Player Character Conflict in Dungeons & Dragons 5e

Makenzie Kellar

Portland State University

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Player Character Conflict in Dungeons & Dragons 5e

by

Makenzie Kellar

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in University Honors and Communication

Thesis Advisor

Jeffrey Robinson

Portland State University

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Abstract

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that has become increasingly popular in recent years due to cameos in shows such as *Stranger Things*, the success of actual-play shows like *Critical Role*, and the release of the D&D movie *Honor Among Thieves*. D&D and other TTRPGs set themselves apart from other games by allowing for a massive amount of freedom, both in character creation and in-game choices, both of which are a massive appeal for the player base. However, this also allows for conflict not only between the players, but also between the characters they create. This project examines 126 reports on player-character conflicts gathered through a largely open-ended survey. Physical or material harm to player characters perpetrated by another player character, as treatment of non-playable characters (NPCs), and differences in mission plans were common triggers for conflict. Players tended to enjoy conflict more when it resulted in positive outcomes for themselves and their characters. They tended to dislike conflict when it was the result of a repeated issue.
Introduction

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is a sword-and-sorcery (i.e., fantasy)-genre tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) that was released in 1974 and has since had a massive impact on gaming culture (Laycock, 2015). Now in its fifth edition (5e)—which will soon be updated in 2024—D&D accounts for over half of all TTRPGs played worldwide, with almost 14 million players (Camp, 2022). Once a fringe interest feared to promote satanism (Laycock, 2015, pp. 19-24), D&D is now an accepted part of mainstream culture, generating four movies (2000, 2005, 2012, 2023), finding its way into popular TV shows (e.g., Stranger Things, The Big Bang Theory) and podcasts (e.g., Critical Role, The Adventure Zone), and garnering player testimonials by movie stars (e.g., Drew Barrymore, Vin Diesel) (Jahromi, 2017).

What is Dungeons and Dragons?

D&D is played with several players (averaging 4-5) and one Dungeon Master (DM). The DM is the game’s story-creator, story-teller (Perkins, 2021), and sole rules referee. DMs personally create (or purchase source material for) a fantasy world which all of the players’ characters inhabit. Worlds contain their own continents, nations, kingdoms, cities, towns, villages, and individual inhabitants (including monsters), as well as different cultures, politics, etc. Players create a single character, referred to as a ‘player character’ (PC). A player decides their character’s race, gender, age, game archetype (e.g., bard, barbarian, fighter, cleric, rogue, wizard), and complete ‘backstory’ (e.g., their birthplace, parents, mentors, personality, morals, family tragedies, aspirations, motivations for ‘adventuring,’ etc.). During the very first gaming session, the DM usually
creates a story that brings the PCs together, encouraging them to form a team that will work together to achieve goals. Players are encouraged to ‘get into their characters’ and ‘role play’ them (i.e., acting as they would act, which can include wardrobe, accent, body language, etc.). Sociologist Gary Allen Fine (1983) argued that TTRPGs such as D&D are autotelic, and that the fun of such games comes from being immersed in a different world.

DMs create ‘adventures’ that give PCs an opportunity to explore the world, solve problems, fight battles, and gain positive reputation, treasure, knowledge, and power. While DMs can provide PCs with reasons for acting in certain ways (e.g., gain treasure or knowledge, be heroes, etc.), including positive/negative reinforcements for doing so (e.g., DMs can muster world forces that threaten to – or actually – kill PCs), DMs cannot force PCs to do anything. Rather, players decide what their PCs do and, guided by a rule system, how they do it. This freedom of choice is a key factor that distinguishes TTRPGs from video games. As with members of small groups in the real world (Behfar et al., 2011), PCs sometimes experience conflict as they work together to solve problems.

A D&D game between friends may play out like this:

**DM:** Alright, Thorbir the Great, it's your turn.

**Thorbir:** The troll is too far for me to get to this turn, so I throw my handaxe at it.

**DM:** Go ahead and roll for it.

**Thorbir:** Damn! I rolled a five, and with my bonuses that’s a 10.

**DM:** You hurl your handaxe, but the troll notices the glint of the spinning blade and ducks out of the way. Evangeline, you're up.

**Thorbir:** I'll get 'em next time!
Evangeline: How bad is the troll looking right now?

DM: Pretty rough. Definitely below half hit points.

Evangeline: Okay, I step forward and shout at the troll: "This fight isn't going your way. Step aside now or you'll regret it."

DM: Give me an Intimidation check.

Evangeline: Pretty good, I got a nineteen!

DM: Your shout is loud enough to draw the troll's attention away from the battle at hand. As it sees the fierce intent in your eyes, it pauses, looks at its own wounds, and slowly lowers its weapon.

Thorbir: I turn to the troll: “Sorry for the trouble, friend. But, uh, you wouldn’t have happened to see an old man with a red cloak walking around this area, would you? We’re looking for him.”

DM: Do any of you speak Giant?

Evangeline: No

Thorbir: No.

Magnus: I’ve got the Comprehend Languages spell! Let’s see if we can get some answers out of this guy.

Though dice determine how successful actions are in a game of D&D, they do not necessarily determine who wins. D&D – and many other TTRPGs – do not have a set ending for players to reach. A game of D&D comes to an end when the players and DM decide to end it, and games can last for years.

Conflict in Dungeons & Dragons
In stories for movies or novels, conflict between characters is not ‘real.’ It may entertain and/or emotionally ‘move’ audience members, but it does not directly affect their social relations with others. In contrast, while occurring in a story, conflict between player characters in D&D games inevitably affects both characters’ and players’ social relations because it is virtually impossible to separate acted roles from role players—the latter being accountable for the former. Consider the following scenario: A group of PCs are fighting a beholder (a fierce, floating creature with one eye, tentacles, and a razor-toothed mouth). One PC (a barbarian) is next to the beholder, attacking it with an axe. Another PC (a ranger) is directly behind the barbarian at a distance, attacking the beholder with a longbow. The ranger’s player rolls a 20-sided die to hit the beholder (according to the rules), but rolls so poorly that his ranger accidentally hits the barbarian, knocking him unconscious and endangering his life. This event threatens social conflict at two, simultaneous levels: The barbarian character is likely to be upset with the ranger character for making an avoidable, risky shot, and the barbarian’s player is likely to be similarly upset with the ranger’s player. The barbarian character subsequently and angrily confronting the ranger character is also the barbarian’s player confronting the ranger’s player.

While conflict between the players is usually considered to be detrimental to the game, the discourse surrounding conflict between characters is somewhat more nuanced. Though many DMs will keep this sort of conflict out of their games due to personal preferences, it is acknowledged that—when handled correctly—conflict can present interesting opportunities for players to engage with their own character and the other characters at the table. The value of conflict between PCs varies greatly between gaming
groups and very much depends on what the exact conflict is. For example, a few harmless pranks between PCs is more likely to be allowed in a game than a fight to the death.

Conflicts between player characters have long been recognized in D&D games and are often referred to as “Player versus Player” (PvP), a term which is widely used in other gaming spaces (Bartle, 2003, p. 540). Despite this, there is virtually no data on how PC conflict affects game enjoyment, nor on factors that are associated with such conflict which could help DMs improve their craft.

This paper does not seek to judge whether or not player character conflict is good for D&D. The variability of each game and the players within them mean that what is “good” for one group may not make an enjoyable game for another. Instead, this project aims to uncover how such conflicts between players come about and what themes of conflict are most common. Investigating these questions has the potential to provide insight that D&D players, particularly DMs, will find useful when managing conflict in their own games.

**Theories of Conflict**

Conflict can be very generally defined as a perceived disagreement or confrontation between people; in some way, the beliefs, opinions, or actions of those involved are incompatible (Deutsch, 1973). In D&D, PC conflict most closely resembles intragroup conflict, or conflict between members of a small (and often task-oriented) group.

Within small groups, Humphrey et al. (2017) argued that a key source of conflict is dyadic, or between two specific group members. Shah et al. (2021) identified dyadic
conflict as the most frequent type of intragroup conflict. Other sources of conflict are ‘individual’ (i.e., when one specific team member serves as the instigator), ‘subgroup’ (i.e., when different factions of a team cause the conflict), and ‘team-level’ (when most members of a team are in conflict with each other) (ibid.). In many situations of intragroup conflict, certain members are not involved at all (ibid.).

The fact that not every individual contributes equally to intragroup conflict prompted scholars to isolate and identify different roles that individuals take during conflict. Conflict on the ‘individual’ level is typically instigated by two different types of people: “bad apples” or “principled dissenters” (Shah et al., 2021, p. 430). “Bad apples” are characterized by their disregard for interpersonal relationships and emotional instability (Felps et al., 2006). Conversely, principled dissenters were shown to push their team members to think critically and engage with different perspectives (Garner, 2019).

Within the field of communication, conflict was originally divided into two distinct categories: relationship conflict and task conflict (Wall & Nolan, 1986). Relationship conflict is about interpersonal incompatibility among teammates (e.g., annoyance, hostility; Jehn, 1995; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Task conflict—and a similar concept of process conflict (Behfar et al., 2011)—is about what tasks should be and how they should be performed (Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000). ‘Bad apples’ are more likely to cause relationship conflict (Felps et al., 2006), whereas, ‘principled dissenters’ are more likely to cause task conflict (Garner, 2019).

On the one hand, some studies have found that intragroup conflict can be productive and can have positive outcomes, especially when the conflict generates novel, constructive ideas and promotes positive future change. Van De Vliert (1999) referred to
this as productive conflict. For example, Shah et al. (2021) found that, among manufacturing teams, task conflict on individual and dyadic levels had the potential for increased team effectiveness, whereas team-level conflict tended to reduce team effectiveness.

On the other hand, while intra-group conflict can, in specific contexts or situations, be productive, the bulk of scientific research suggests that intragroup conflict is damaging to group-member satisfaction. This is an important point for this project as D&D’sraison d’êtreis for players to ‘have fun.’ In a meta-analysis of 26 studies, De Dreu and Weingart (2003) found that both relationship and task conflict were universally negatively correlated with team-member satisfaction, and that the correlation was stronger for relationship conflict. Similarly, they also found that, across 25 studies, both relationship and task conflict were, on average, negatively correlated with team performance. Behfar et al. (2011) found that process conflict negatively affects member satisfaction, group performance, and group coordination.

There is extremely little research concerning PC conflict in D&D. As such, this thesis is inductive and attempts to answer a number of questions in a qualitative manner, such as: Are there recurrent types of PC conflict? Does the occurrence of PC conflict during gaming sessions increase or decrease the amount of ‘fun’ players experience during those sessions? Do PC conflicts have consequences for PCs and their relationships? Do PC conflicts have consequences for players and their relationships? What can DMs do to mitigate PC conflict?

Data and Methods
Data

Data collection was approved by PSU’s institutional review board and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were collected from September of 2022 to February of 2023 using a Qualtrics survey (Appendix 1). The survey was advertised through flyers sent to game stores across the United States (with owners'/managers’ permission) and postings on D&D Facebook groups (with moderators’ permission). To encourage participation, a $200 Amazon gift card was raffled off to one random participant. In order to be eligible, participants had to be ≥18 years old, have native or native-like fluency in English, and have been a player in a D&D 5e game during which there was a conflict between two or more PCs. A total of 126 usable surveys were collected.

Methods

This thesis used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitatively, thematic analysis was conducted on each open-ended question (see Results, below) following the principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), including the ordered steps of conceptual labeling, code-category development, and theme generation. The answer to each open-ended question—which ranged from a single sentence to multiple paragraphs—was inductively assigned a conceptual label (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) designed to represent participants’ meanings. Conceptual labels were detailed and preserved participants’ own words as much as possible. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), extremely similar conceptual labels were grouped in order to create more general
conceptual categories. For each open-ended question, all conceptual categories that were represented in more than one survey constituted potential themes. However, not all themes were adequately robust. Robustness was operationalized in terms of a theme being raised in ≥20% of surveys, which also allowed the theme to be quantified and used as a binary variable (no=0/yes=1) in regression analyses (see below).

Statistics were performed in STATA (StataCorp, 2017). No category of any binary variable included less than 20% of its total cases for a given regression model, which warranted the variable’s inclusion in the model (Sun et al., 2009). In order to build the multivariate regression model predicting ‘fun,’ unadjusted bivariate analyses were initially computed for all potential predictors (Tables 1 and 2). In order to build a parsimonious multiple regression model, the only predictors included were those that were significantly, bivariately associated with ‘fun’ at \( p \leq .10 \). As seen in Table 5, this resulted in a regression model with four independent variables. Correlations were computed between these four variables to test for multicollinearity, none of which were intercorrelated at levels greater than \( \pm 0.28 \), which warranted their inclusion in the model (Tabachnick, & Fidell, 2007). The multiple regression had approximately 30 cases/events per independent variable (EPV), which is well above the recommended EPV ≥10 for small-sample models (Hair et al., 2010). Statistical significance was considered at a two-sided \( p < .05 \).

Results

Measures

*How Conflict Affected Players’ ‘Fun’ During Gaming Session*
Players rated how their reported conflict during a gaming session affected the ‘fun’ they experienced during that session on a five-point scale: (1) The conflict reduced the amount of fun I had that session a lot; (2) The conflict reduced the amount of fun I had that session a little; (3) The conflict did not affect the amount of fun I had that gaming session; (4) The conflict increased the amount of fun I had that session a little; and (5) The conflict increased the amount of fun I had that session a lot. ‘Fun’ was the main dependent variable for regressions (Mean: 2.9; Median: 3; Range: 1-5; SD: 1.6).

Characteristics of Player Population

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the player population, including means for players’ reports of how the conflict affected their ‘fun’ during that gaming session. These characteristics are described below, including how they were transformed into variables for regressions.

Table 1: Characteristics of Player Population (N=126)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Session “Fun”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young adult (18-25)</td>
<td>17% (N=21)</td>
<td>3.7 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult (26-39)</td>
<td>61% (N=77)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older adult (40-59)</td>
<td>22% (N=28)</td>
<td>2.6 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male identifying</td>
<td>63% (N=79)</td>
<td>3.1 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female identifying</td>
<td>28% (N=36)</td>
<td>2.6 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (non-binary or refused to answer)</td>
<td>09% (N=11)</td>
<td>3.0 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>81% (N=102)</td>
<td>2.9 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>19% (N=24)</td>
<td>2.9 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country in which game was played</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>64% (N=81)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>36% (N=45)</td>
<td>3.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game campaign style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More combat than roleplay</td>
<td>17% (N=22)</td>
<td>2.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal combat and roleplay</td>
<td>47% (N=59)</td>
<td>2.9 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More roleplay than combat</td>
<td>36% (N=45)</td>
<td>3.3 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of D&amp;D 5e experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>12% (N=15)</td>
<td>3.0 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>34% (N=43)</td>
<td>3.1 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>54% (N=68)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>59% (N=74)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-monthly</td>
<td>24% (N=30)</td>
<td>2.9 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly or less</td>
<td>17% (N=22)</td>
<td>3.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Player age.** Player age was measured as a continuous variable (Mean: 33; Median: 31; Range: 18-59; SD: 9.4). Age breaks down into stages of life as follows:

Young adult (18-25 yo.; N=21; 17%), adult (26-39 yo.; N=77; 61%), older adult (40-59 yo.; N=28; 22%).

**Player gender.** Player gender was transformed into a categorical variable: Male identifying (N=79; 63%), female identifying (N=36; 28%), and other (no response or non-binary; N=11; 09%). For regressions, gender was binary (male or female identifying).
**Player ethnicity.** Player ethnicity was transformed into a categorical variable: White (N=102; 81%), non-white (N=24; 19%). Ethnicity did not vary enough to be used in regressions.

**Country in which game was played.** Player country was transformed into a binary variable: US (N=81; 64%), other (N=45; 36%). U.S. participants represented 34 states.

**Game campaign style.** Campaign style was a categorical variable: More combat than roleplay (N=22; 17%), equal combat and roleplay (N=59; 47%), and more roleplay than combat (N=45; 36%). For regressions, campaign style was binary (others vs. more roleplay than combat).

**Player D&D 5e experience.** Player years of experience playing D&D 5e was measured as a continuous variable, from 1 to 9 years, or the amount of time D&D 5e has been in play (Mean: 6.7; Median: 7; Range: 1-9; SD: 2.2). For more context, Table 1 breaks experience down into three-year categories.

**Player frequency of play.** Player frequency of play was a categorical variable: At least weekly (N=74; 59%), at least bi-monthly (N=30; 24%), and monthly or less (N=22; 17%). For regressions, frequency of play was binary (others vs. at least weekly).

**Nature of PC Conflict**

Table 2 summarizes the nature of the PC conflict, including means for players’ reports of how it affected their ‘fun’ during that gaming session. These characteristics are described below, including how they were transformed into variables for regressions.

**Table 2: Nature of PC Conflict**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>“Fun”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict between a good and non-good PC?</td>
<td>N=107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60% (N=64)</td>
<td>3.0 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40% (N=43)</td>
<td>3.0 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict a repeated (vs. novel) issue between PCs?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25% (N=32)</td>
<td>2.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>75% (N=94)</td>
<td>3.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict triggered by PC vs. PC assault?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28% (N=35)</td>
<td>2.6 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>72% (N=91)</td>
<td>3.1 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict triggered by how PCs dealt with NPCs?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21% (N=27)</td>
<td>3.2 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>79% (N=99)</td>
<td>2.9 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict triggered by ‘how to plan’ for a mission?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27% (N=34)</td>
<td>3.4 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>73% (N=92)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the conflict perpetuated by PCs’ origins’/backstories?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32% (N=40)</td>
<td>3.3 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68% (N=86)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did conflict have consequences for PCs?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive consequences</td>
<td>24% (N=30)</td>
<td>3.6 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative consequences</td>
<td>63% (N=79)</td>
<td>2.8 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None or no report</td>
<td>13% (N=17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did conflict have consequences for players?</td>
<td>N=126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive consequences</td>
<td>10% (N=12)</td>
<td>3.5 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative consequences</td>
<td>40% (N=50)</td>
<td>2.0 / 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None or no report</td>
<td>50% (N=64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Was the conflict between a good and non-good PC?** All conflicts had two ‘sides,’ which were almost always represented by individual PCs (i.e., the vast majority of conflicts started out as being dyadic, even if others joined in later). Participants reported the alignment of all parties involved in conflicts (e.g., lawful good, lawful neutral, lawful evil, neutral good, neutral, neutral evil, chaotic good, chaotic neutral, and chaotic evil). Each side of each conflict was coded as either ‘good’ or ‘non-good,’ and as either ‘chaotic’ or ‘non-chaotic.’ In rare cases where a side initially involved more than one PC, the alignment designation was assigned based on ≥50% of the PCs on a given side. The only significant combination to emerge (e.g., good/good, good/non-good,
non-good/non-good, chaotic/chaotic, chaotic/non-chaotic, non-chaotic/non-chaotic) was ‘good vs. non-good.’ Specifically, a binomial probability test showed that a significant number of all conflicts were between one good-aligned PC and one non-good-aligned PC (60% vs. 40%, $p=.05$). The binary variable for regressions involved whether this condition held (1) or not (0).

Three conflict triggers. From the qualitative coding (see above), three conflict-trigger themes emerged. These triggers—which had to be represented in ≥20% of all conflicts in order to ‘count’ as a theme—were mutually exclusive for conflicts, such that 76% of all conflicts were triggered by one of these three factors. These triggers were based on the coding of three, related, open-ended questions which were asked separately to ensure focused answers but considered together for coding: (1) “[P]lease describe what the conflict was about or over? That is, what was the reason for, or cause of, the conflict? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe;” (2) “In order to understand the conflict – which you will describe in later sections – please briefly give us some context for the conflict, so that we can better understand it. For example, what was the party doing at the time? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe,” and (3) “Describe what happened during the conflict, or how the conflict ‘played out.’ For example, who did what to whom, how did other characters react, and how did the conflict end or get resolved? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe.” Combined, these three questions produced a narrative regarding the nature of the conflict and its cause(s).

Was the conflict triggered (a) by PC vs. PC assault? The first theme that emerged was that 28% of all conflicts were triggered by one PC somehow directly assaulting
another PC, either by directly attacking them (physically or magically) or by stealing (or attempting to steal) something from their person. The presence (1) or absence (0) of this theme became a binary variable.

For example, in case #10, the conflict was triggered by the bard firing a bow into combat. The bard “botched the attack and hit [paladin] instead,” causing the paladin and wizard to confront the bard after the combat ended. For another example, in case #97, magic was used to harm another PC when, during a fight, the bard cast fireball on an area where the rogue was located. To make matters worse, “both [the rogue] and the enemies were entangled at the time” restraining them and increasing the likelihood that the bard’s spell would do more damage to the rogue. An example of theft included case #78. The rogue had previously attempted to pickpocket several members of the party, particularly the cleric and warlock. The particular conflict was triggered when the rogue “pickpocketed a special quest item the warlock had been keeping a secret from the party.” The warlock screamed at them and was prepared to attack until the paladin stepped in to de-escalate.

*Was the conflict triggered (b) by how PCs dealt with NPCs?* The second theme that emerged was that 21% of all conflicts were triggered by how one PC dealt with, or threatened to deal with, a non-player character (NPC; i.e., one of the many other people in the fantasy world). The presence (1) or absence (0) of this theme became a binary variable.

For example, in case #35, the party had captured a cultist whom the barbarian wanted to execute. The party questioned the cultist and found out that they were a newer initiate who had been “indoctrinated by supposed friends” and were “young and seemed
fairly innocent.” The rogue objected to killing the cultist, which escalated into a conflict with the barbarian about the cultist’s fate. In a less morally charged example, case #86 featured a party who had recently completed a mission for their guild where the sorcerer had been killed and then brought back with a revivify spell. When they returned and received congratulations from the guildmaster for completing the mission, the ranger was “extremely vocal about her displeasure at the guildmaster's attitude” and “had begun yelling at and chastising our guildmaster for acting unconcerned that [sorcerer] had died.” When the rogue and warlock tried to intercede – with the warlock stating that the ranger’s behavior towards the guildmaster “was uncalled for” – the ranger began yelling at, and insulting, them as well.

*Was the conflict triggered (c) by ‘how to plan’ for a mission?* The third theme that emerged was that 27% of all conflicts were triggered by how to prepare for and/or execute a plan for a mission. The presence (1) or absence (0) of this theme became a binary variable.

For example, in case #28, the party was investigating an underground fighting ring. The party’s mystic wanted to gather information by talking to the bartender, but the paladin thought that “all he would do is giveaway [sic] that the group was seeking info.” For another example, case #77 contained a debate between party members over how to handle a hydra that was guarding a key that the party needed. The ranger “wanted to sneak in and steal the key and run” while the sorcerer “wanted to kill the hydra for materials.”

*Was the conflict a repeated (vs. novel) issue between PCs?* Based on coding the three questions about the nature and cause(s) of the conflict (see above), another
theme emerged that cut across all conflicts (i.e., that was not mutually exclusive across triggers). Specifically, 25% of all conflicts were some type of ‘repeat’ of prior conflicts (e.g., another iteration of a same conflict or an escalation of a prior conflict). This theme became a binary variable. Only between 21-27% of the three types of thematically triggered conflicts (see above) were also ‘repeated’ conflicts, suggesting that thematically triggered conflicts were largely distinct from ‘repeated’ conflicts. The presence (1) or absence (0) of conflicts being ‘repeats’ became a binary variable.

For example, in case #39, one of the PCs was a “snooty high elf” sorcerer who “had a habit of leaving the party without notice” (emphasis added). The reported conflict was another instance of this behavior: The sorcerer charged into combat with a dragon and was “squashed.” After being magically brought back to life (i.e., revived), the cleric attempted to physically restrain the sorcerer (i.e., the conflict) to keep them from running off again.

**Was the conflict perpetuated by PCs’ origins’/backstories?** Based on coding the three questions about the nature and cause(s) of the conflict (see above), another theme emerged that cut across all conflicts (i.e., that was not mutually exclusive across triggers). Specifically, 32% of all conflicts were somehow perpetuated by PCs’ origins or backstories, that is, by players roleplaying parameters of their PCs that had been established prior to them starting the campaign. These parameters included, for example, elements of a PC’s culture, upbringing, socialization by mentors, psychological traits and traumas, etc. as defined by a player when they created their PC (which is often referred to as a PC’s origin story or backstory). Also included was a PC’s class domain (e.g., grave cleric), school (e.g., necromantic wizard), archetype (e.g., eldritch-knight fighter), college
(e.g., lore bard), etc., which is associated with a particular ‘outlook on life.’ Alignment was not considered to be part of a PC’s origin/backstory (and comprised a separate theme). The presence (1) or absence (0) of conflicts being ‘perpetuated by origin/backstory’ became a binary variable.

The theme of backstory-motivated conflict was multifaceted. In some cases, two PCs’ backstories/origins were directly in conflict from the very beginning of the game. For example, in case #50, the party contained a cleric whose goddess “abhors the undead” and a necromancer wizard (i.e., a wizard specializing in undead). Up to the point of the conflict, the wizard had been keeping their necromancy a secret. The conflict occurred immediately when the truth was revealed, when the wizard introduced the party to the wizard’s skeletal servants. In other cases, individual PC’s backstories came into conflict with the game’s emerging plot or in-game development of other PCs. For example, in case #24, the party stumbled upon a sleeping demigod. That demigod happened to be of an old religion that the wizard had been studying, according to his backstory. When the party voted on what to do with the demigod, everyone except the wizard voted to kill it, creating suspicion and, eventually, conflict.

**Did the conflict have consequences for PCs?** The determination of conflict’s consequences for *PCs* (not players) was based on qualitative coding of two open-ended questions: (1) “After the conflict was over, describe any short and/or long-term consequences that it had for relationships between the characters (not players);” and (2) “Describe what happened during the conflict, or how the conflict ‘played out.’ For example, who did what to whom, how did other characters react, and how did the conflict end or get resolved? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe.”
Compared to conflicts for which there were either no consequences or positive consequences (37%), a significant number of conflicts (63%) had some type of negative consequences for PCs (binomial probability test: $p=.006$). This presence (1) or absence (0) of negative consequences became a binary variable.

There were two types of negative consequences. First, in 59/79 (75%) of conflicts with negative consequences, and thus 59/126 (47%) of all conflicts, the conflict resulted in damage to PC/party relations that persisted at least some time after the current gaming session. Second, in the remaining 20/79 (25%) of conflicts with negative consequences, the conflict resulted in a PC dying and/or leaving the campaign (either voluntarily or forcibly). For example, case #47 featured a conflict between the party’s bard and sorcerer over how to handle “innocent bystanders” in a town run by a dictator. The dispute “irreparably damaged their relationship.” For another example, in case #54, the ranger’s decision to “sell out his comrades” by joining the enemies in the middle of a combat encounter caused the two other members of the party to die “a horrible death.”

**Did the conflict have consequences for players?** The determination of conflict’s consequences for players (not PCs) was based on qualitative coding of the following open-ended question: “After the conflict was over, describe any short and/or long-term consequences that it had for relationships between the players (not characters).” Compared to conflicts for which there were either no consequences or positive consequences (60%; N=76), 40% (N=50) had some type of negative consequences for players. This presence (1) or absence (0) of negative consequences became a binary variable. On the one hand, the above distribution indicates that a significant number of conflicts did not result in negative consequences for players (binomial probability test:...
On the other hand, 40% is a large minority of conflicts and, as will be seen in the multiple regression (Table 5), this variable was the largest predictor of ‘reduced fun.’

Negative consequences for players took a variety of forms. Some were relatively mild, as with case #24, where the survey respondent noted that there was “definitely a layer of tension created between the players involved.” In the more extreme example of case #18, the survey respondent noted that the conflict damaged player relationships to the point where “[they] and the other members of the party only speak to [wizard’s] player when [they] absolutely have to.” Some conflicts even resulted in the entire campaign coming to an end, as with case #63, where the “the group actually came apart” after a conflict between the fighter and the rest of the party. The fighter’s player was asked not to come back to the club that had facilitated the game, and it took “a few weeks or so before the other players felt comfortable to gather around a table again but any mention of the events would cause a session to end again.”

Management of PC Conflict

Table 3 summarizes the role of DMs in managing conflicts. These findings did not factor into regressions.

Table 3: DM Management of PC Conflict (N=126)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did DM intervene in any way to manage conflict?</td>
<td>18% (N=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82% (N=103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or no report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did player make suggestions for ‘improved’ DM intervention?</td>
<td>44% (N=56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56% (N=70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or no report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Did DMs intervene in any way to manage conflicts?** The determination of whether or not DMs intervened into conflicts was based on qualitative coding of the following open-ended question: “Describe how your DM ‘managed’ or ‘dealt with’ the conflict, its course, and/or its outcome.” The most common answer to this question was some version of “the DM let it [i.e., the conflict] play out,” which was considered ‘no intervention.’ Combined with cases in which this answer was left blank, 82% of players reported that their DM did not intervene in any way.

Players reported a variety of ways in which DMs actually intervened. Some DMs had pre-determined policies that PC–PC combat was either not allowed at all, or had to be mutually consensual; in these cases, when PCs ‘came to blows,’ the combat was simply prohibited. Other DMs briefly ‘paused’ the game and ‘took a break’ when conflicts became overly heated. Some DMs used non-player characters (NPCs) to talk PCs down or away from conflict, or to provide solutions that PCs were not considering. Other DMs engineered outcomes to create situations in which neither PC had to compromise, but this tended to result in relatively artificial plot modifications. Finally, in some cases, players reported that DM’s intervened to encourage (vs. avoid or deescalate) conflict, such as by engineering plots in which PCs would come into conflict with each other, and/or by encouraging players to have their PCs make decisions that promoted conflict (e.g., a DM going out of their way to remind a player that their PCs was possessed and that a reasonable action would be to attack another PC).

**Did players make suggestions for improved DM intervention into conflict?**

Determining suggestions for DM intervention into conflict was based on qualitative coding of the following open-ended question: “Do you think the DM could have
managed the conflict better or more productively? If so, what could they have done?” On the one hand, only a minority (44%) answered ‘yes.’ On the other hand, this was a large minority, contrasting starkly with the finding that only 18% of DMs actually intervened in some way (see above) and indicating that players felt that at least some intervention was necessary.

One set of suggestions involved DMs somehow stepping in toward the goal of having the conflict reach a productive outcome. For example, in case #34, the player wrote that “[the DM] could have paused the roleplay to be sure there wasn't any character bleed and to make sure big decisions [...] met with the entire group's consent.” For another example, in case #40, the player wrote that they “wished at some point [DM] would have stopped the game, explained to the player that his character was acting inappropriately, and that as a player he was also acting inappropriately.”

Another set of suggestions involved DMs being more clear, prior to the campaign’s beginning, about their DM style, expectations for players, and overarching tenor or ‘feel’ of the campaign and world. For example, in case #2, the player wrote that “[the DM’s] preferred game style was much darker than most of the party's so he often presented hopeless scenarios and expected us to just deal with them.” This made it difficult for the participant, who was playing a PC with a “general warm and innocent attitude” to mesh with another PC in the game.

Another set of suggestions was that DMs not go out of their way to perpetuate conflict. For example, in case #7, one PC (a ranger) was attempting to rejoin the party in disguise after a falling out with another PC (a paladin). The player wrote that the DM “gave excessive hints to [paladin] indicating that something was unusual [...] which
fueled the [suspicion] and contempt from his character.” For another example, in case #1, a PC had been possessed by a foreign agent, and the DM encouraged that PC to attack another PC: “[the DM] directed it, apparently he enjoys watching his players [fight each other].”

**Statistical Analysis**

Table 4 shows the unadjusted bivariate analyses for the effect of all predictor variables (see above) on how conflicts affected players’ game-session fun.

**Table 4: Unadjusted Bivariate Analyses for Game-Session Fun**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player age</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>-2.77</td>
<td>-0.074 to -0.012</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player gender(^1)</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>-1.52</td>
<td>-1.171 to 0.154</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player country(^2)</td>
<td>-0.476</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>-1.53</td>
<td>-1.09 to 0.141</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign style(^3)</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>-0.065 to 1.144</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player years of D&amp;D experience</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
<td>-0.238 to 0.028</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of play(^4)</td>
<td>-0.194</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>-0.64</td>
<td>-0.792 to 0.404</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict between good &amp; non-good(^5)</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.675 to 0.628</td>
<td>.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict was a repeated issue(^5)</td>
<td>-0.963</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>-2.91</td>
<td>-1.619 to -0.307</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict triggered by PC-PC assault(^5)</td>
<td>-0.509</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
<td>-1.162 to 0.143</td>
<td>.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict triggered by NPC treatment(^5)</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>-0.436 to 1.024</td>
<td>.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict trigg. by mission planning(^5)</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>-0.857 to 1.256</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict perpetuated by backstory(^5)</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>-1.104 to 1.150</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative consequences for PCs(^5)</td>
<td>-0.293</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>-0.95</td>
<td>-0.903 to 0.317</td>
<td>.344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative consequences for players(^5)</td>
<td>-1.576</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>-5.82</td>
<td>-2.112 to -1.039</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) 0=Male-identifying; 1=Female identifying  
\(^2\) 0=Non-US; 1=US  
\(^3\) 0=≤50% combat; 1=>50% roleplay  
\(^4\) 0=<Weekly; 1=>Weekly  
\(^5\) 0=No; 1=Yes

Table 5 shows the final, multivariate model for predictors of players’ game-session fun.

**Table 5: Multivariate Predictors of Game-Session Fun (N=120)\(^1\)**
Players’ game-session fun was significantly affected by two variables: player age and the conflict resulting in negative consequences for players (vs. not). As players get older, the presence of conflict significantly reduces their perception of game-session fun. As seen in Table 1, while young adults (18-25 yo) report that conflict “slightly increases” game-session fun (3.7/5), all other age groups – including both adults (2.8/5) and older adults (2.6/5) – report that conflict “slightly decreases” game-session fun, and this effect appears to be linear.

Independent of player age, when conflicts have negative consequences for players (vs. not) – which occurs in 40% of all conflicts (Table 2) – players report significantly lower levels of game-session fun. As seen in Table 2, these players report that conflict “slightly decreases” (2.0/5) game-session fun.

While not significant at the $p \leq .05$ level, conflicts being repeats or continuations of prior conflicts (vs. novel conflicts) approached significance ($p=0.79$) in lowering players’ perception of game-session fun. As seen in Table 2, while novel conflicts “slightly increased” game-session fun (3.2/5), repeated conflicts “slightly decreased” (2.2/5) such fun. Note that this variable was strongly, bivariately associated with game-session fun (Table 4), and one reason why this variable may not have achieved significance at $p \leq .05$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player age</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-2.33</td>
<td>-0.063 to -0.005</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign style$^2$</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>-.323 to .803</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict was a repeated issue$^3$</td>
<td>-0.550</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
<td>-.1.164 to .065</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict trigg. by mission planning$^3$</td>
<td>0.269</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>-.319 to .856</td>
<td>.367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative consequences for players$^3$</td>
<td>-1.272</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>-4.50</td>
<td>-1.832 to -.713</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$ $R^2=.28$
$^2$ 0= ≤50% combat; 1=>50% roleplay
$^3$ 0=No; 1=Yes
in the multivariate model (Table 5) is because it is moderately, positively correlated (.28) with players’ reports of conflicts having negative consequences for players.

**Discussion**

The overarching—and, arguably, overriding—goal of playing D&D 5e is to have fun. This study found that a large majority of players—especially ones over the age of 25—perceive that PC conflict during a gaming session reduces their fun during that session. Beyond this, perceptions of fun are significantly reduced when conflicts result in negative consequences for players, which occurs frequently (40%).

**Not all Conflicts are Created Equal**

76% of conflicts were triggered by three, mutually exclusive factors: (1) PC-PC assault; (2) NPC treatment; and (3) mission planning. While none of these triggers significantly affected players’ game session fun, PC-PC assault was the only trigger that was negatively associated with ‘fun,’ and that resulted in below-average means for ‘fun.’

**The Benefits of Session-Zero Parameters**

One central finding is that a large number of conflicts can likely be avoided, or at least minimized, by DMs establishing certain campaign parameters from the outset and making them clear to players, which is typically done in a ‘session zero.’ A session zero takes place when the players and DM meet prior to the start of the game to discuss rules, expectations, background information for the setting, and can be used as a time for the DM to help players with character creation (Cullen, 2022).

The finding that 60% of conflicts occur between a good-aligned PC and a non-good PC suggests that many conflicts can be eliminated or mitigated by requiring
that all PCs are good-aligned (lawful, neutral, or chaotic). If DMs do not use alignment, they can still require that all PC’s moralistic outlooks are ‘good.’ This recommendation is in line with the classic, moralistic fantasy genre of good versus evil, for example characterized by the PCs in Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings*. This recommendation works even if a DM’s campaign/world embodies a grimdark fantasy genre. In that case, at least good-aligned PCs are likely to see ‘moral-eye-to-moral-eye’ as they jointly deal with morally gray problems, decisions, NPCs, enemies, etc. While anti-heroes can be interesting, they tend to ‘work’ in fiction because they are often main protagonists who either operate alone or with a supporting cast, and of course because they are written versus role played. In contrast, having one or two anti-hero PCs in an otherwise ‘good’ D&D party tends to foster PC conflict because all PCs are ostensibly equal members of a team who must work together in real time without scripting. Arguably, this recommendation will also reduce conflicts associated with PC-PC assault and NPC treatment (see above).

Another finding was that 32% of conflicts were perpetuated by PCs backstories/origins. On the one hand, DMs are encouraged to tie campaign plots—including their moral and ethical complications—into individual PCs’ backstories because it is engaging for players and increases their ‘fun.’ On the other hand, findings suggest that conflict is more likely when two PCs’ backstories (i.e., PCs’ fundamental motives, goals, hatreds, etc.) directly conflict with each other. This can be avoided in a session zero, where DMs can work with players to craft distinct, yet compatible, PC backstories.
The potential cost of placing parameters or requirements on character generation (i.e., in session-zero) is that it will reduce an individual player’s campaign ‘fun’ (e.g., because they were hoping to play a chaotic-neutral assassin). However, these requirements can be justified by ‘the greater good’ (no pun intended), because they are likely to prevent multiple instances of PC-PC conflict over time, each of which affect multiple players.

**DM Intervention into Conflicts**

While data suggest that DMs are hesitant to intervene in PC conflict, the fact that doing so was suggested by 44% of players means that intervention is worth considering. Most DMs will not want to create artificial (e.g., session-zero) bans on PC-PC conflict because it breaks game immersion. DM intervention can take many other forms, such as using NPCs to ‘guide’ or ‘manage’ conflict, or taking brief game breaks to allow players to ‘cool down’ (and perhaps talk about the conflict ‘out of game’ before PC-PC conflict eventuates). Regardless of if, or how, a DM intervenes into any given conflict, findings suggest that conflicts persist across gaming sessions and that ‘repeated-issue’ conflicts are especially damaging to player ‘fun.’ Thus, DMs should at least consider making efforts to manage game-session conflicts in between those sessions (e.g., by talking to players – at least individually, but perhaps collectively – about their perspectives on the conflict, their PCs’ conduct, etc. in order to prevent conflict persistence or escalation).

**Limitations**

This study has a number of limitations. First, the sample size is small (N=126), limiting the study’s generalizability and potential validity. Second, the term ‘conflict’ is often perceived as having negative connotations (Kerwin et al., 2011). Given that the
survey asked participants to report on a ‘conflict,’ it may have resulted in a selection bias of conflicts that were negative, or perhaps even severely negative. Third, the survey did not ask if games were conducted face-to-face versus online, which may have affected players’ perceptions of game-session fun.

**Potential for Future Research**

Though this work provides some insight into PC conflict in Dungeons & Dragons 5e games, there is still a great deal yet to be explored. Firstly, this research focused mostly on the role of a DM in managing conflict. While the DM certainly holds the most responsibility for this as the arbiter of the game, there is undoubtedly a place for players in conflict. Whether or not their actions in a conflict affect the outcome of a conflict as much as those of the DM is yet to be determined.

Additionally, research into the causes of conflicts between players—and not their characters—would likely yield useful information about game management. It would also provide an easier basis to compare and contrast the conflict occurring in D&D groups to those studied in previous academic work.
References


StataCorp. (2017). Stata Statistical Software: Release 15. College Station, TX: StataCorp LLC.


Appendix 1

Consent Statement
I have had the chance to read and think about the information in this form. I have asked any questions I have, and I can make a decision about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions anytime while I take part in the research.

- I agree to take part in this study (1)
- I do not agree to take part in this study (2)

This survey is in English. How would you describe your fluency in English?

- I have native, or native-like fluency (1)
- I have intermediate fluency (less than native or native-like fluency) (3)

“You must be an adult (≥18 years old) to complete this survey. How old are you?”

“In order to be eligible to participate:
1. You must have been a PLAYER (not a DM) in a D&D 5e game with two or more player characters.

and

2. At some time during that play, there must have been a conflict between two or more of the PLAYER CHARACTERS. This does NOT include conflict between player characters and NPCs, or between players and the DM (e.g., over rules). Your character may (or may not) have been directly involved in the conflict.”

Does all of this apply to you?

- Yes (1)
In what country did this gaming session take place?

- USA (1)
- United Kingdom (2)
- Australia (3)
- Other (4) _______________

In what US State did this gaming session take place?

Before you describe the conflict, we need the following information about EACH of the CHARACTERS in your adventuring party/group that were present during the session in which the conflict occurred: character name (simple/first), race, class, level, and formal/listed alignment. Please provide single/first names of each character (not player), and refer to them by name in your descriptions below. For example:

1. Grimli, Dwarf, Barbarian, level 3, Lawful Good (LG)
2. Trad, Half Orc, Ranger, level 3, Neutral Good (NG)
3. Gilorn, Half Elf, Wizard, level 3, Chaotic Good (CG)

Which character (from above) were you playing? Please just write the first name.

- Character (2) ____________________________________________
I was not playing any of the characters from above (3)

In order to understand the conflict – which you will describe in later sections – please briefly give us some CONTEXT for the conflict, so that we can better understand it. For example, what was the party doing at the time?

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Before you tell us how the conflict 'played out' (which you will describe in the next question), please describe what the conflict was about or over? That is, what was the reason for, or cause of, the conflict? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe.

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Describe what happened during the conflict, or how the conflict ‘played out.’ For example, who did what to whom, how did other characters react, and how did the conflict end or get resolved? Please use character first names (that you gave above) to describe.

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Describe how your DM 'managed' or 'dealt with' the conflict, its course, and/or its outcome.

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

How responsible do you think the DM was for the conflict that occurred?
Do you think the DM could have done something that would have ensured a more productive resolution to the conflict? If so, what could they have done?

After the conflict was over, describe any short and/or long-term consequences that it had for relationships between CHARACTERS (not players)?

After the conflict was over, describe any short and/or long-term consequences that it had for relationships between PLAYERS (not characters)?

The conflict:

- Reduced the amount of fun I had that gaming session A LOT (1)
- Reduced the amount of fun I had that gaming session A LOT (2)
- Did not affect the amount of fun I had during that gaming session (3)
- Increased the amount of fun I had that gaming session A LITTLE (4)
- Increased the amount of fun I had that gaming session A LOT (5)

At that point in the campaign, how balanced was the game between roleplay and action?

- Very action heavy (1)
○ Somewhat action heavy (2)

○ Balanced between action and roleplay (3)

○ Somewhat roleplay heavy (4)

○ Very roleplay heavy (5)

How long did that D&D group typically play for?

○ Less than 1 hour (1)

○ 1-2 hours (2)

○ 2-3 hours (3)

○ 3-4 hours (4)

○ 4-5 hours (5)

○ +5 hours (6)

Which gender do you identify with most closely?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Transgender Male (3)
Transgender Female (4)

Gender Variant/Nonconforming (5)

Other (6)

Prefer not to say (7)

Which best describes you?

American Indian or Alaska Native (1)

Asian (2)

Black or African American (3)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)

Hispanic or Latino (5)

White (6)

Other (7)

Prefer not to say (8)

How long have you been playing D&D 5e?

Since it was published in 2014 (almost 9 years ago) (1)
Since 2015 (almost 8 years) (2)

Since 2016 (almost 7 years) (3)

Since 2017 (almost 6 years) (4)

Since 2018 (almost 5 years) (5)

Since 2019 (almost 4 years) (6)

Since 2020 (almost 3 years) (7)

Since 2021 (almost 2 years) (8)

Since the beginning of this year (2022) (9)

How frequently do you play D&D 5e?

I have only played several times and do not have enough information to answer this question (1)

At least once per week (2)

At least once every two weeks (3)

At least once per month (4)

At least once every three months (5)

At least once every six months (6)
☐ At least once per year (7)

☐ Less than once per year (8)