can you feel entrapped as cause of feeling invested in a game

can nostalgia for a game cause entrapment

Is the whole mmo experience partially just a near miss experience? You always stretch for the best gear available, and once you've got it new content, with better gear is released. You never really reach the end (you never win), even though you may feel you are really close this time.

Can we look at the whole mmorpg gaming experience as a near miss

Arena, almost reaching the goal on rating or rank. trying hardernext time  
Almost being able to join a guild  
Almost doing enough DPS/HPS to reach a rank on worldoflogs  
Almost beating your friend at dps  
Almost getting a WF or top x kill  
Almost getting realm first, trying harder next xpack  
Almost beating the challenge mode record  
"almost" finding x item in archaeology  
"almost" getting the last skillpoint of the profession   
Exploring an area, almost managing to wall-walk up a certain place  
Reaching gold cap by playing AH, investing in goods (gambling)

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing games and Near Miss: Are players *motivated* by near miss in MMORPGs outside of raiding?

# Introduction

Near miss is a term that can be used to describe the situation where a gambler is in a losing situation, but interprets it as being close to winning. In gaming we can apply this term to describe the gamers false interpretation of being close to finishing or achieving something, while in reality that may not be the case (Karlsen, Faltin 2010). Faltin Karlsens paper: *"Entrapment and Near Miss: A Comparative analysis of Psycho-Structural elements in Gambling games and Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing games"* (2010) explains how this term can be applied to Massively multiplayer Online Role-Playing games (MMORPGs) in the raiding scene, where the players will want to keep going for another attempt at a boss-fight after almost managing to defeat it.

Based on Karlsens paper, I will examine how the extra motivation gained from near miss in a raiding environment in MMORPGs, may exist in an even higher degree than what Karlsen concluded in his paper. Based on his findings, as well as that of others, I will attempt to show that near miss experiences may act as a motivational force for MMORPG players in several aspects of the game, not just in raiding. The hypothesis is that players in MMORPGs can experience near miss in almost all aspects of the game, and that this experience, to many players, is motivating and drives them to become more hardcore, try harder and play even more to achieve what they want. I will also look for differences in the motivational value, to see if it may vary based on the type of activity.

# Method

This paper is using a theoretical research approach, based on the IMRoD structure. The literature and research used as basis for my argumentation and conclusions have been found by searching the ACM-database (http://dl.acm.org/) as well as Google Scholar (scholar.google.com). I have also looked up and used references that Karlsen used in his paper.   
  
While this paper does look at the MMORPG genre as a whole, I will be targeting the game World of Warcraft (WoW) as the main source of information. This both because it is by far the largest MMORPG to date in terms of player base (mmodata.net), and the fact that it is the game I personally have the most experience with.

Having this in mind, I have included "World of Warcraft" in the search strings in most cases. Paired with World of Warcraft, I have used words such as "addiction", "addictiveness", "invested", "near miss", "hardcore", "motivation" and "accomplishment". I have also used these words paired with "MMORPG" and "MMO", though I have mostly focused on the results involving WoW.

The amount of research done on WoW and MMORPGs in general is overwhelming, however there are still areas less explored than others. The theory that MMORPGs, and especially WoW, is addictive, is a widely discussed subject. The cause of the discussed addictiveness is a whole branch of that subject, and there are several theories as to the cause. The paper by Karlsen analyze the differences between gambling and MMORPG gaming, using WoW players as his focus group trough a comparative analysis. Questioning his 12 hardcore WoW playing informants, he studies how the near miss feeling may be a motivational or driving force that push players to keep going even longer. While there are a lot of research on addictiveness in general, this specific theory seems less explored.

Using research on addictive behavior and statistical data on the subject, paired with Karlsens paper as a basis, I will argue that the near miss feeling can be a motivating force for many MMORPG players to a high degree, also outside of raiding.

# Results

Karlsens seems to believe near miss does motivate players to keep going for longer hours. He says: *"It seems that being near to defeating a boss or clearing an instance collectively increases the dedication to play. This might increase considerably the time spent on an already quite time-consuming activity."* (Karlsen, Faltin 2010). He mention on several occasions that near miss is occurs in many parts of games, and refers to King et al. who in 2009 released a paper where they argue that near miss is a common experience in computer games. Quoting from the paper by King et al: *"For example, in a platform jumping game, a player may execute three perfect jumping maneuvers in a row and then misjudge the final obstacle and lose the game."*(King et al. 2009).

I believe it's correct to assume Karlsen takes the position where he believes near miss happens, and that it motivates and drives players in several aspects of the game. He does however only conclude this to be the case in the raiding environment.

The paper, *"Why MMORPG players do what they do: Relating motivations to action categories"* (Suznjevic, M. and Matijasevic, M. 2010), compares various player behavior patterns in World of Warcraft to motivational components. They concluded that players were highly motivated by an *Achievement* component they describe as the desire to gain power, progress rapidly, accumulate in-game symbols of wealth and status, the desire to challenge and compete with others and having the interest in analyzing the underlying rules and system in order to optimize character performance (Suznjevic, M. and Matijasevic, M. 2010).

This *Achievement* component can be linked to accomplishing something in the sense that once you *achieve* your goal, you must also have accomplished it. The word most rapidly repeating itself in Karlsens discussion on near miss, is accomplishment. It's clear that his informants were stretching to accomplish their goals, which in their case was killing the bosses they were progressing on. If they seemed close to doing so, they would become extra motivated, and often keep going outside their schedule in order to achieve what they wanted.

The paper, "*The Psychology of the Near Miss"*, by R. L. Reid (1986) tells of how most people misunderstand the way randomness works, and often misjudges a near miss experience as "luck". The paper also tells of how 50 people from various backgrounds were acquainted to discuss the effect of the near miss experience in gambling games. The general consensus was that experiencing near miss was encouraging, if it had any effect at all. Also quoting from the paper: *"The most frequent suggestions was that it would be "frustrating" or "irritating"... A few suggested that a near miss would be both encouraging and frustrating. There were some mention of "trying harder" after a near miss, although the discussants had been asked to think of situations in which this phase could have no meaning beyond "trying again".*

# Discussion

I believe the question we have to answer in order to conclude anything on the hypothesis, is whether or not the extra motivation you gain when being close to achieving something in a raid, also is present while doing other activities in MMORPGs. If this is the case, then we may be able to assume that players gain that same extra motivation and interest to keep on going, when they experience near miss in other aspects of the game.

Let's take a look at some near miss experiences a player might experience in an MMORPG. When playing Player versus Player (PvP) one might be close to reaching a rating, but then losing. At any point when trying to do a certain number of Damage Per Second (DPS), and being close to accomplishing it, or when almost beating a friend at the DPS meters, but failing. Reaching an amount of in-game currency trough investing and selling on an Auction House (AH), but suddenly not being able to sell. Almost managing to reach a zone trough illegal exploration, but failing the last jump to reach it. Finding the fourth out of five items with a random drop chance, and then going on grinding for hours without any "luck". Going for a World First kill of a boss, or aiming to be the first person on your server to reach a new level cap, but missing it by a minute.  
  
All of these scenarios, and many like them, can be interpreted as near miss experiences. If we can assume that a large number of players will get extra motivation to try again, or keep on going when experiencing these or equal scenarios, the hypothesis might indeed be correct.

While the paper by R. L. Reid is as much as 26 years old, from a time far ahead of any MMORPG, I believe the theories he has, that near miss experiences are encouraging, still apply today. Now this theory is for gambling games, and not directly aimed at computer games, let alone MMORPGs. However there are a few aspects of MMORPGs that resembles gambling games, especially the random number generator (RNG) found in pretty much all MMORPGs. The RNG takes care of making certain parts of the game more dynamic, by being random. E.g. the chance of blocking an attack, or finding a specific type of item trough looting, are both random thanks to the RNG (wowwiki.com/RNG).

# Conclusion

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