language and attacking each other. I directed my attention to the encounters where the highest concentration of flaming existed and wanted to understand what triggered players to resort to using offensive language.

After having a clear idea about the overall state of how players within WoW communicated with each other, the next step was the creation of a survey in order to answer my three research questions and also to verify and connect the theory with the problem that the paper brings up for discussion. In doing so, multiple method guides were consulted in designing the questionnaire (Fowler 1995, Gay et al. 2006).

With this research study I aimed to reach at least 100 respondents as to ensure a relevant sample pool. Taking under consideration the rapid pace at which World of Warcraft is developing with new content being added every few months, I gated the survey to be applied only to players with active accounts at the moment the data was collected, By doing so, I ensured that the respondents' opinions were based on current game content and that they didn't lose contact with the game. Furthermore, I took into consideration the responses from players 16 years of age and older, as I wanted the respondents to fulfill a basic self-assessment requirement.

In order to find participants for the survey, two reaching out methods were used. First, the snowball method (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981) which entailed that the researcher would pass the survey in her network of players who were asked after completion to pass it along to their friends to fill it in as well and so on. Even though the respondents could opt to remain anonymous, I took into account the possibility that the first tier of players, the ones with a close relation to the researcher,
might not answer truthfully or simply give answers that would not put their friendship with the researcher at risk.

Wanting to stay clear of any type of bias, I decided to use a second method and create threads on the five biggest WoW forum platforms where I uploaded the survey. Here, I introduced myself, the institution I represented and the subject of my paper, providing a link to the survey. Various ways of contacting the researcher were also given in order for the respondents to be able to get in touch and ask questions in case they needed any clarification concerning the survey.

A total of 124 respondents answered the survey. As it is in the nature of the game when played on European servers to place together people from a variety of countries and since the five WoW forums are accessed daily by users worldwide, there were no further efforts made to ensure a larger pool of respondents from a cultural background point of view.

The survey consists of 29 questions grouped up in several clusters of inquires depicting the main theoretical ideas presented throughout this paper. The questionnaire contains demographic questions about the sample group, multiple choice questions some requiring a single answer and others allowing the selection of multiple answers and rank order scaling questions which were used to determine the sample's opinion on certain words or expressions. Open ended questions were meant to offer the respondents the ground and means to describe their experiences or explain their choices while dichotomous questions were used the least as their ability to provide qualitative information in this case was limited, they were used mainly as introductory means for more in-depth inquiries.

The first four questions are meant to provide background on players and contain information like age, gender, playing habits and top of mind association for the Internet and World of Warcraft.

Group two consists of four questions that allow the respondents to rank different offensive words and emotes scaling them from least flaming to most flaming and also picking at least one of them that they wouldn't mind being called while playing World of Warcraft. Lastly, the fourth question in the group refers to when, if ever, is okay to insult another player.

Group three contains six questions related to the flaming phenomenon. Here players are asked to describe particular instances where they have been flamed and their reaction as well as triggers for when they are the offender.

Group four comprises three questions about the player's habits when they are put in a situation of either becoming upset or very aggravated with another player and also how they react when they are the 3rd person in a two person argument.

Group five is composed of six questions about the game's function called emotes. Here respondents inform about their habits in using this feature, their opinion on some of the most frequently
used emotes and whether they feel it is easier or not to use the emote function instead of regular communication. Here I also looked to identify the measure in which the in-game emote feature acts as catalyst for flaming situations and whether or not the less pleasant emotes are perceived as offensive.

Six questions form the final cluster which goes back to triggers and investigates when do the respondents feel most offended, when are they most likely to retaliate and what are the leading factors to the use of offensive language for them. One of the questions in this block is directed towards identifying which aspect of the game makes players most comfortable with flaming, while the last one asks the respondents' opinions on whether they feel like the language used in WoW over the past five years has changed and if so, to what extent.

The two major theories presented in the theoretical framework chapter were applied in an effort to identify the flaming behavior triggers while playing World of Warcraft, as well as the in-game-embedded features’ ability to support or deflate offensive situations.

The flaming phenomenon and how the respondents chose to use offensive language or react to offensive language being used around them, is reflected by the questions in groups two, three and five.

The online disinhibition effect theory and how it is used to provide justifications for the cognitive dissonance as reaction to flaming other people online is reflected in groups three, four and six.

5.2 Limitations of research design, issues of reliability and validity

Even though an online survey is a great way of collecting data fast from a sizable sample, it also runs the risk of respondents giving hasty answers and not putting too much thought in their replies. In order to counteract this risk, I built up the questionnaire with very few open ended questions while for the rest I provided a considerable amount of answers in hopes that everyone will find one that perfectly describes his/her feelings on the matter.

Still when it comes to looking at the respondents another risk arises, namely that the researcher has no possibility of knowing whether the answers received are truthfully given or not. While some of them might find the anonymity empowering and admit things that they wouldn't otherwise, there is a risk that some respondents give answers that are politically correct and make them look good instead of the way they really feel about the matter at hand. However, this study doesn't aim to reach a sharp and unquestionable conclusion about all the World of Warcraft players as a whole. Instead, the survey is meant to showcase patterns of language usage and possible triggers for flaming in more of an investigative way.

37
Another risk relates to misunderstandings. Asking questions face to face has the advantage that people who might be confused by the way a question is formulated or about the exact meaning of a concept presented, can pose additional questions and receive the needed clarification. When doing an online survey, that possibility did not exist. Moreover, people from different countries might have different interpretations of the same word / expression. In order to counteract this risk I tried to stay away from a too academical language and I provided in almost every question additional explanations both for the concepts used and for further understanding the question. However, even though supplementary information was given, I still took into account the risk that everyone interprets things in their own way. This is why I made myself available via private message, Skype and email to everyone who had any questions and needed some clarification about the survey.

The last risk brings up the matter of generalization. Even though I gathered data from 124 players, this is still too small a sample of people for it to allow making any generalization based on the responses. However, the results of the study still offer insight into the matter of flaming and its triggers and they can be used in order to identify trends which can be the starting point for future research.

In this chapter I presented data about my method of choice and its accounted-for risks. I also gave detailed information about each group of questions in the survey and the way they relate to the relevant literature. Next chapter is dedicated to presenting the results of the survey and their interpretation with the help of visual aids such as graphs and charts. While going through the results, I will also go back to the theories introduced in the framework in order to make a complete circle.

Another matter that must be addressed in this chapter is the issue of reliability and validity. Reliability concerns whether or not the result is replicable. The analysis of the chat logs was done with no prior expectancy or hypotheses of what the results would be. Thus, the researcher simply went through the chat lines and extracted every occurrence of flaming, composing a final list for the survey. The chat logs are available on request and due to the clear cut employment of the method, I am confident that the results will be the same no matter of the researcher who does the analysis.

However, I did take into account the fact that the offensive character of a word is a subjective matter. Even though offensive words usually contain insults and profane language, what I consider offensive may be considered far from flaming by someone else. In the same line of thought, the three categories and the inclusion of certain words in the said categories might again be up for discussion. I argue though that the categories themselves don't play a big part in the content analysis, they are simply used to help divide the flaming words into smaller, more manageable sub-parts, but they don't influence the analysis and its results in any way. As for the subjective character of flaming, this was where I decided to let the results of the survey have the last word. What I mean is that there was a risk that I
was too inclusive in which words to chose as offensive, but this risk would be managed through the survey. If the results of the survey would have shown that very few respondents thought that a certain word was offensive, then the word in question would be placed lower on the trigger list.

Validity in research refers to whether the tools used to measure are appropriate and allow the researcher to answer the questions posed. Looking at the present research and at what it was investigating, I argue that the methods used helped answering the research questions and the results of the survey analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively provided valuable insight into World of Warcraft players' offensive behaviour.

From an ethical standpoint I made sure my research methods didn’t detriment in any way the respondents. As such, the issue of consent was managed by the voluntary nature of the survey application methods. Only players who wanted to become respondents filled the questionnaire, no means of coercion were used at any time during this study. The respondents remained anonymous throughout their participation in the research, as such the question of invasion of privacy was mute. The issue of information was resolved by both my introduction of the research nature at the beginning of the questionnaire as well as on my post template used on the websites. I strove to present the information as clearly as possible as to minimize the occurrence of misunderstandings, I also made myself available on several online platforms for direct discussion with the participants for clarifications. I also used a language appropriate for the environment I was studying and refrained from introducing ambiguous terms of too sophisticated, academical ones. The issue of capacity was addressed by only retaining the participants who were 16 years of age and older in an effort to ensure a minimum level of self assessment and evaluation of the information received. The intended purpose of the study was made prevalent to the respondents and no degree of deception was necessary nor used on the course of this endeavour.
6. Presentation and analysis of results

6.1 Question block one

The first group of questions was constructed in order to get more information about the sample and it aimed at providing information about age and gender, continuing with the time spent playing World of Warcraft, as well as top of mind associations for the Internet and the game.

There was a total number of 124 participants in the study divided in 95 males, 22 females and 7 who chose not to disclose their gender. As for age, the lowest limit was encountered at 16 years and the highest at 53. The least represented age groups in the survey were the 36-40 with only 3 respondents and the over 40's with 4 respondents, summing up to a total of 5.6% of the total sample. Moving on to the next categories, there were 13 respondents under 20 years old, while 30 were in the 26-30 bracket and 11 were aged between 31 and 35. The age group most represented in the sample was 20-25 with a total number of 56 respondents adding up to a total of 45.2%.

The main association people made with being online was information with 38,7% of the total votes, followed by social interaction (27,4%) and freedom (20,2%). The entire range of possibilities and the answers given are shown in the graph below.

Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of being online?

While information is probably an obvious first choice and given the vast array of ways in which the internet allows people to connect with each other (Facebook, Skype, etc), it didn't feel out of the ordinary for social interaction to occupy the second place. However, 20% of the total respondents chose to associate the internet with freedom instead of the other two more popular options. Interpreting freedom in this case as freedom of speech, this circles back to the theory presented in this paper concerning the online disinhibition effect, especially anonymity, invisibility, dissociative imagination.
and minimization of status and authority. Being anonymous gives us the freedom to speak our minds without being identified and being invisible allows us to move freely within the online platforms, observing others, reading their comments without anyone noticing our presence. Looking at this from the vantage point of the Dissociative Imagination pillar of the online disinhibition effect, it can also mean freedom to be a whole other person, acting freely in a fantasy world where the rules and responsibilities from the real world don’t apply. Here, as the theory showed, without the presence of a clear authority figure that could enforce punishment when needed, people are more inclined to speak their mind and misbehave.

Regardless of it being caused by the protective layers that the pillars of the disinhibition effect provide or because the feeling of being online allows one to act out certain emotions in order to get gratification and some sort of tension reduction, freedom is an interesting choice that should be analyzed further in a more in depth research on internet behaviour.

However, these are just speculations since freedom can mean different things for different people. For some it could mean freedom to speak one's mind, for others it could mean freedom to search for and do what they want online when they want to do it, while for others it could mean the freedom to chose between the multiple tools that the Internet provides.

The same association question was asked in regard to World of Warcraft. Here, two answers make up for a total of 79,8 of the total responses. The first place is occupied by social interaction with 49,2%, followed by freedom with 30,6%. The full graph is presented below:

Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of playing World of Warcraft?

- Social interaction: 61, 49.2%
- Freedom: 38, 30.6%
- Integration: 9, 7.3%
- Outlet for expressing emotions: 5, 4%
- Information: 5, 4%
- Anonymity: 3, 2.4%
- Networking: 2, 1.6%
- Invisibility: 1, 0.8%
While the question of freedom was already addressed, I want to stress the fact that social interaction holds first place and relate it back to the beginning of the paper, confirming the assumptions that even if the main purpose of playing World of Warcraft is to enjoy the story line and take on the challenges it provides, this particular game is rooted in its communication platform and it is centered around player interaction.

Even though present in only a handful of choices, the option “Outlet for expressing emotions” makes for an interesting discussion when associated with both the internet and World of Warcraft. Only one respondent representing 0.8% chose this option when thinking about being online while five respondents totaling 4% felt this way about World of Warcraft. Even though taking place on a low scale, this is a relevant finding seeing as it relates back to the online disinhibition effect and the theory of cognitive dissonance. On one hand, there is a very big difference between being online on one of the social media platforms and being online in WoW from an anonymity point of view. In order to use Twitter or Facebook for example, one has to create an account and to provide a certain amount of personal information. People who are active on social media spend time creating an online persona and are careful with what they post in order to maintain that identity and obtain gratification from getting likes and re-tweets. On the other hand, in World of Warcraft people can be anonymous to a higher degree seeing as there is no public profile and no personal information shared with the other players, nor the aim for maintaining a certain image on oneself for others to witness.

On the Internet in general and social media in particular, the way people act might have an impact on their likability and number of followers which could lead to refraining from displaying an attitude that would be perceived as negative or offensive. However in WoW these types of constraints are less noticeable since the link between the fantasy character and the offline person is less powerful. People can choose to act out based on their mood caused either by in game events or offline ones and vent out their frustration. In World of Warcraft one can fully embrace the dissociative imagination aspect of the online disinhibition effect and immerse in role-playing, taking on the role of an Alliance Knight who embarks on a crusade to pillage Horde cities and destroy his enemies. Everything said and done during such actions would be attributed to the “it’s my character’s action, not mine” line of thought and by employing the theory of cognitive dissonance, any negative outcome would be rationalized and excused as being the result of something that needed to be done in order to save the Alliance from its foes.
6.2 Question block two

As presented in the methodology portion, the second group of questions consists of inquiries about the gravity of certain offensive words and also about the circumstances in which the respondents feel it is permitted to insult other players.

First off, the survey contained a question that asked the respondents to rank on a scale from 1 to 5 their opinion on how offensive the most used fifteen insults in the game are (where 1 is least offensive and 5 is most offensive). This list was created based on the results of the chat log analysis performed during the three months at the beginning of this year. The words and expressions included in the survey are: retard, fuck, cunt, idiot, crybaby, pussy, gay, mofo, fucktard, faggot, noob, nigger, bitch, go fuck yourself and go kill yourself.

Looking strictly at the occurrence of instances when these words were ranked 5 on the 1 to 5 scale, the following results were registered concerning the most offensive words and expressions: Go kill yourself (47,6%) nigger (43,5%), faggot (33,9%), cunt (24,2%), retard (24,2%), go fuck yourself (17,7%), gay (16,9%) and fucktard (15,3%).

However, I felt that only looking at the most offensive choices (ranked 5 on the scale) and least offensive (ranked 1 on the scale) might not give an accurate overview since it doesn't take into account the answers which ranked the words 4th and respectively 2nd so I decided to analyse them again and compare the results.

Looking through the column for what they considered most offensive (ranked 4 and 5 on the scale) these are the results: Go kill yourself was considered most offensive by 61,3% respondents, followed by nigger with 59,6%, faggot with 50%, cunt with 46%, retard with 45,2%, fucktard 38,7%, go fuck yourself with 35,4% and gay with 27,4%.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, the answers given for least offensive (ranked 1 and 2 on the scale) were noob with 89,5%, followed by fuck with 78,3%, mofo with 75,8%, crybaby with 72,5%, bitch with 64,5%, idiot with 63,7%, pussy with 62,9% and gay with 58,8%.

Looking at the comparison between the two, as expected there are differences, but most of them are encountered for the words in the middle pack, that don't stand out in either direction of the flaming spectrum. The top five offensive words and expression remains the same: go kill yourself, nigger, faggot, cunt and retard with the mention that cunt and retard were tied on the number 5 of the scale (24,2%) while cunt takes the lead in the cumulative scale with 45,2% versus 38,7%. On the opposite side, the top five least offensive words and expressions, one difference was noted. The words encountered here are the same in both versions with the exception that the words in the 2nd and 3rd place (mofo and fuck) switch places when looking at the cumulative version.
One thing to note here is that it is surprising to find “mofo” so low on the offensive end of the scale since the word is a shortened version of “mother fucker”, but this might be explained by the fact that the word “fuck” is also very low indicating an online desensitization towards this particular family of words. Also, it is worth pointing out that words like bitch, idiot and gay are again at the lower end of the offensive spectrum while in the offline world, their usage is very likely to be frowned upon.

The same words were used in the next question, where the respondents were asked to list at least one word that they would feel okay to being called. The graph follows as this:

### While playing World of Warcraft, which of the following words would you be ok with being called?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noob</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiot</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitch</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry baby</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retard</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pussy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cunt</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faggot</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigger</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can notice here that the top insults permitted are noob (83,9%), idiot (51,6%), bitch (50%), crybaby (41,9%) and retard (41,1%), the majority of which are consistent for the most part with the words that the respondents considered least offensive in the previous question. However, a noticeable difference is seen in the expressed tolerance towards the word “retard” which occupies the 5th place even though it was also one of the top five most offensive words in the previous question. This might be attributed to the fact that the preceding inquiry permitted only one answer from the available options while this one was a multiple option answer question. Following this possible explanation, a more in depth analysis for this question was performed which showed that 71 respondents (57,2%) chose 3 or more options while only 34 picked just one alternative (27,4%).

So far by analysing these questions we were able to identify the words that are considered the most offensive by World of Warcraft players. The reason behind this inquiry was that the usage of such words can act as triggers. For example, if a player considers “nigger” a highly offensive word and
someone decided to refer to the player in question using this word, then there is a high chance that the player would retaliate.

The questions were designed to approach the same issue from different angles. First, the gamers were asked to rank different words on a scale from the least offensive to the most offensive and then, they were asked to answer which offensive words would they be okay with being called. The intention with this was to compare the answers from the two questions and see which words ranked highest both as being offensive but also as being unacceptable to use against the respondents.

Analyzing the answers to the two questions confirmed that “nigger”, “faggot” and “cunt” are considered by the respondents as highly offensive. However, two important mentions have to be made here. In the first question, “retard” was the 5th most offensive word from the list while in the next question, 51 respondents totaling 41,1% said that they would be okay with being called that. This discrepancy I felt it was important to address since it is not common to view one word as offensive and at the same time not minding being called that. A possible explanation for this is offered by one of the pillars of the online disinhibition effect, namely the Dissociative Imagination. The theory suggests that in an online context, players can make a clear distinction between themselves and the characters they play and their actions don’t transfer from the online to the offline. Like this, even though “retard” is an offensive word, players don’t take offense when being called that because the insult is aimed at their character which is a completely different entity from their offline self.

The second discrepancy was encountered with the word “gay”. In the first question, only 16.9 % of the respondents ranked “gay” as highly offensive, while in the second question more than double that amount, 38.7 %, placed “gay” as the 4th last word that they would allow being called. The fact that gay scored high on the permittivity scale can be attributed to the online disinhibition effect theory in action. The usage of this word is frowned upon in real life, but in game due to anonymity and minimization of status and authority people can use words that are not permitted just because there is no fear of identification and punishment in sight. However, when they themselves would be on the receiving end of being called such a word, they feel strongly against it.

Last question in this block concerns the instances in which respondents consider the use of the insult “retard” justifiable. The answers given were as follows:
In which of the following situations you feel that it is ok to call someone retarded?

When inspecting the answers for this question, we can see that 27.4% say that they have never called another player retarded, while the rest seem to be in agreement that multiple occasions gives them the right to do so.

Searching the raw data for additional information on whether the respondents chose multiple options or limited themselves to one, it was noticed that 35.5% of the total number of them selected 3 or more options, with a high percentage of them picking all possible options.

Two aspects of the answers given to this question can be explained with the help of Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Firstly we have the 27.4% of the respondents who opted for the last choice (“it is never OK and I have never done it”). According to the theory, people can misconstrue the reality in order to defend the image they have of themselves. As such, any unacceptable aspects of one's self, like flaming others, will be distorted or recalled selectively in the attempt to maintain a healthy level of self esteem (regardless of the reality of the player's in game actions) which would explain why almost a third of the respondents decided to opt for the aforementioned option.

The second aspect relates to all the other respondents who opted for various options which made the use of the word “retard” acceptable. Festinger argues that if we behave offensively in a certain situation, we convince ourselves that our actions were justified and we exaggerate the circumstances of the event until they justify the offensive response. Throughout this paper we noticed that the word “retard” ranked high on the flaming scale which indicates that its usage would create
tensions between one's self image and reality. In order to reduce this tension and align their actions with their self image, the respondents justify their behaviour by exaggerating the circumstances until they warrant the use of the word “retarded”. At the top of the list of such circumstances are people who don’t listen to advice and those who don’t follow directions which were the top picks for this category with 44% and 42% respectively.

6.3 Question block three
This group of questions focuses most on flaming occurrences taking place between players. The respondents are asked if they were ever a victim of flaming as well as an offender themselves. The block also contains additional inquires about flaming triggers and the victim's feelings in such occurrences. First question focuses on whether the respondents have ever been flamed while playing World of Warcraft to which 85.5% answered Yes as the graph below shows:

Have you ever been flamed while playing World of Warcraft?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this question, respondents were asked to share one situation that stuck with them from a time when they have been flamed. This question was an open ended one and its answers were meant to provide context for the flaming discourse in order to pinpoint the situations where flaming was most likely to occur. Based on the answers given, two main categories were identified. On one hand there are the situations when flaming occurs due to in game events and here we have three subcategories including personal mistakes, disagreements within the game and frustration over player versus player combat as triggers for potential volatile situations. On the other hand, there were identified situations when flaming occurs due to factors external to the game and here we have two subcategories that describe flaming as a result of gender and of sexual orientation. It was noticed that the biggest flaming trigger was linked to player performance in a dungeon or raid setting. Mistakes made or low damage output while fighting monsters attracted offensive responses from the other members of the groups. Second and third in occurrence were controversies regarding play style and player versus player
combat disputes. All the categories are shown below with a few examples extracted from the data collected which I considered to be most representative for their categories due to their detailed nature of describing the situation in which flaming took place.

**Game related flaming**

Personal mistakes within the game.

- Early in my WoW career, I accidentally walked off of the ledge in UBRS, and started the event, pulling the boss. I was called every name in the book, and I was flamed repeatedly. It got so bad, that I eventually changed servers, to find a guild to raid with. Since then I have become a much better player, but that event always stuck with me. It was a simple mistake that caused me to be harassed unmercifully.

- I was a fairly new max level priest and I was trying my hand at healing a heroic dungeon for the first time. The tank kept pulling multiple mobs and I could not keep up. The tank and his/her friend kept calling me a loser, a retard, a dumbass fucking healer, etc.

- Died on a boss mechanic in a progression raid, and was flamed for being a "blind retard".

- When I was very young I was in an Onyxia raid and my guild leader called me a "fucking retarded noob" when I died to fire. I was a kid, so it really bothered me because he was in his 30s/40s.

In game disagreements.

- Trying to tell someone something that would have been better in a certain situation. *(S)he* couldn't deal with the advice and flipped out calling me all sorts of names.

- There have been so very many over the years, but the ones that stick with me are usually the ones where I am called out for doing something wrong, then when I give refuting evidence they get even madder and lash out with angry comments and sometimes try to get me group kicked.

- Did something in a group they didn't agree with. They sort of went off on me about it, verbally abusive sort of thing. So I got heated as well. Turned into a huge thing, barely finished the instance. In the end, I reported their names and told them to go die.

- I was an officer of a guild in 2007, and I found out that one of my guild members was flaming, raging, and basically making a few other players' time from another guild miserable
due to some old dispute he had with them. When I confronted him about it, he admitted he had done so and said he would always continue to do it. After I kicked him from the guild for not conforming to our guild rules, he sent me some choice words in whispers, ranging from "kid" all the way up to "retard" and "fag".

Player versus player combat

- I was ganking a low level player which yes is quite a low thing to do. He switched to his alliance character and whispered me basically wishing every disease upon my family.

Non game related flaming

Sexism.

- I spoke on the voice comm channel, which led to these people to say "LOL IT'S A GIRL" "LOOK, AN ATTENTION WHORE" and I was kicked from the group.
- I've been angrily "yelled" at because of my gender. Twice, in two different scenarios, people have given me flak because I disagreed with them, saying how because I was a girl on WoW, I expect and demand attention.
- I've had an incident of getting called a whore in a dungeon, when they found out I was a female.

Sexual orientation.

- Was flamed by the main tank in my guild. He called me a faggot purely because I was gay and it got a bit excessive. I don't really have a problem with the word being used as an insult, it's only offensive to me when people use it strictly because I'm gay. The only reason it hurt was because I was the only one he called that, for more than a year.

Starting of with flaming as a result of in game events, we can use the concepts of retaliation and over retaliation from Festinger’s Theory of Cognitive Dissonance in order to explain the situations described by the answers. Talking about player versus player combat, it is important to mention that killing another player outside of battlegrounds is only permitted on Player versus Player servers. That being said, every player makes a conscious decision of creating a character on such a server which leads to the fair conclusion that once a player creates a character on a PvP server, he/she takes into account that combat between players is a possibility. With that in mind, frustrating as it might get at
times to get killed over and over again by a higher level player in a low level questing zone, it is a part of the game, a part that everyone on this type of server acknowledged when creating their characters. In such a situation, one could choose to log off until the troublesome player leaves, or log onto a higher level character and engage in fair combat which would illustrate the concept of retaliation. However, in the case presented by the respondent of the survey showed that the player “whispered me basically wishing every disease upon my family”, which would be an example of over-retaliation.

Flaming as a result of poor player performance in the game can also be explained with the help of Festinger’s Theory of Cognitive Dissonance and it links back to the analysis done on the perceived permittivity in the usage of the word “retard” from the previous block of questions. In a similar fashion, flaming someone and calling them "blind retard", "fucking retarded noob", “loser” or “dumbass” is considered permitted if the players in question made a mistake or caused a wipe. It is clear that players don’t want to spend double the time needed to complete a dungeon, for example, because of other players’ mistakes. This can lead to frustration and heated word exchanges between the ones involved. In such situations, there is a high possibility that flaming occurs. According to Festinger, we can look back on those events and justify our choice of words by the fact that the player who we were flaming deserved it for being unskilled, or causing downtime or holding the group back due to bad damage.

Flaming others for non gaming related matters, can be linked to two of the Online Disinhibition Effect pillars, namely Anonymity and Minimization of Status and Authority. As we saw in the Theoretical Framework chapter, Suller argues that the absence of authority figures combined with the state of anonymity that the game offers enables people to express themselves and act in ways that they wouldn’t in the day to day life. Moreover, as we could see in the analysis from the second block of questions, players consider words related to race, gender and sexual orientation highly offensive which should lead to their disuse. However, the answers presented here show otherwise and reveal that these types of insults are utilized by players which according to Suller happens because we enjoy expressing our minds even in an insulting manner as long as we are protected by a layer of anonymity and as long as our actions can’t be met with punishments that would transfer to our real life.

Following this question, the respondents were asked to describe how they reacted in the given situation. The great majority of the answers were divided between retaliating and ignoring the situation. Some players said that they try for the most part not to get offended by rude comments made by strangers and that if the situation continues for a long period of time, they use the ignore function of the game which blocks any incoming messages from the respective player. In some other cases, players also chose to use to report players for abusive language to the World of Warcraft Game Masters which handle issues of offensive and racist comments within the game.
Here we can observe two types of reactions concerning the concept of ignoring the players that display a flaming behaviour. First is a reactive stance characterized by ignoring the player, either by using the game function which blocks any incoming messages or by deciding to mentally disregard all of his comments. The second one is the pro-active action of reporting the player to the Game Masters and pending their investigation of the matter, possibly punishing the offending player with a temporary ban from the game. In this case, the victim's deed is not only meant to shield oneself but also to protect the community by actively doing something against the person who flamed.

The next set of questions in this block will be analyzed together. The first one investigated whether or not the respondents themselves were at least once, the ones who flamed another player and the answers depicted below show a 62.9% versus 37.1% outcome in favour of Yes.

**Have you ever flamed someone while playing World of Warcraft?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following up are two questions concerning the victim of a flame incident and the consideration for them. First off, 37.1% of players who choose to engage in a flaming behaviour considered that their opponent deserved it fully while 35.5% were in doubt saying that it depends on their mood. Lastly, 22% of the respondents answered that they have never said anything offensive to anyone. The full list of options and their answers disposition are presented in the graph below:

**The person who you are flaming (being rude/offensive against) usually …**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deserve it fully</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe they don’t always deserve it. It depends on my mood.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never said anything offensive to anyone, ever</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to make them angry because I enjoy seeing people getting annoyed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe they don’t always deserve it fully, but it’s part of the game</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following question in this block refers to the consideration the offenders have for the people whom they are flaming. Here, the respondents were given a series of alternatives and we can notice that the two ones most chosen are completely opposed. On one side, when the respondents think about the person on the other side of the possible offensive comment, they end up not going through with their intentions (31.5%). On the other, the respondents showed no regard for the target's feelings as long as one condition was fulfilled: they truly deserved it. The graph below shows all the options and their answers:

**When you are flaming someone, do you sometimes take under consideration the possibility of them getting hurt by it?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes and when I do, I usually end up not saying anything to them.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I think they really deserve it, then I don’t care how they feel.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never said anything offensive to anyone, ever.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely since I don’t believe they think of me when they are being offensive.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah and I hope they hurt. It’s not my fault they are stupid and annoy me.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do and sometimes I go back and apologize for what I said.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, there is the inquiry on the thought process that takes place before making an offensive comment. Just like in the previous question we can see an inclination towards avoiding flaming as 38.7% of the respondents opted for trying to speak nicely first and only retaliating if the situation didn’t improve. The second most ranked answer pointed at reconsidering the act of flaming after giving it more thought, followed by the option who had respondents acting based on their mood. All of the alternatives are shown in the graph below:
When you get annoyed and think of flaming someone …

I decided to analyze these last questions together because of their joint indication of a major discrepancy. If we go back at the question “Have you ever flamed another player”, we have 37,1% respondents answering No. Continuing to the next question which addresses whether or not the person flamed deserved it, only 22,6% responded “I have never said anything offensive to anyone, ever”. Going on to the question regarding taking into account the feelings of the flamed person, 20,2% respondents chose “I have never said anything offensive to anyone, ever”. Lastly we look at the question concerning the thought process prior to flaming where only 9,7% of the replies indicated that the responded have never thought of saying anything offensive to another player. If at the beginning of the results section I was hinting at the fact that some of the discrepancies in answers can be attributed to Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, the results of these last four questions take it from the state of possibility to one of probability. I refer here at the clear shift that we can see taking place between the answers given to the first question compared to the ones given to the following ones. In the beginning 37,1% of the respondents answered that they have never flamed another person, in the following two questions only 22,6% and 20,2% respectively said that they have never said anything offensive to anyone. That shows that initially when given the option, people are likely to choose the alternative that reflects best the opinion that they want to have of themselves. However, when asked the same thing later on in the survey in a more complex question with more answer options, almost half the players continued to state that they have never flamed someone else. Festinger stresses the importance aligning our self image with our actions has, because if they aren’t in harmony we feel unbearable
tension until the situation is remedied. This would explain why in a clear cut Yes or No question we would be inclined to pick the option that makes us feel best about ourselves.

6.4 Question block four

Group four comprises only three inquires about respondents' reaction to getting both upset and aggravated with another player and also their decision process when being a bystander in a flaming exchange of words between two players.

The first question here addresses the possible scenarios for when a player feels upset with another player. Some of the answers indicated that the respondents would use the channel whisper and attempt to communicate with the aggravating player, explaining the reasons that upset them, in hopes of finding a mutually agreeable solution to the problem. Other players choose to part ways with the offender and remove themselves from the specific situation that caused annoyance, while a considerable portion of answers indicated that players ignore the rude person so that they wouldn't be bothered by their comments anymore. Lastly, some respondents chose to use the /spit emote to show their dissatisfaction with the player that upset them.

Next question is similar to the previous one but addresses the specific situations when the respondents feel aggravated around a player. 29,8% respondents choose to remove themselves from the environment by logging on another character, while 18,5% show their feelings towards the aggravating player by expressing contempt. A smaller amount of players (13,7%) choose to retaliate and confront their flamer.

The last question in this block looks at the way the respondents react when they are witnessing a heated conversation between other two players. The results are as follows:

**If you notice a player being rude to another player, you usually …**

- Other. 26 21%
- Pick a side and join the discussion. 21 16.9%
- Report the rude player for language. 21 16.9%
- Try to re-conciliate them. 18 14.5%
- Put the rude player on my ignore list so that I don’t have to see his messages anymore. 17 13.7%
- I usually don’t care enough to interfere in these types of situations. 11 8.9%
- Mock both of them so that they get even more angry. 10 8.1%
The great majority of the Other column contains comments about respondents urging the two players who are arguing to “take it in whisper because I can't be arsed to look at that stuff” or “tell them to be quiet, or argue privately” while others admit that they would join the discussion only if a friend would be one of the players involved and lastly, one comment reads “who cares, it's the internet”.

The three questions in this block showed again a tendency for wanting to remove oneself from the flaming environment. Again, the ignore and report functions are mentioned as the most used tools when dealing with a potentially offensive situation. However, the answers to these questions revealed a clear intention for communication and conflict resolution. Players admit to thinking twice before acting and trying first to open a communication line with the person causing them distress and explaining their feelings about the situation created with the hopes of defusing the conflict. This is connected to the invisibility and minimization of status and authority components of the online disinhibition effect in two ways. First, being invisible gives people the courage to speak up and express their opinions without having to see their interlocutor’s reaction. Like this, players can opt for starting a conversation and trying to solve any misunderstandings or simply state the reasons for which they are unhappy with a person or situation. Secondly, offline power and authority don’t transfer online and people thrive knowing that everyone is on the same level even though they come from different social, economical or cultural backgrounds. In this context, players are more likely to engage in conversations when they know that even if they would resort to the use of offensive language, they can’t be held responsible and punished for their actions.

6.5 Question block five

The group five comprises of questions regarding the game's embedded function named emotes. Starting off, respondents were asked if they use it and the vast majority, 83.5% of them, answered yes. Following this, they were asked to choose between one of the strongest worded insult “retard” and the strongest worded slash command “spit” which generates the message “Player X spits on you”. The most chosen alternative was “None are offensive, so I don't care”, picked by 32.3% of the respondents. A full list is presented below:
Would you rather someone used /spit on you or called you retarded?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None are offensive so I don’t care.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling someone retarded says more about them than about me, so I don’t get affected by it either way.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used spit.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called me retarded.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It offends me in the same way.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next three questions addressed the respondents' thoughts towards three very commonly used emotes: /spit, /mock and /golfclap which generate the messages: “You spit on <target>”, “You mock the foolishness of <target>” and “You clap for <target>, clearly unimpressed”. Even though arguably the message transmitted through the emotes isn't a particularly pleasant one, most respondents picked “childish or funny” to describe them in the detriment of other alternatives like taunting, obnoxious, inflammatory or annoying. The second to last question in this block asked the respondents if they consider it to be easier to use emotes instead of typing actual messages to their interlocutor. Here are the answers given:

Do you feel it is easier to use emotes instead of actually writing something to someone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, I think emotes are a childish way to communicate</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only if I’m in a hurry, otherwise I prefer writing to someone than using emotes.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s the same.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I would do a /love on someone but I wouldn’t write to them that I loved them. Awkward!</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, if they are negative emotes. I cba getting into a fight with a noob in a PuG so I would just /spit on him instead.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last question in this block asked the respondents to rank several offensive words and emotes on a scale going from least offensive to most offensive. The top five choices were nigger (50%), cunt (16,1%), retard (12,9%), spit (8,9%) and crybaby (6,5%).

The questions in this group were meant to shed some light over the way players use the emote function and to investigate the possibility for this tool to act as a catalyst for flaming. Also the inquiries addressed the possibility that players use offensive emotes to express their dissatisfaction instead of starting a flaming war with another player. However, the most often picked answer alternative
indicated that most players perceive emotes as a childish way of communication and that even the emotes which could be considered most offensive are discerned as childish or funny. That aside, it is relevant to analyse further all the answers given to the last two questions in this block. Even though 37,1% of the respondents thought that emotes were a childish way to communicate, 16,1% said that they would rather use emotes than writing to someone while 21% thought that both are just as good forms of communication. Moreover, when we look at the answers to the previous question, we notice that the use of the emote spit was ranked 4th on the most offensive scale indicating its flaming potential.

The in-depth analysis of all categories of answers in correlation show two major patterns of behaviour. On one side are the people who either discard the usage of emotes all together or deem them as no different to simply using words when communicating with another player. On the other side are people who use emotes in specific situations, namely when they want to communicate something that could put them in an awkward situation if addressed in writing, when they want to express their dissatisfaction with a certain setting without starting a flaming war or when they are in a hurry and want to expedite conveying their message. As such, it can be concluded that the emote function of the game can in specific situations substitute the use of written communication. Furthermore, even though it can’t on its own entirely defuse volatile situations, the usage of emotes can sometimes prevent the escalation of such occurrences.

It should also be noted that even though 83,5% of the respondents admitted to using the emote function of the game, 37,1% considered later on that they are childish and disregarded them when compared to writing to another player and 23,4% admitted to only using them if they are in a hurry, otherwise preferring writing. In other words even though the vast majority of the respondents use emotes, over half of them consider the emotes either an immature way of communicating or less desirable than actual writing. This behaviour can be explained by resulting to the Cognitive Dissonance theory in that on first glance the respondents admit to using emotes when addressing other players, but when given the opportunity to elaborate on this practice they correlate it with implications of self image preservation and discard it for fear they might be perceived as immature themselves.

6.6 Question block six
The first question in this block, asked the respondents about trigger origin, more specifically about whether their offensive behaviour is the result of in game occurrences or due to the players using the medium as an outlet to release frustration. An overwhelming majority of respondents (87,9%) answered that their behaviour was the direct action of in-game events while 12,1% admitted to using
the game as a way to reduce tension accumulated in their offline lives. The next question inquired about which personal traits when attacked were perceived as most offensive. The respondents were asked to pick between: skills as a player, intelligence, psychical appearance, race or gender and the results are as follows:

**You feel most offended when you feel that someone attacks …**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your intelligence.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your skills as a player.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your race or gender.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your IRL appearance.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the answers given to this question revealed an interesting aspect. Only 2.4% respondents felt offended when their real psychical appearance was attacked. A viable reasoning for this goes back to invisibility, one the online disinhibition effect components. The invisibility layer cast over players makes any insult thrown at them purely speculative hence diminishing its offensive quality.

The next question asked the respondents what makes them most comfortable with speaking their minds or fully expressing their opinions in the game. The most picked answer, chosen by 40.3% of the respondents, was “I won't see the person again”, followed by “They don't know who I am and they can't find out my identity either”. Next in line, selected by 10.5% is “It's only my character's opinion and not mine. What happens online, stays online” almost tying with “I can't be punished for what I say” which gathered 9.7% of the votes. The least chosen alternative was “I used the in game mail function and I won't be online when they read it, hence they can't confront me about it” with 2.4%.

This question was meant to show which of the factors that lead to the online disinhibition effect acts most like a catalyst for offensive behaviour. The idea of invisibility among players was the winner of this category by far, followed by anonymity, dissociative imagination, minimization of status and authority and asynchronicity. However, it must be noted here that the reason for which invisibility broke ahead of the others by such a large margin might be connected to the very nature of the game. Here I refer to the fact that World of Warcraft belongs to the Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games genre which makes it easier for players to get lost in the crowd. While I am not suggesting that the results to this question are false in any way, I do believe that the genre of the game should be taken into account as a contributing factor.
The last question of this survey asked players about their opinion on whether or not the language used in World of Warcraft has changed in the last five years. The most chosen alternative was preferred by 42% of the respondents who considered that the language displayed is more hostile because players are feeling more comfortable with using offensive words. The entire list of options is presented below:

**How do you feel the language used in World of Warcraft has changed in the past 5 years?**

- It's more hostile as people are feeling more comfortable with using offensive words. 53 42.7%
- Offensive words in IRL are less frowned upon in WoW where due to their overuse, they feel more ok to utilize. 46 37.1%
- It's more or less the same, just that what was considered offensive 5 years ago is considered more or less ok now. 44 35.5%
- People taunt each other in all available channels in hopes to stir conflict and create drama. '/popcorn' 42 33.9%
- More people seem to wait idly for some trade channel flame war in order to get them out of their boredom. 31 25%
- Other 26 21%

I was also interested to see to what extent, if any, do World of Warcraft players consider that there has been a threshold shift regarding the use of offensive words. Analyzing the answers received, I see that the majority of players opinionated that “people feel more comfortable with using offensive words” and that “what was considered offensive 5 years ago is considered more or less OK now” probably as a direct result of “their overuse, making them feel more OK to utilize”.

The overall research data analysis revealed several behavioural patterns that occur most frequently when players find themselves in offensive settings. When flamed, World of Warcraft players displayed reactions which varied from the removal of self or offender from the game environment entirely (either by changing servers, leaving groups or attempting to get the offender kicked from groups) to logging of and/or ignoring everything that has to do with the situation. However, the
absolute medium lies with the majority of players adopting a non inflammatory stance at least at first, later on deciding whether or not to flame back or exit the situation. In this frame set, it feels important to note that even though not represented by a majority of players' answers, the tendency to act like flaming behaviour is almost an embedded feature of the game was present as attitude towards offensive settings.

The major flaming trigger factors lie with the usage or certain words as nigger and faggot, poor performance while fighting monsters, unjustified arrogance, shifting blame towards free of fault targets and a state of ennui. However, there was not enough evidence to support the idea that the game's emote function as a whole could act as a trigger. /spit was the only emote that presented the potential to convey a certain amount of dissatisfaction and in doing so be able to substitute actual writing and even prevent the escalation of volatile occurrences. Globally though, the emotes function lack of power to release tension was attributed to the fact that their use is perceived mostly as childish and funny or less desirable to convey messages when compared to writing.
7. Conclusions and discussion

The idea for this thesis started of as a mere add notation in a corner of a notebook page. Have I ever called someone retarded to their face in World of Warcraft? Would it even matter to someone if I did? With each added question the thought grew until it took on a life of its own and thousands of chat lines analyzed, 2 major theories applied, a 29 questions survey and 124 entries dissected later I find myself finally presenting a clear overview.

The theories presented in the Theoretical Framework were used throughout the analysis of the survey results. Starting off with the Online Disinhibition effect and it's six pillars, four of them were used intensively in the analysis of the results section.

Dissociative anonymity is very present in World of Warcraft, mainly because players have full control on what information regarding their identity, if any at all, they disclose. Even though guilds have usually a forum where users can share pictures of them in real life and use a voice communication software to chat during raids, players can opt not to post any pictures and not to speak on the voice communication software. This type of full anonymity was found to contribute to a feeling of freedom of expressing one's thoughts even if in an offensive matter.

Invisibility is also present in WoW since all the available ways in which players can communicate with each other in a written manner allow them to remain invisible. During the results section, invisibility was associated with freedom in online environment and it was the highest picked characteristic which makes players most comfortable with fully expressing their opinions online.

Dissociative Imagination was encountered throughout the paper since it allows players to escape the real world and take up various identities through role playing. The clear distinction between their characters and their offline self, that some players made, was found to act as an enabler, allowing players to act in an offensive manner with the excuse that whatever they were saying or doing was the action of their character and not their own (offline) selves.

The Minimization of Status and Authority in World of Warcraft was found to act as a catalyst for flaming. Even though players have the option to report other players for breaking the rules of conduct within the game, the punishments are usually minor and include warnings and locking the access to one's account for three hours. The results showed that many players act in an offensive manner because they can't be punished or the repercussions are not severe enough.

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance was also extensively used in interpreting the results. Players excused their flaming behaviour by saying that their target deserved such a harsh treatment due to their poor performance and other in game related events. Various discrepancies were found in the
analysis section which were explained with the help of this theory. Players prioritized preserving their self image in the detriment of keeping true to their initial answers.

Talking about the first research question, *how do World of Warcraft players choose to act in an offensive setting*, the information collected during this study showed multiple directions of response. Firstly, we have to make the distinction between the occurrences when the respondents were verbally assaulted and the ones when they were the initiators of the flame. In the first category, most players chose to remove themselves from the situation completely by either ignoring the situation or the player causing them distress. Furthermore, some opted for reporting the offender to the game authorities in an effort to have the player sanctioned in accordance to WoW's general rules of conduct. Lastly, players choose to retaliate with the variation that some try to reason first with the flamers and if/when the conflict isn't reconciled, retaliate. In the second category players are the flaming initiators and act out their disapproval of certain players or their actions by utilizing foul or racist language, sometimes with the aid of other players, by fueling up existing feuds and by trying to turn players against each other in the hopes of sparking up conflict. In such situations, some of the main flaming triggers act as direct justification for offensive behaviour. In an effort to explain their actions, players blame the situation on other players' attitudes perceived as unpleasant or poor performance. The analysis revealed two major behavioural patterns. In flaming settings, players choose to either take a reactive stance and remove themselves from potentially offensive situations, or to behave proactively. As such they either respond to flaming, engage in flaming themselves, provoked or otherwise, and/or take the necessary steps to have the game “authorities” discipline the offenders.

Flaming as a phenomenon is abundantly present in the game and subject of the second research question: *What are the main triggers that lead to flaming in World of Warcraft?* May it spark out of frustration with their own or other people’s performance, when fighting monsters in a group setting, or out of plain boredom, the instinct to lash out was present throughout the survey’s results. Analyzing the raw research data in correlation with the cognitive dissonance theory allowed me to conclude that there are indeed certain words, emotes and situations that are generally directly linked to volatile occurrences. As such, the list of flaming main triggers emerged: the use of the words and expressions identified as the most offensive ones by the respondents (go kill yourself, nigger, faggot, cunt and retard); attacks against one's intelligence; boredom; the display of poor performance or play style by players in randomized group settings; being wrongfully accused for something; the over-usage of caps, or the presence of players who yell and/or call other people names and finally, the display of unjustified superiority.
The survey analysis showed that the fantasy world the game offers its subscribers is subject to all the shortcomings that being online entails. From the shelter of anonymity and invisibility, to the lack of real transferred authority, to various cognitive dissonance justifications, players are never short of ways to express their frustration and lash out without fearing an immediate if any repercussion for their actions. Related to the **third research question**, namely **to what extent do the existing features of the game, specifically the slash command emote function, offer or even enable players to release and vent their dissatisfaction**, the survey analysis revealed no strong connection between the usage of emotes and any tension-reduction mechanisms. In-game features such as the emotes that could work as frustration release buttons, fail to do so as they aren’t perceived as either offensive enough nor sufficient to convey the right amount of flaming, with the situational exception of /spit. However, this specific emote’s ability to impact certain offensive settings is derived mainly from the player’s choice of subtracting themselves from the situation with a minimum flaming reaction, rather than from the very nature of the emote itself. Generally, the survey analysis showed that emotes with offensive texts didn't amount for a similar perception from the respondents who classified them as “funny”, “childish” or less desirable to use than writing. Moreover, even though almost 90% of the respondents admitted they are using this feature, a large portion of them also stated that they consider them a childish, inefficient way to communicate, stripping them of any inflammatory status. As such, even though originally the game developers might have designed some of the emotes as a less offensive way of conveying discomfort or frustration, they are generally perceived as the least offensive mean of flaming.

I am confident that the flaming triggers revealed in the course of this paper can act as reference basis for both game developers and players who intend to create and preserve a non flaming gaming environment. Since the thesis revealed that World of Warcraft players think that the language within the game has become more offensive throughout the years, game developers could adjust the rules referring to player conduct to be less permissive towards flaming and more proactive in enforcing punishment against it. By understanding how the emote function is used, game developers can adapt it by stripping away its flaming potential and also use this knowledge when creating new features for the game.

This study is also relevant for researchers who take on psychological endeavors that aim to map offensive behaviour in an online environment and serve as a starting point for any study in the field of flaming. Knowing how people act in flaming settings and what triggers such occurrences constitutes a platform to build on when investigating the possible motivation behind flaming and the patterns of offensive behaviour in an online context.
As a general overview extracted directly from the respondents’ experiences as presented in the questionnaire, World of Warcraft suffers from an increased usage of offensive language while the tolerance for insults becomes higher with every year that goes by. In this frame set, I will direct my future efforts to mapping out possible measures and features that the game developers could deploy to re-establish a balanced threshold for offensive behaviour.
References

65


66


Statista. 2015. “Statistics and facts about MMO Gaming”. Available at http://www.statista.com/topics/2290/mmo-gaming/ Last retrieved: 12.05.2015


APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

0. How often do you play World of Warcraft?
   - Daily
   - A few days a week
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - My account is currently inactive

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - I’d rather not say

2. What is your age?
   - 16 – 19
   - 20 – 25
   - 26 – 30
   - 31 – 35
   - 36 – 40
   - 40 +

3. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of being online? *
   You can choose only one.
   - Information
   - Social interaction
   - Anonymity
   - Integration
   - Freedom
   - Invisibility
   - Outlet for expressing emotions
   - Networking
4. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of playing World of Warcraft?*  
You can choose only one.  
- Information  
- Social interaction  
- Anonymity  
- Integration  
- Freedom  
- Invisibility  
- Outlet for expressing emotions  
- Networking  

5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?*  
Rate each of them from 1 to 5, where 1 is not offensive and 5 is very offensive.  

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<td>Go fuck yourself</td>
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<td>Go kill yourself</td>
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6. While playing World of Warcraft, which of the following words would you be ok with being called?*
You must choose AT LEAST one.
- Retard
- Cunt
- Idiot
- Cry baby
- Gay
- Bitch
- Faggot
- Noob
- Pussy
- Nigger

7. Have you ever been flamed while playing World of Warcraft? *
flamed = offensive language (someone being rude to you, cursing you, calling you names, etc)
- Yes
- No

8. If yes, could you describe one situation that stuck with you?*
(What lead to it / what were the circumstances)

9. How did you react?*
(what did you do? did you ignore it or did you engage in a conversation/fight?)

10. Have you ever flamed someone while playing World of Warcraft? *
flamed = offensive language (being rude, cursing, calling names, etc)
- Yes
- No

11. When playing World of Warcraft, when you get annoyed with someone and decide to act about it, in the majority of cases it's...*
- Because I want to blow off some steam from IRL annoyances / frustration / having a bad day.
- Due to in game events (people being bad in PuGs, etc).

12. The person who you are flaming (being rude/offensive against) usually...* You can choose only one.
- Deserves it fully.
- Maybe they don't always deserve it, it depends on my mood.
- I want to make them angry because I enjoy seeing people getting annoyed.
- Maybe they don't always deserve it fully, but it's part of the game.
- I never said anything offensive to anyone, ever.
13. When you are flaming someone, do you sometimes take under consideration the possibility of them getting hurt by it?*
You can choose only one.
○ Yeah and I hope they hurt. It's not my fault they are stupid and annoy me.
○ Rarely since I don't believe they think of me when they are being offensive.
○ Sometimes and when I do, I usually end up not saying anything to them.
○ If I think they really deserve it, then I don't care how they feel.
○ I do and sometimes I go back and apologize for what I said.
○ I never said anything offensive to anyone, ever.

14. When you get annoyed and think of flaming someone...*
You can choose only one.
○ I just do it without giving it too much thought, everyone flames people these days.
○ I think twice and usually give up. It's not worth it.
○ I try to speak nicely first, but if the other person is rude, then I retaliate.
○ If I think they really deserve it, then I say what I want to say no matter if it's considered offensive or not.
○ Depends on my mood. If I'm in a good mood, I'll let it slide; if I'm in a bad mood, he will regret being an asshole to me.
○ I never thought of saying anything offensive to anyone, ever.

15. If you notice a player being rude to another player, you usually...*
You can choose only one.
○ Pick a side and join the discussion.
○ Mock both of them so that they get even more angry.
○ Put the rude player on my ignore list so that I don't have to see his messages anymore.
○ Report the rude player for language.
○ Try to reconcile them.
○ I usually don't care enough to interfere in those types of situations.
○ Other: 

16. You feel most offended when you feel that someone attacks...*
You can choose only one.
○ Your skills as a player.
○ Your intelligence.
○ Your IRL appearance.
○ Your race or gender.
○ Other: 

73
17. You are most likely to retaliate when....
Retaliate = respond to an attack with an equal attack. You can choose more than one.
- I feel attacked out of the blue.
- I feel like I don't deserve it.
- I feel that someone is purposely trying to humiliate / mock me.
- When someone is blaming me or others while trying to cover their own mistakes.
- When someone takes a superior position as if they are extremely good players when in fact they aren't.
- I don't care enough about what other people say about me in order to retaliate.
- I never under no circumstances retaliate.

18. In which of the following situations you feel that it is ok to call someone retarded?
You can choose more than one.
- They don't follow directions.
- They are talking in caps (yelling) and calling people names.
- They make a mistake in game.
- They cause a wipe.
- They don't listen to advice.
- Their damage is too low.
- They died several times.
- It is never OK to call someone retarded and I've never done it.

19. Do you use slash command emotes while playing World of Warcraft?
Examples: /cheer, /love, /hug, /spit, /bored, etc.
- Yes
- No

20. Would you rather someone used /spit on you or call you retarded?
You can choose only one.
- Used spit.
- Called me retarded.
- It offends me in the same way.
- None are offensive so I don't care.
- Calling someone retarded says more about them than about me, so I don't get affected by it either way.

21. The use of the slash command spit is:
/spit = You spit on <target>. You can choose only one.
- Inflammatory
- Annoying
- Funny
- Obnoxious
- Childish
- Taunting
22. The use of the slash command mock is:
/mock = You mock the foolishness of <target>. You can choose only one.
   - Inflammatory
   - Annoying
   - Funny
   - Obnoxious
   - Childish
   - Taunting

23. The use of the slash command golfclap is:
/golfclap = You clap for <target>, clearly unimpressed. You can choose only one.
   - Inflammatory
   - Annoying
   - Funny
   - Obnoxious
   - Childish
   - Taunting

24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:
You can only select one option per number.

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25. When you are upset with someone, you usually....
You can choose only one.
   - Do a /spit on them.
   - Write them an in-game mail addressing the situation.
   - Call them names directly.
   - Point out their mistakes for the other players to notice.
   - Ask for them to be removed from raid.
   - Mock them to get a rise out of them.
   - Other: 

26. When you feel aggravated around another player you...

You can choose only one.

- Express contempt.
- Log off from the game completely.
- Mock them to get a rise out of them.
- Call them out for being retarded.
- Do a /spit and let the situation be.
- Remove yourself from the environment by logging on an alt.
- Other: ________________ 

27. Do you feel it is easier to use emotes instead of actually writing something to someone?

You can choose only one.

- Yes, I would do a /love on someone but I wouldn’t write to them that I loved them. Awkward!
- Yes, if they are negative emotes. I can’t get into a fight with a noob in a PuG so I would just /spit on him instead.
- I think it’s the same.
- Only if I’m in a hurry, otherwise I prefer writing to someone than using emotes.
- No, I think emotes are a childish way to communicate.

28. What aspect of the following ones makes you most comfortable with speaking your mind / expressing your opinions fully in World of Warcraft?

You can choose only one.

- I won’t see the person again.
- I can’t be punished for what I say.
- They don’t know who I am and can’t find out my identity either.
- I used the mail function and won’t be online when they read, hence they can’t confront me about it.
- It’s only my character’s opinion and not my own. What happens online, stays online.
- Other: ________________ 

29. How do you feel the language used in World of Warcraft has changed in the last 5 years?

You can choose more than one.

- It’s more hostile as people are feeling more comfortable with using offensive words.
- It’s more or less the same, just that what was considered offensive 5 years ago is considered more or less ok now.
- Offensive words in IRL are less frowned upon in WoW where due to their overuse, they feel more ok to utilize.
- People taunt each other in all available channels in hopes to stir conflict and create drama. /popcorn
- More people seem to wait idly for some trade channel flame war in order to get them out of their boredom.
- Other: ________________
APPENDIX 2. FIGURES (FOR ALL SURVEY QUESTIONS)

0. How often do you play World of Warcraft?

- Daily: 93 (67.4%)
- A few days a week: 25 (18.1%)
- My account is currently inactive: 14 (10.1%)
- Once a week: 5 (3.6%)
- Once a month: 1 (0.7%)

1. What is your gender?

- Male: 95 (76.6%)
- Female: 22 (17.7%)
- Undisclosed: 7 (5.6%)

2. What is your age?

- 20 – 25: 56 (45.2%)
- 26 – 30: 30 (24.2%)
- 16 – 19: 13 (10.5%)
- 31 – 35: 11 (8.9%)
- Undisclosed: 7 (5.6%)
- 40+: 4 (3.2%)
- 36 – 40: 3 (2.4%)
3. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of being online?

- Information: 48 (38.7%)
- Social interaction: 34 (27.4%)
- Anonymity: 7 (5.6%)
- Integration: 2 (1.6%)
- Freedom: 25 (20.2%)
- Invisibility: 3 (2.4%)
- Outlet for expressing emotions: 1 (0.8%)
- Networking: 4 (3.2%)

4. Which of the following words comes to mind first when thinking of playing World of Warcraft?

- Information: 5 (4%)
- Social interaction: 61 (49.2%)
- Anonymity: 3 (2.4%)
- Integration: 9 (7.3%)
- Freedom: 38 (30.6%)
- Invisibility: 1 (0.8%)
- Outlet for expressing emotions: 5 (4%)
- Networking: 2 (1.6%)

Retard [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

- 1: 32 (25.8%)
- 2: 18 (14.5%)
- 3: 18 (14.5%)
- 4: 26 (21%)
- 5: 30 (24.2%)

Fuck [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

- 1: 73 (58.9%)
- 2: 24 (19.4%)
- 3: 16 (12.9%)
- 4: 9 (7.3%)
- 5: 2 (1.6%)
Gay [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1 51 41.1%
2 22 17.7%
3 17 13.7%
4 13 10.5%
5 21 16.9%

Mofo [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1 74 59.7%
2 20 16.1%
3 16 12.9%
4 10 8.1%
5 4 3.2%

Fucktard [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1 47 37.9%
2 12 9.7%
3 17 13.7%
4 29 23.4%
5 19 15.3%
Noob [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1  85  68.5%
2  25  21%
3   7  5.6%
4   4  3.2%
5   2  1.6%

Nigger [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1  28  22.6%
2  10  8.1%
3  12  9.7%
4  20  16.1%
5  54  43.5%

Bitch [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

1  52  41.5%
2  28  22.6%
3  20  16.1%
4  13  10.5%
5   1  0.9%
Go fuck yourself [5. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

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Go kill yourself [6. Which of the following words/expressions you consider offensive?]

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6. While playing World of Warcraft, which of the following words would you be ok with being called?

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<td>Cry baby</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bitch</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faggot</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noob</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pussy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigger</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
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</table>
7. Have you ever been flamed while playing World of Warcraft?

- Yes 106 85.5%
- No 18 14.5%

8. If yes, could you describe one situation that stuck with you?

- Misunderstanding during dungeon/raid.
- 3 people harassing me verbally and getting me repeatedly killed in low lvl dungeon. No lead up or reason.
- N/a
- Someone from a rival guild that I had never had any interaction with at all convinced his friend to harass me so I was called a terrible bitch all day by two people I didn't even know
- Can't remember exact situation since i play for over 10 years now
- Hardly anything, i just don't care about keyboard warriors.
- I have never been truly flamed.
- Disagreement over Rotation used for maximum dps
- Taking a guildmate to lfr and leaving the group afterwards when i was helping a tank out with tactics (as i play tank/melee/ranged dps and caster dps i offer help if and when is needed, turns out the tank didn’t take criticism very well.
- it was during a world event where you summon a mob in hellfire peninsula. i got there first and saw someone else
- coming... so i was nice and let them go first... they killed the mob... so i went to activate the stone to kill the mob (and i did)... the person told me to "fuck off"
- None stuck with me.
- Whiny whiny shit shit
- Can't think of any.
- Someone accused me of not doing my job during an LFR run and started calling me names.
- someone thought I caused a wipe or that I did something wrong. Doesn't have a specific example
Early in my WoW career, I accidentally walked off of the ledge in UBRS, and started the event. I was called every name in the book, and I was flamed repeatedly in Org. It got so bad, that I eventually changed servers, to find a guild to raid with. Since then I have become a much better player, but that event always stuck with me. It was a simple mistake made because of camera angle, that caused me to be harassed unmercifully.

N/A

I don't remember anything specific. Just the normal guild drama and the BG toxicity.

No situation stuck with me, I just ignore them if I know I haven't done anything.

A random guy I've never seen or heard from before complete flipped out on me for questing in the same zone (no joke)

What lead up to it was to join a random dungeon. Was told numerous names for stating my opinion on how we needed to pull the mobs.

I main a hunter, I was playing a Death Knight. In a raid I gave advice to a hunter. A third person (the tank) decided to verbally abuse me because he thought I was looking down on the hunter.

I've played this game consistently for last 3 years and on/off for a couple of years before that. Getting flamed is not uncommon in this game and I've probably have had my fair share of rude comments. No specific situations come to mind, but I remember being called noob, idiot, retard etc.

Random dungeon, harassment totally uncalled for by a group member.

I play a healer, so if the tanks dies he usually blames me.

NA

Made a bad pull during a raid in TBC

Made a mistake in a raid, people called me names

Died on the Hans & Franz Mythic encounter in BRF

Trying to tell someone something that would have been better in a certain situation. (s)he couldn't deal with the advice and flipped out calling me all sorts of names.

I can't remember any exact event but I'm sure there were few there, but as I can't remember them they weren't

anything big or meaningful

Was tanking a boss for the first time in looking for raid and forgot about a mechanic and wiped the raid.
• I really can't remember anything specific.
• There have been so very many over the years, but the ones that stick with me are usually the ones where I am called out for doing something wrong, then when I give refuting evidence they get even madder and lash out with angry comments and sometimes try to get me group kicked.
• Did something in a group they didn't agree with. They sort of went off on me about it, verbally abusive sort of thing. So I got heated as well. Turned into a huge thing, barely finished the instance.
• I was performing poorly in a raid, and our tank decided to (rightfully so) call me out on it just not in a very constructive manner.
• Happens all the time on the internet, people should have gotten used to it.
• Mostly while leveling in random dungeons. People flame about not enough dps/not running fast enough through the dungeon etc.
• My HPS was not as high as some other healers, raid wiped and some guy started blaming all on me.
• I spoke on TeamSpeak, which led to these pugs to say "LOL IT'S A GIRL" "LOOK, AN ATTENTION WHORE" and I was kicked from the group.
• Accidentally pulling a boss and tank blows up on me even though it was easily manageable and died very fast.
• When I was in a super high end raiding guild and I managed to draw the wrath of the raidleader by trolling/joking around during in an encounter.
• Everyone gets flamed one time or another since we all make mistakes, but none of these ever stuck with me. I tried to remember but unfortunately I am unable to.
• No
• n/a
• Being called unknowlageable by a noob. on forums. Though obvious troll.
• Came back to the game after a period and was rusty while healing, lots of deaths ensued.
• Doing something in the game other people in the raid thought I was doing wrong.
• I've been angrily "yelled" at because of my gender. Twice, in two different scenarios, people have given me flak because I disagreed with them, saying how because I was a girl on WoW, I expect and demand attention.
• Being called names for reminding people about tactics
I was an officer of a guild in 2007, and I found out that one of my guild members was flaming, raging, and basically making a few other players' time from another guild miserable due to some old dispute he had with them.

When I confronted him about it, he admitted he had done so and said he would always continue to do it. After I kicked him from the guild for not conforming to our guild rules, he sent me some choice words in whispers, ranging from "kid" all the way up to "retard" and "fag".

someone could not agree to doing a mistake and when I didn't let it go he/she told me to go and fuck my mother

The only one that I can recall (and this took a bit of rethinking, mind you) was the main tank in my guild for most of Cataclysm. He called me a faggot purely because I was gay and it got a bit excessive. I don't really have a problem with the word being used as an insult, it's only offensive to me when people use it strictly because I'm gay. The only reason it hurt was because I was the only one he called that, for 23 raid tiers, mind you.

Baddies like to cry when I tank *too fast*

I was running LFR to gear up my rogue. Others in the group were geared significantly better than I was, so my

DPS was quite low in comparison with theirs. After a boss wipe, one person in particular chimed in with "Kick the fucking rogue or I leave" and other such rude and frustrating comments.

A lot of times, just people being people when they are on edge and have no barrier cause it's online.

nothing in particular

A guy on lfr started flaming me for telling the raid what to do on imperator since he was the leader. I had killed it on mythic preBRF so I knew what to do.

There has been many situations, but I can think of one where I killed a rare (back before everyone could tag a rare) and someone called me a faggot

I was a fairly new level 80 priest, when 80 was capped level wise, and I was trying my hand at healing a heroic for the first time. The tank kept pulling multiple mobs and I could not keep up. The tank and his/her friend kept calling me a loser, a retard, a dumbass fucking healer, etc.

Midcast during a heal on the tank, he dies, he begins to flame me for 'never healing' them, then he left the party

my friends call me nigga all the time lol true story
• Someone was angry that they lost a roll for loot, started repeatedly messaging me. Didn't use hurtful names, but was harassing. I ignored them and they logged on alts to continue harassment. Ignored them.
• I've had an incident of getting called a whore (by randoms in a lfg dungeon, when they found out I was a female) and harassed with other derogatory names too.
• I recently came back to WoW after taking more than a 2 year break. I have only ever experienced hostile situations about 'being a girl'. For example, I have had players cuss me or the raid leader out if I receive loot they want and they assume it is because I'm a girl. I have had players make degrading comments regarding my gender, think I am less of a player ('bad'), etc. I find it relatively easy to move on from these because I do not care.
• Died on a boss mechanic in a progression raid, and was flamed for being a "blind retard" didn't invite someone to a raid, needed a tank and he kept joining as dps
• not realy. im hard to offend so i just let it slide
• None Really. Though the chances of this are massively increased in the Dungeon or Raid Finder features in general terms.
• I answered no.
• When I was 11 or 10 I was in an Onyxia raid and my guild leader called me a "fuckin retarded noob" over ventrilo when I died to fire. I was a kid, so it really bothered me because he was in his 30s/40s.
• Always when i tell people that they are doing something wrong and they reply with things I do wrong(which I actually do right).
• Asking tactics about bosses in groups usually brings out some nasty comments about being bad etc.
• Calling a player out for not helping in a battleground.
• //
• One time in HM LFR I was in a group with some friends and pulled the Butcher to the water (This was before the water strat for Mythic came about). We were all overgeared and carrying the group (I was tanking and in the top 5). I got called a lot of words for doing that and was requested to be kicked. We downed the boss without an issue.
• tank aggroing whole room with a recent mas lvl healer, could not keep up the healing and was flamed.
• Too many to count, people get over invested and spam ridiculous filth repeatedly. I usually troll them as much as possible.
• I disregarded common understanding of how a scenario/dungeon was supposed to be run. It was still okay for our progress but it seemed to make several people in my party inadequately upset.
• I was ganking a low level player which yes is quite a low thing to do. He switched to his alliance character and whispered me basically wishing every disease upon my family.
• Ignorance
• I encounter a lot of blatantly racist and sexist conversation in trade chat. A personal attack I can recall is being called a "retard" in an instance by a stranger.
• i haven't
• My GM was jealous .I was hooking up with a fellow guildy (she was banging) and he told me to fuck off and called me bad. But we both knew I was really good and he was just salty
• Back when the Hour of Twlight dungeons came out I was on a Ret. Pally and the healer thought I was doing lousy
• DPS so she kept pulling me into the fire to die. That lead me to being a healer on the next expac and now im a raid healer doing heroic raids with a really amazing guild.
• I have a few max level characters and one of them is a healer that I play frequently. Another woman in one of the guilds I'm in likes to harass me and other female healers because she apparently thinks we're not as cool for playing a "stereotypical female role."
• I can't think of a particular situation that I would say has "stuck with me" in an offensive way.
• Wolfyjosh called me a noob...... and hes bad... like... hes really bad at WoW... that kinda hurt... T.T
• I cannot describe it, flaming happens pretty much on a weekly basis for me. I also flame myself, I'm quite foul mouthed.
• We were arguing over strategies for bosses
• Loot Master in a raid. Highest roll had the tier piece, gave it the second roller, he flamed.
• None that I remember
• I was doing Operator Thogar, and a healer used Leap of Faith on me, so I got struck by a train, and died. The leader then kicked me, and flamed me, calling me a noob and a faggot.
- PvP. I was destroying low level character as a max level character and it really angered some people. They made a character on my faction and vented their frustrations out on me.
- I don't remember
- I haven't been flamed in years, but it likely had something to do with my knowledge of my class being greater than theirs and having a disagreement about that.
- I answered no
- I can't say that any situation has really stuck with me so I will just describe the latest one cause that's the only one I can remember at the moment. Another player telling me to uninstall my game and stop being so shit, or something like that, I don't remember the exact words.
- Usually when trying to help people in Looking for raid, when they fail to read what I tell them I get offensive because they keep screwing up on the same thing with an answer being right down in the chat. Which then leads to them flaming me with senseless blabber, without keeping in mind I was being nice at first while trying to help them.
- I dated a guy in a well known and hardcore guild about 5 years ago before I toned things back and got a job postcollege. When we broke up after a year or so irl because he was talking to other girls on OkCupid and being flaky about whether or not we were actually dating, he kicked me out of the guild (we had been dating in secret) and slandered me to everyone. He told people I was a plug puller, account buyer, and all around shitty person. He said horrible things about me on the group IRC which I had been banned from (my friend relayed stuff to me). How I was stupid, sucked, etc. I disappeared, changed my name, and have raided far more casually since. 5 years have now passed, my friends are all new friends, I've graduated college and begun working. I'm living in a different place. Still, I find myself occasionally thinking back on that time. How can you be so cold to someone you profess to care about? Behind his screen, he told me he never gave a shit about me and laughed in my face.
- What technology gives it also takes away.
- Can't remember, but most likely for failing on dungeon mechanics while leveling up in TBC.
- I don't have one
- LFR.
- Don't remember.
- Playing an alt at 100 and being unfamiliar to tanking after a long hiatus. 3 out of 4 people in the group were just being assholes to me about not pulling quick enough.
• Harassed for killing another player in PvP combat, the person spammed my chat threatened me within the game and called me many names. They also put my character on ignore in between messages they sent to me, to prevent me from replying to them in any way. Once ignored this character they continued on another character for a while before heading to a third to attempt to kill my character in PvP combat.

• can't recall details

• I ganked people on the Timeless Isle with the Censer of Eternal Agony buff. Received many angry whispers.

• Threatened a guy to leave my guild alone saying I'd reveal his affair. He got a person in his guild to mount a huge campaign of attacks against me on forums which made up information.

• Running dungeons early through the dungeon finder can lead to a colorful group. I've been with a few truly offensive players before who would go off without provocation.

• As usual, it was a pug in LFD and he just LOVED throwing around the word Nigger as if he just learned the word today.

• Selling stuff in trade chat and someone wispered me saying I was a stupid piece of shit and should go kill myself that no one wants that. Lol trolls ftw

• Killed someone while he was killing the NPC's I wanted.

• I cant remember any situation.

• It has been many many years ago. Unfortunately I can't remember the circumstances.

• Usually it involves a pug or Looking For Raid. Some guy/girl decides to either be a douche, act carelessly and or just doesn't care. I try to keep it civil most of the time and solve the issue but some people will say whatever the hell they want (Online anonymity) and at times their frustration is directed at me.

9. How did you react?

• i call them nigga back

• Ignore, have a chuckle and move on.

• Ignored.

• Laughed, told him to deal with it or get the fuck out of my raid.

• Did not care.

• N/a
I got better at playing. The harshest treatment I can think of was when I was learning how to heal, but even then it was highly supportive and encouraging.

I tend to laugh it off/not take the situation seriously. Possibly trolled the other person by insulting them right back.

Apologized in game but laughing in real life.

I have never been truly flamed.

I explained that I was running LFR for gear and that was why my DPS was so low. Unfortunately, the comments continued until I was finally votekicked.

I didn't react, I mean, I was kinda mad about it... but I didn't say anything much, just "Douches". And then left.

Made a remark of the maturity of the person who made the insult.

Ignored him, no reason to stoop to his level

Sometimes I just ignore it but I've left the group too

a young child was spamming about drinking beer in general chat, I asked him to shut it as he was just an annoying kid .. from his words, it was clear he was under 18. His parent then launched in to me and I retaliated and questioned why his, as it turned out, eight year old child was playing an online mmo game. I also called in to question his parenting skills. We left it at "fuck you prick", "yea fuck you too wankstain" or something of the sort.

engaged and leave the group

I reacted by blocking the person, and whispering his guild leader, telling him about the actions of the guildmember.

I don't remember exactly but I think I just said that I could also be as high on the healing meter as he/she was if I just as he/she would have popped all my healing cooldowns at the very beginning of the boss encounter, but that I decided to save mine for another moment when they would come to better use. Though since we wiped after just 2 minutes I never got the chance to use any of my healing cds. But after that I didn't say anything and I don't even remember if he said anything to respond to that or not.

Used the /ignore feature.

N/A

.  

Tried to ignore it for the most part; told my GM constantly and borderlined quit at one point (Thankfully, he left at one point)

I generally ignore the person (not actually /ignore, just don't read their text)
I usually ignore a few minor comments, but I'll initiate a kick for really rude players. I don't try to engage rude players in conversation, but I will praise or comfort victims if they seem very affected.

People usually use these comments when someone is doing something wrong (often pretty minor mistakes) and respond with mean comments often out of proportion. I tend to stick up for myself, either by explaining why I made the mistake, point out mistake the other person did or simply respond with similar "name calling".

Called him out on it, Obvious troll is obvious.

I left the group and blocked the players. I refuse to allow someone to talk to me like that, especially over a video game.

Ganked them even harder. While remaining disgustingly polite in /w

Engaged in a fight. This was about 8 years ago though much younger then.

NA

Normally when people annoy me I just /ignore them as I would rather not play with them

i just stated i was trying to offer a hand, didnt bother telling him tactics anymore which resulted in him getting kicked by the raid leader

Kind of bummed and annoyed but I had played LoL soloque for years so I quickly was able to regain my focus.

I was pissed and i was playing with a few of my friends and everyone just started talking shit.

I provoked him so it was somewhat warranted but it was started by him and i was looking for a reaction. I thought it was funny although at first it was annoying. I simply kept saying 'sry' in chat

Told him/her to go fuck themselves and put them on ignore

With extreme sarcasm, as per usual.

i said my bit and stopped because the other party refused to listen

I start the flamewar with correct arguments and always stay close to the reality.

Usually I ignore her but I have, on occasion, pointed out her poor dps performance. I don't mind players being bad (outside of guild progression, anyway) but if they're bad and harass others, I'm more likely to respond.

Ignored them both and moved on.

ignore

I apologized for my mistake, and for wiping the raid. The damage was done, and I ended up making a new character on another server.
I also flamed him.
I mocked him and eventually left the guild. Still banged the girl though.
No
n/a
In most cases ignored, in some, got pulled into it.
I reacted by disappearing. I cut anyone involved out of my life and moved on. There's nothing else constructive you can do. What are you gonna do? Be like "HAHA ur a bunch of CUNTS." They will just find that pathetic. It's survival of the toughest out there.
I usually argue back, or say things a long the lines of "Did you know that language could be construed as homophobic?". They run out of steam pretty quickly.
Pointed out that the one calling me out died more by pulling up warcraftlogs, and that others died more than me too.
I didn't respond.
Laughed to myself, told the other officers what had happened, and reported his tirade to Blizzard using the ingame reporting system. I don't know what happened to him after that.
I lol'd
I use the ingame option to ignore people.
I engaged in the fight.
I'm the type of guy who doesn't get offended easily at all, It takes a lot to get me in my red zone. Usually I brush it off as LFR nonsense or just ignore it altogether. There's been a few instances where someone has gone to such extremes that I ripped out my full vocabulary of vile words and hurled it in his/her face.
I'm sure I would react normally and try to keep things calm since flaming mostly happens in raiding scenarions and I don't want the raid to fail and disband because of a silly conversation. That is wasted time for both myself and also for the other people in the raid.
Retaliated back. Things eventually settled and I moved on with my guild pulling ahead beating his in progression when it was all said and done.
I left the group and logged off for awhile, wondering if I should even contiune playing.
Ended up making a fool out of him. It's more like a funny memory for me. LFR is usually quite the comedy show since all the tryhards try to act good.
"Iz just game, y u hef to be mad?"
Not care because it's trivial, A negative interaction online or real life does not matter unless you place value in the person you are interacting with.
I would sometimes argue back with people in PvP situations but after they were over I'd put them on block and move onto whatever was next without thinking of them again.

Flame back or ignore.
Laughed and continued on my own
I mostly ignore these types of situations. I don't care about what an anonymous person in a game has to say about me, especially if it is so ignorant as to insult my gender.
I engaged in a civil manner by explaining what had happened and that the death could not be avoided. Member who flamed apologized for jumping to conclusions.
I pointed out he was wrong and asked him to mind his own business. I ignored his further flaming and put him on ignore to ensure we wouldn't be paired in future LFR runs.
I ignored it.
I reported their names, told them to go die and left the dungeon. No consequences were enforced from Blizzard's side towards them unfortunately.
called them "assholes" in vent
Ignored it
I just laughed it off. The guy vented pretty hard, but it takes a lot to get to me or to upset me. Laughing about it probably made him worse.
Reported for extremely offensive language and ignored, not worth the time or effort to do more.
I bashed back and shut the people up with my own flaming, usually ending up on their ignore list :D
i normaly just think "yeah okay what ever u say" but sometimes i just troll them if they get mad
Told them to stfu its not like they probably never did a mistake themselves.
Ignored them and/or flamed back
//
Stayed quiet and told them i haven't tanked in a while
If it is directed at me, my instinct is to give them a chance to apologize or something, and if not, I'll ignore them and give a little attitude back (basically just announcing I ignored them and being mildly cheeky). I never use any of the words listed above, barring "idiot."
i called them an idiot, saying that they probably didn't get credit because that persons pet killed the mob
I said that was completely not true, and I only advertise my gender to people I chat with/consider friends/people in my guild because of sexism and discrimination in WoW.
never happened so can't respond
You ignore it.
I tend to react defensively to most instances of flaming, either by not acknowledging it or by giving evidence to support my refuting claim. But there are those times where I just get so annoyed I tell them to fuck off.
I usually just ignore and try to move on as fast as I can with stuff like that
Answered No
I usually just ignore it
i take it easy and it usually amuses me
I just ignore it or support my stance with facts.
I proceeded to kill his other character, just laughed at the event and went on with my day.
I kept playing how I wanted to i kept my mouth shut because they don't matter and I don't want to get my account banned.
reported him to Blizzard for abusive language
Left and reported.
I tried to make them stop, but as it is often futile, I would ignore and choose to leave at a pivotal moment.
i don't remember
I just ignored him, not worth replying.
I kept writing back to him until the LFR crossrealm chat connection was lost, since it was completed after the boss was dead.
I answered no
In my experience there is no use in reasoning with someone who goes all emotional and aggressive on a chat.
So, I proceeded to /ignore the player.
said have a nice day mate!
In a hostile manner. So more name calling.
My usual reaction is /eyeroll or /fidget
Was upset, laughed mostly. Didn’t really offend me that much.
Told him to take his attitude and shove it up his ass. (And then I looked at what I was doing wrong, and improved thanks to his critique)
Tried to stand up for myself and when that only inflamed him more, I ignored the player
I flamed them right back from my high horse of supreme intelligence.
I let the person do his/her thing and didn't react to it.
• I laughed about it and called him a faggot.
• Ignored it.
• Don't feed the troll (i.e ignore them)
• When it's guild related I try to remain calm, address the issue. When it's just a random person I usually just call them out and stop engaging in any form of communication with them.
• Ignore everyone

10. Have you ever flamed someone while playing World of Warcraft?

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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>78</td>
<td>46</td>
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</table>

62.9% Yes 37.1% No
11. When playing World of Warcraft, when you get annoyed with someone and decide to act about it, in the majority of cases it's...

Because I want to blow off some steam from IRL annoyances / frustration / having a bad day. 15 12.1%
Due to in game events (people being bad in PuGs, etc.). 109 87.9%

12. The person who you are flaming (being rude/offensive against) usually...

Deserves it fully. 46 37.1%
Maybe they don't always deserve it. It depends on my mood. 44 35.5%
I want to make them angry because I enjoy seeing people getting annoyed. 4 3.2%
Maybe they don't always deserve it fully, but it's part of the game. 0 0%
I never said anything offensive to anyone, ever. 28 22.6%
13. When you are flaming someone, do you sometimes take under consideration the possibility of them getting hurt by it?

- If I think it [32] 8 6.5%
- I never said [25] 14 11.3%
- Yeah and I ho [8] 39 31.5%
- Rarely since I don't believe they think of me when they are being offensive. 32 25.8%
- Sometimes and when I do, I usually end up not saying anything to them. 6 4.8%
- I do and sometimes I go back and apologize for what I said. 25 20.2%

14. When you get annoyed and think of flaming someone...

- I just do it without giving it too much thought, everyone flames people these days. 6 4.8%
- I think twice and usually give up, it's not worth it. 31 25%
- I try to speak nicely first, but if the other person is rude, then I retaliate. 48 38.7%
- Depends on my mood. If I'm in a good mood, I'll let it slide, if I'm in a bad mood, he will regret being an asshole to me. 14 11.3%
- I never thought of saying anything offensive to anyone, ever. 12 9.7%

15. If you notice a player being rude to another player, you usually...

- I usually do [11] 8 6.5%
- Try to re-co [18] 7 5.6%
- Report the r [21] 6 4.8%
- Pick a side [21] 5 3.9%
- Put the rude [17] 4 3.2%
- Other [26] 2 1.6%
- Mock both of [10] 1 0.8%
Pick a side and join the discussion. 21 16.9%
Mock both of them so that they get even more angry. 10 8.1%
Put the rude player on my ignore list so that I don't have to see his messages anymore. 17 13.7%
Report the rude player for language. 21 16.9%
Try to re-conciliate them. 18 14.5%
I usually don't care enough to interfere in these types of situations. 11 8.9%
Other 26 21%

16. You feel most offended when you feel that someone attacks...
- Your skills as a player. 44 35.5%
- Your intelligence. 53 42.7%
- Your IRL appearance. 3 2.4%
- Your race or gender. 14 11.3%
- Other 10 8.1%

17. You are most likely to retaliate when....
- I feel attacked out of the blue. 29 23.4%
- I feel like I don't deserve it. 51 41.1%
- I feel that someone is purposely trying to humiliate / mock me. 37 29.8%
- When someone is blaming me or others while trying to cover their own mistakes. 79 63.7%
- When someone takes a superior position as if they are extremely good players when in fact they aren't. 66 53.2%
- I don't care enough about what other people say about me in order to retaliate. 8 6.5%
- I never under no circumstances retaliate. 9 7.3%
18. In which of the following situations do you feel it is ok to call someone retarded?

- They don't follow... 53 42.7%
- They are talking ... 50 40.3%
- They make a mistake in game. 15 12.1%
- They cause a wipe. 22 17.7%
- They don't listen to advice. 55 44.4%
- Their damage is too low. 16 12.9%
- They died several times. 39 31.5%
- It is never ok to... 34 27.4%

19. Do you use slash command emotes while playing World of Warcraft?

Yes 104 83.5%
No 20 16.1%
20. Would you rather someone used /spit on you or call you retarded?

- None are offensive so I don't care: 40 (32.3%)
- It offends me in the same way: 15 (12.1%)
- Called me retarded: 17 (13.7%)
- Used spit: 20 (16.1%)
- Calling me retarded says more about them than about me, so I don't get affected by it either way: 32 (25.8%)

21. The use of the slash command /spit is:

- Inflammatory: 11 (8.9%)
- Annoying: 10 (8.1%)
- Funny: 19 (15.3%)
- Obnoxious: 19 (15.3%)
- Childish: 41 (33.1%)
- Taunting: 24 (19.4%)

22. The use of the slash command /mock is:

- Inflammatory: 3 (2.4%)
- Annoying: 5 (4%)
- Funny: 42 (33.9%)
- Obnoxious: 12 (9.7%)
- Childish: 34 (27.4%)
- Taunting: 28 (22.6%)
23. The use of the slash command golfclap is:

- Inflammatory: 2 (1.6%)
- Annoying: 10 (8.1%)
- Funny: 79 (63.7%)
- Obnoxious: 8 (6.5%)
- Childish: 18 (14.5%)
- Taunting: 7 (5.6%)

/spit [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]

1  15  12.1%
2  10  8.1%
3   6  4.8%
4  20  16.1%
5  18  14.5%
6  16  12.9%
7   8  6.5%
8  14  11.3%
9   6  4.8%
10 11  8.9%

Retard [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]

1   2  1.6%
2   7  5.6%
3   5  4%
4   4  3.2%
5   3  2.4%
6   7  5.6%
7  18  14.5%
8  24  19.4%
9  38  30.6%
10 16  12.9%
Cunt [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]

/golfclap [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]

Idiot [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]

/pity [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]
Bitch [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]
/mock [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]  

1 12 9.7%  
2 14 11.3%  
3 32 26.8%  
4 28 22.6%  
5 12 9.7%  
6 4 3.2%  
7 5 4%  
8 9 7.3%  
9 7 5.6%  
10 1 0.8%

Cry baby [24. Arrange the following words and emotes in order from 1 to 10 where 1 is least offensive and 10 is the most offensive:]  

1 17 13.7%  
2 23 18.5%  
3 10 8.1%  
4 11 8.9%  
5 20 16.1%  
6 13 10.5%  
7 12 9.7%  
8 6 4.8%  
9 4 3.2%  
10 8 6.5%
26. When you are upset with someone, you usually....

- Do a /spit on them. 2 1.6%
- Write them an in-game mail addressing the situation. 8 6.5%
- Call them names directly. 6 4.8%
- Point out their mistakes for the other players to notice. 34 27.4%
- Ask for them to be removed from raid. 11 8.9%
- Mock them to get a rise out of them. 2 1.6%

26. When you feel aggravated around another player you...

- Express contempt. 23 18.5%
- Log off from the game completely. 4 3.2%
- Mock them to get a rise out of them. 3 2.4%
- Call them out for being retarded. 17 13.7%
- Do a /spit and let the situation be. 1 0.8%
- Remove yourself from the environment by logging on an alt. 37 29.8%
- Other 39 31.5%
27. Do you feel it is easier to use emotes instead of actually writing something to someone?

- No, I think [46]
- I think it's [26]
- Yes, if they [3]
- Only if I'm [29]
- Yes, I would [20]

Yes, I would do a /love on someone but I wouldn't write to them that I loved them. Awkward! 20 16.1%
Yes, if they are negative emotes. I cba getting into a fight with a noob in a PuG so I would just /spit on him instead. 3 2.4%
I think it's the same. 26 21%
Only if I'm in a hurry, otherwise I prefer writing to someone than using emotes. 29 23.4%
No, I think emotes are a childish way to communicate. 46 37.1%

28. What aspect of the following ones makes you most comfortable with speaking your mind / expressing your opinions fully in World of Warcraft?

- I used the mail function and I won't be online when they read, hence they can't confront me about it. 3 2.4%
- It's only my character's opinion and not my own. What happens online, stays online. 13 10.5%
- I won't see the person again. 50 40.3%
- Other 20 16.1%
- They don't know who I am and can't find out my identity either. 26 21%
- I can't be punished for what I say. 12 9.7%

29. How do you feel the language used in World of Warcraft has changed in the last 5 years?

- It's more hostile... 53 42.7%
- It's more or less... 35 28.5%
- Offensive worlds... 44 35.5%
- People taunt each... 46 37.1%
- More people seem... 42 33.9%
- It's more hostile as people are feeling more comfortable with using offensive words. 53 42.7%
- It's more or less the same, just that what was considered offensive 5 years ago is considered more or less ok now. 44 35.5%
- Offensive worlds in IRL are less frowned upon in WoW where due to their overuse, they feel more ok to utilize. 46 37.1%
- People taunt each other in all available channels in hopes to stir conflict and create drama. /popcorn 42 33.9%
- More people seem to wall idly for some trade channel flame war in order to get them out of their boredom. 31 25%
- Other 26 21%
### APPENDIX 3. LIST OF EMOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emote command</th>
<th>Animation</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>No target selected</th>
<th>Target selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You agree</td>
<td>You agree with &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You are amazed!</td>
<td>You are amazed by &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/amaze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You raise your fist in anger.</td>
<td>You raise your fist in anger at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/angry</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You apologize to everyone.</td>
<td>You apologize to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sorry!</td>
<td>Sorry!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/applaud</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>You tell everyone to attack something.</td>
<td>You tell everyone to attack &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/applause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You put your arm around &lt;target&gt;'s shoulder.</td>
<td>You bark at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/attacktarget</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>You stretch your arms out.</td>
<td>You are so bashful...too bashful to get &lt;target&gt;'s attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/arm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You bark. Woof woof!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bashful</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You are bashful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/beep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/beckon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You beckon everyone over to you.</td>
<td>You beckon &lt;target&gt; over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/beg</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You beg everyone around you.</td>
<td>You beg &lt;target&gt;. How pathetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/belch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You let out a loud belch.</td>
<td>You burp rudely in &lt;target&gt;'s face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You look around for someone to bite.</td>
<td>You bite &lt;target&gt;. Ouch!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bleed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blood oozes from your wounds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/blood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/blink</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You blink your eyes.</td>
<td>You blink at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/blow</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>You blow a kiss into the wind.</td>
<td>You blow a kiss to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/blush</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You blush.</td>
<td>You blush at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/boggle</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You boggle at the situation.</td>
<td>You boggle at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bonk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You bonk yourself on the nogggin.</td>
<td>You bonk &lt;target&gt; on the nogggin. Doh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bored</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You are overcome with boredom.</td>
<td>You are terribly bored with &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oh the drudgery!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bounce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You bounce up and down.</td>
<td>You bounce up and down in front of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bow</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>You bow down graciously.</td>
<td>You bow before &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bravo</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>You applaud. Bravo!</td>
<td>You applaud at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/brb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You let everyone know you'll be</td>
<td>You let &lt;target&gt; know you'll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
right back
You let out a loud belch.
You burp rudely in <target>'s face.

/be right back.
You wave goodbye to everyone. Farewell!
You wave goodbye to <target>. Farewell!

/burp
You wave goodbye to everyone. Farewell!
You wave goodbye to <target>. Farewell!

/bye
You wave goodbye to everyone. Farewell!
You wave goodbye to <target>. Farewell!

/cackle
You cackle maniacally at the situation.
You cackle maniacally at <target>.

/calm
You remain calm.
You try to calm <target> down.

/down.
You remain calm.
You try to calm <target> down.

/cat
You scratch yourself. Ah, much better!
You scratch <target>. How catty!

/catty
You scratch yourself. Ah, much better!
You scratch <target>. How catty!

/charge
You start to charge.
You begin to eat in front of <target>.

/cheer
You cheer!
You cheer at <target>.

/chew
You begin to eat.
You begin to eat in front of <target>.

/chicken
With arms flapping, you strut around. Cluck, Cluck, Chicken!
With arms flapping, you strut around <target>. Cluck, Cluck, Chicken!

/chuck
You let out a hearty chuckle.
You chuckle at <target>.

/clap
You clap excitedly.
You clap excitedly for <target>.

/cold
You let everyone know that you are cold.
You let <target> know that you are cold.

/comfort
You need to be comforted.
You comfort <target>.

/commend
You commend everyone on a job well done.
You commend <target> on a job well done.

/confused
You are hopelessly confused.
You look at <target> with a confused look.

/congrats, /congratulate
You congratulate everyone around you.
You congratulate <target>.

/congratulate everyone
You congratulate everyone around you.
You congratulate <target>.

/cough
You let out a hacking cough.
You cough at <target>.

/cough
You let out a hacking cough.
You cough at <target>.

/cower
You cower in fear.
You cower in fear at the sight of <target>.

/crake
You crack your knuckles.
You crack your knuckles while staring at <target>.

/cringle
You cringe in fear.
You cringe away from <target>.

/cry
You cry.
You cry on <target>'s shoulder.

/cuddle
You need to be cuddled.
You cuddle up against <target>.

/cuddly
You need to be cuddled.
You cuddle up against <target>.

/curious
You express your curiosity to those around you.
You are curious what <target> is up to.

/curtsey
You curtsey.
You curtsey before <target>.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/dance</td>
<td></td>
<td>You burst into dance.</td>
<td>You dance with &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/disappointed</td>
<td></td>
<td>You frown.</td>
<td>You frown with disappointment at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/disappointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/doh</td>
<td></td>
<td>You bonk yourself on the noggin. Doh!</td>
<td>You bonk &lt;target&gt; on the noggin. Doh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/doom</td>
<td></td>
<td>You threaten everyone with the wrath of doom.</td>
<td>You threaten &lt;target&gt; with the wrath of doom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/drink</td>
<td></td>
<td>You raise a drink in the air before chugging it down. Cheers!</td>
<td>You raise a drink to &lt;target&gt;. Cheers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/drool</td>
<td></td>
<td>A tendril of drool runs down your lip.</td>
<td>You look at &lt;target&gt; and begin to drool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/duck</td>
<td></td>
<td>You duck for cover.</td>
<td>You duck behind &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/eat</td>
<td></td>
<td>You begin to eat.</td>
<td>You begin to eat in front of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/excited</td>
<td></td>
<td>You talk excitedly with everyone.</td>
<td>You talk excitedly with &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/eye</td>
<td></td>
<td>You cross your eyes.</td>
<td>You eye &lt;target&gt; up and down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/facepalm</td>
<td></td>
<td>You cover your face with your palm.</td>
<td>You look over at &lt;target&gt; and cover your face with your palm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/farewell</td>
<td></td>
<td>You wave goodbye to everyone. Farewell!</td>
<td>You wave goodbye to &lt;target&gt;. Farewell!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/fart</td>
<td></td>
<td>You fart loudly. Whew...what stinks?</td>
<td>You brush up against &lt;target&gt; and fart loudly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/fear</td>
<td></td>
<td>You cower in fear.</td>
<td>You cower in fear at the sight of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/feast</td>
<td></td>
<td>You begin to eat.</td>
<td>You begin to eat in front of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/fidget</td>
<td></td>
<td>You fidget.</td>
<td>You fidget impatiently while waiting for &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/flap</td>
<td></td>
<td>With arms flapping, you strut around. Cluck, Cluck, Chicken!</td>
<td>With arms flapping, you strut around &lt;target&gt;. Cluck, Cluck, Chicken!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/flee</td>
<td></td>
<td>You yell for everyone to flee!</td>
<td>You yell for &lt;target&gt; to flee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/flex</td>
<td></td>
<td>You flex your muscles. Ooooh so strong!</td>
<td>You flex at &lt;target&gt;. Ooooh so strong!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/flirt</td>
<td></td>
<td>You flirt.</td>
<td>You flirt with &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/flop</td>
<td></td>
<td>You flop about helplessly.</td>
<td>You flop about helplessly around &lt;target&gt;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/followme</td>
<td></td>
<td>You motion for everyone to follow.</td>
<td>You motion for &lt;target&gt; to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/food</td>
<td></td>
<td>You are hungry!</td>
<td>You are hungry. Maybe &lt;target&gt; has some food...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/frown</td>
<td></td>
<td>You frown.</td>
<td>You frown with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Targeted Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/gasp</td>
<td>You gasp.</td>
<td>You gasp at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/gaze</td>
<td>You gaze off into the distance.</td>
<td>You gaze eagerly at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/giggle</td>
<td>You giggle.</td>
<td>You giggle at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/glad</td>
<td>You are filled with happiness!</td>
<td>You are very happy with <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/glare</td>
<td>You glare angrily.</td>
<td>You glare angrily at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/gloat</td>
<td>You gloat over everyone's misfortune.</td>
<td>You gloat over <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>'s misfortune.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/go</td>
<td>You tell everyone to go.</td>
<td>You tell <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> to go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/golfclap</td>
<td>You clap half heartedly, clearly unimpressed.</td>
<td>You clap for <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>, clearly unimpressed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/goodbye</td>
<td>You wave goodbye to everyone.</td>
<td>You wave goodbye to <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>. Farewell!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/greet</td>
<td>You greet everyone warmly.</td>
<td>You greet <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> warmly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/grin</td>
<td>You grin wickedly.</td>
<td>You grin wickedly at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/groan</td>
<td>You begin to groan.</td>
<td>You look at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> and groan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/grovel</td>
<td>You grovel on the ground, wallowing in subservience.</td>
<td>You grovel before <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> like a subservient peon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/growl</td>
<td>You growl menacingly.</td>
<td>You growl menacingly at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/guffaw</td>
<td>You let out a boisterous guffaw!</td>
<td>You take one look at <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> and let out a guffaw!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hail</td>
<td>You hail those around you.</td>
<td>You hail <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/happy</td>
<td>You are filled with happiness!</td>
<td>You are very happy with <code>&lt;target&gt;</code>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/healme</td>
<td>You call out for healing!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hello</td>
<td>You greet everyone with a hearty hello!</td>
<td>You greet <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> with a hearty hello!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/helpme</td>
<td>You cry out for help!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hi</td>
<td>You greet everyone with a hearty hello!</td>
<td>You greet <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> with a hearty hello!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/highfive</td>
<td>You put up your hand for a high five.</td>
<td>You give <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> a high five!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hug</td>
<td>You need a hug!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/hungry</td>
<td>You are hungry!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/impatient</td>
<td>You fidget.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/incoming</td>
<td>You warn everyone of incoming enemies!</td>
<td>You point out <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> as an incoming enemy!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/insult</td>
<td>You think everyone around you is a son of a motherless ogre.</td>
<td>You think <code>&lt;target&gt;</code> is the son of a motherless ogre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/introduce</td>
<td>You introduce yourself to everyone. You introduce yourself to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/jk</td>
<td>You were just kidding! You let &lt;target&gt; know that you were just kidding!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kiss</td>
<td>You blow a kiss into the wind. You blow a kiss to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/kneel</td>
<td>You kneel down. You kneel before &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/knuckles</td>
<td>You crack your knuckles. You crack your knuckles while staring at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lavish</td>
<td>You praise the Light.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lay</td>
<td>You lie down. You lie down before &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/laydown</td>
<td>You lie down. You lie down before &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lie</td>
<td>You lie down. You lick your lips. You lick &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lick</td>
<td>You lick your lips.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/listen</td>
<td>You are listening! You listen intently to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lol</td>
<td>You laugh. You laugh at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/lost</td>
<td>You are hopelessly lost. You want &lt;target&gt; to know that you are hopelessly lost.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/love</td>
<td>You feel the love. You love &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mad</td>
<td>You raise your fist in anger. You raise your fist in anger at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/map</td>
<td>You pull out your map. You massage &lt;target&gt;'s shoulders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/massage</td>
<td>You need a massage!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/moan</td>
<td>You moan suggestively. You moan suggestively at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mock</td>
<td>You mock life and all it stands for. You mock the foolishness of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/moo</td>
<td>Tauren only Mooooooooooo. You moo at &lt;target&gt;. Mooooooooooo.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/moon</td>
<td>You drop your trousers and moon everyone. You drop your trousers and moon &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mountspecial</td>
<td>Rear-up animation for all mounts (including flying). Works only when mounted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mourn</td>
<td>In quiet contemplation, you mourn the loss of the dead. In quiet contemplation, you mourn the death of &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/no</td>
<td>You clearly state, NO. You tell &lt;target&gt; NO. Not going to happen.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nod</td>
<td>You nod. You nod at &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nosepick</td>
<td>With a finger deep in one nostril, you pass the time. You pick your nose and show it to &lt;target&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/oom</td>
<td>You announce that you have low mana!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/openfire</td>
<td>You give the order to open fire.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/panic</td>
<td>You run around in a frenzied state of panic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/party</td>
<td>You raise a drink in the air before chugging it down. Cheers!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pat</td>
<td>You need a pat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/peer</td>
<td>You peer around, searchingly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/peon</td>
<td>You grovel on the ground, wallowing in subservience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pest</td>
<td>You shoo the measly pests away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pick</td>
<td>With a finger deep in one nostril, you pass the time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pity</td>
<td>You pity those around you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pizza</td>
<td>You are hungry!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/plead</td>
<td>You drop to your knees and plead in desperation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/point</td>
<td>You point over yonder.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/poken</td>
<td>You poke your belly and giggle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ponder</td>
<td>You ponder the situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pounce</td>
<td>You pounce out from the shadows.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/praise</td>
<td>You praise the Light.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pray</td>
<td>You pray to the Gods.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/purr</td>
<td>You purr like a kitten.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/puzzled</td>
<td>You are puzzled. What's going on here?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/question</td>
<td>You want to know the meaning of life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/raise</td>
<td>You raise your hand in the air.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/rasp</td>
<td>You make a rude gesture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/rdy</td>
<td>You let everyone know that you are ready!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ready</td>
<td>You let &lt;target&gt; know that you are ready!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/rear</td>
<td>You shake your rear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/roar</td>
<td>You roar with bestial vigor. So fierce!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/rofl</td>
<td>You roll on the floor laughing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/rude</td>
<td>You make a rude gesture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sad</td>
<td>You hang your head dejectedly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/salute</td>
<td>You stand at attention and salute.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/scared</td>
<td>You are scared!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/scratch</td>
<td>You scratch yourself. Ah, much better!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sexy</td>
<td>You're too sexy for your tunic...so sexy it hurts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shake</td>
<td>You shake your rear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shimmy</td>
<td>You shimmy before the masses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shindig</td>
<td>You raise a drink in the air before chugging it down. Cheers!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shiver</td>
<td>You shiver in your boots. Chilling!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shoo</td>
<td>You shoo the measly pests away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shrug</td>
<td>You shrug. Who knows?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/shy</td>
<td>You smile shyly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sigh</td>
<td>You let out a long, drawn-out sigh.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/silly</td>
<td>You tell a joke.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/slap</td>
<td>You slap yourself across the face. Ouch!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sleep</td>
<td>You fall asleep. Zzzzzzz.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/smell</td>
<td>You smell the air around you. Wow, someone stinks!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/smile</td>
<td>You smile.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/smirk</td>
<td>A sly smirk spreads across your face.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/snarl</td>
<td>You bare your teeth and snarl.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/snicker</td>
<td>You quietly snicker to yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sniff</td>
<td>You sniff the air around you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/snub</td>
<td>You snub all of the lowly peons around you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sob</td>
<td>You cry.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/soothe</td>
<td>You need to be soothed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/sorry</td>
<td>You apologize to everyone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/spit</td>
<td>You spit on the ground. You spit on (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/spoon</td>
<td>You need to be cuddled. You cuddle up against (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/stare</td>
<td>You stare off into the distance. You stare (&lt;target&gt;) down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/stink</td>
<td>You smell the air around you. You smell (&lt;target&gt;). Wow, someone stinks!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/strong</td>
<td>You flex your muscles. Ooooh so strong! You flex at (&lt;target&gt;). Ooooh so strong!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/strut</td>
<td>With arms flapping, you strut around. Cluck, Cluck, Chicken! With arms flapping, you strut around (&lt;target&gt;). Cluck, Cluck, Chicken!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/surprised</td>
<td>You are so surprised! You are surprised by (&lt;target&gt;)'s actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/surrender</td>
<td>You surrender to your opponents. (&lt;target&gt;). Such is the agony of defeat... You surrender before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/talk</td>
<td>You talk to yourself since no one else seems interested. You want to talk things over with (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/talkex</td>
<td>You talk excitedly with everyone. You talk excitedly with (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/talkq</td>
<td>You want to know the meaning of life. You question (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tap</td>
<td>You tap your foot. Hurry up already! You tap your foot as you wait for (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/taunt</td>
<td>You taunt everyone around you. You make a taunting gesture at (&lt;target&gt;). Bring it! You tease (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tease</td>
<td>You are such a tease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/thank</td>
<td>You thank everyone around you. You thank (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/thanks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/thirsty</td>
<td>You are so thirsty. Can anyone spare a drink? You let (&lt;target&gt;) know you are thirsty. Spare a drink?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/threat</td>
<td>You threaten everyone with the wrath of doom. You threaten (&lt;target&gt;) with the wrath of doom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/threaten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tickle</td>
<td>You want to be tickled. Hee hee! You tickle (&lt;target&gt;). Hee hee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tired</td>
<td>You let everyone know that you are tired. You let (&lt;target&gt;) know that you are tired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/train</td>
<td>&quot;Choo Choo Train&quot; animation and sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ty</td>
<td>You thank everyone around you. You thank (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/veto</td>
<td>You veto the motion on the floor. You veto (&lt;target&gt;)'s motion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/victory</td>
<td>You bask in the glory of victory. You bask in the glory of victory with (&lt;target&gt;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/violin</td>
<td>You begin to play the world's smallest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

116
Table of actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>volunteer</td>
<td>You raise your hand in the air.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wait</td>
<td>You ask everyone to wait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wave</td>
<td>You beckon everyone over to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weep</td>
<td>You cry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welcome</td>
<td>You welcome everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whine</td>
<td>You whine pathetically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whistle</td>
<td>You let forth a sharp whistle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wickedly</td>
<td>You grin wickedly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wink</td>
<td>You wink slyly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woot</td>
<td>You cheer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>You begin to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrath</td>
<td>You threaten everyone with the wrath of doom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yawn</td>
<td>You yawn sleepily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yay</td>
<td>You are filled with happiness!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>You nod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yw</td>
<td>You were happy to help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table above is a list of actions and their descriptions. Each action is prefixed with a slash followed by a word (e.g., /volunteer). The descriptions are as follows:

- **volunteer**: You raise your hand in the air.
- **wait**: You ask everyone to wait.
- **wave**: You beckon everyone over to you.
- **weep**: You cry.
- **welcome**: You welcome everyone.
- **whine**: You whine pathetically.
- **whistle**: You let forth a sharp whistle.
- **wickedly**: You grin wickedly.
- **wink**: You wink slyly.
- **woot**: You cheer!
- **work**: You begin to work.
- **wrath**: You threaten everyone with the wrath of doom.
- **yawn**: You yawn sleepily.
- **yay**: You are filled with happiness!
- **yes**: You nod.
- **yw**: You were happy to help.