Outline for Ethnography Paper

From the assignment description:

What does the space look like? How is it organized? What are people doing? How do people interact? What is the culture of the space? What are the social roles and norms? What is the etiquette? In addition, you should try to observe some of the themes addressed in the course: how people build virtual communities; the nature of on-line identity; gender, racial, and class differences; how people use the Internet for political purposes, etc. Think of yourself as an on-line explorer learning about new peoples and cultures in an emerging virtual universe.

If you choose to write a paper it should be 10-15 pages double spaced and written in 12 pt. font (roughly 4,500 to 6,750 words). You are encouraged to be creative in your narrative format and style (write in the first person, tell a story, etc.), but all papers/projects should include:

* An Introduction that lays out where the discussion is going and the main points
  + Do we have a “main point” for our paper? Is there something we are trying to be persuasive about, or is this purely an informative paper? “World of Warcraft provides an immersive medium through which players have created a complex virtual world whose culture is as complex as the culture of physical community.”
* An explanation of the research site and why the topic was selected
  + “Research site”? I assume that means an explanation of the virtual space we conducted our study in, so we could talk at length about the interface the player has with the world, and also touch on VOIP and forums, etc. The topic was selected for obvious reasons, but maybe we can throw something more in than just “we both already played”.
* Some reflexive discussion of your own background and how that might influence your research, as well as a description of the methods used, including information about your informants (those you observed or interviewed)
  + This would be a good space to talk about the differences between our experiences. What do we get out of the game? Who do we play with and why? That kind of thing.
* Three to four sections, each separated by a heading, that elucidate your main points—how cultural values, social norms, and/or other themes from the course are expressed in your research site. Each section should include data from your observations or interviews and summarize the material to make a point. You should try to analyze that data as much as possible using frameworks, theories, and analyses from the course.
  + 3 to 4 sections: One could be an extensive overview of the game as a whole, to give people an idea of what is going on in the game outside of out other major points. Guilds is an obvious choice and we can write about that extensively. Another is the game’s economy, where we can talk at some length about crafting, farming, etc. The last sections are more fluid. We should obviously talk about game goals (raiding vs pvp), the community of the game outside of guilds including things like etiquette, and whatever else we haven’t covered that we think we should.
* A conclusion that ties the various points or themes together
* In writing your paper or completing your project, you should make **at least four explicit connections** to **readings from the class** (properly cited). Outside readings can also be used, but they are not required.
  + This shouldn’t be too hard. The SL and WoW readings should have plenty of ideas that we can tie back to, and if we really want we could probably tie into it the idea of anonymity and what changes arise due to the inability to communicate cross-faction.

Keeping the above in mind, a tentative outline:

1. Introduction (probably like 2 paragraphs for each of):
   1. Who we are and why we chose to conduct this ethnography
   2. What is the World of Warcraft?
   3. What will this paper attempt to show? (something about the nature of the game and why people should think it’s a cool thing outside of just being a game)
2. Explanation of anything we need our readers to know for the following sections
   1. What are guilds, pvp vs pve, some easy things like that. This section should be a VERY brief overview of the topics we will get into in the body of the paper, just so that our readers can know what we’re talking about when we talk about our methods and the differences between our experiences.
3. Methods
   1. Brief discussion of the interface that the game provides players
   2. Discussion of means of communication, and why players so often turn to communication options outside the game’s natural UI (VOIP), and maybe talk about what that means in terms of familiarity with other players (you don’t just chat with random people on your guild TS)
   3. Overview of the interview process, as well as an explanation of the way we observe the things happening in WoW and tie them back into the paper.
4. Us
   1. A comparison of the culture of your guild and mine, and the differences between our goals in the game, including:
      1. Casual “for fun” stance vs goal oriented progression raiding
      2. Family and irl friends vs application and merit based membership
      3. Anything else?
5. Main Points, up to several pages for each of the following major sections
   1. Discussion of the main ideas of the game. The things you would first say to someone who has never heard of WoW:
      1. Dungeons and dragons RPG / team oriented roots, classes and roles. (mage vs hunter vs warrior and tank vs dps vs healer)
      2. Brief discussion of lore, mostly just to give the readers an idea of the different factions / races
      3. Experience, the leveling process, and in game currencies
      4. Dungeons and gear
   2. The game’s endgame goals
      1. What is raiding?
      2. Progression raiding as something very different from casual raiding
      3. What is pvp?
      4. Arena / RBG as opposed to casual world pvp
      5. Achievements
   3. In game economy
      1. Crafting
      2. Auction house
   4. Cultural issues within the game \*tentative\*
      1. Avatar presentation, including race and gender
      2. Accessibility of the game to real world minorities, including perhaps a discussion of how WoW is an area where people can excel in ways that they could not in the real world due to physical disabilities or whatever, also gender
      3. Griefing and camping
      4. Anonymity
6. Conclusion