Thesis: Of Orcs and Men: A Study of Individualism and Community in World of Warcraft

Student: Matthew Sharp

Degree: Master of Arts

College: Science and Humanities

Date: May 2009

Pages: 83

World of Warcraft (WoW) is the most successful massively multi-player role-playing game (MMO). It currently consists of over ten million players world-wide. This study focuses on how American players use the game to play with the meanings of individuality and community. This tension between individualism and community is one of the key elements of American culture. Too much individualism leads to a loss of community. The same occurs in WoW. Player-run guilds, which operate as a community of memory, begin to suffer from players who operate on individualistic terms. Ultimately, players play WoW because they get the chance to experience what a strong community commitment can be like.