

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND



**LOOKING FOR THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN
THE GAME , THE GROUP
AND THE PLAYER**

"No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine own were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."

- John Donne
(1572 - 1631)

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1 Preface

This report was written in fall of 2005 as part for a project cluster in “Advanced Computer Game Analysis” at the IT-University of Copenhagen. The idea of this cluster was to look at games in an analytical and methodological perspective, and by doing so understand the elements and functions behind the game. During this report we will investigate how and why group structures within multi-player games emerge.

As this is a new field for all of us we have consulted people who are currently working in this field. We would like to thank Miguel Sicart and Jonas Heide Smith, PhD students at the IT-University, for going beyond the call of duty and sharing thoughts and ideas on the subject.

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2 Introduction

This was *not* how they planed it. This was going to be a walk-over. The dragons of The Blasted Lands were known throughout the entire realm of Azeroth, as being easy prey for seasoned adventurers like themselves. But something had gone wrong. Terribly wrong. Seven of the ten man strong group that had set out to bring down the dragons, were no longer among the living. Their lifeless corpses lay scattered on the hillside which had proven their final doom. One of them was still on fire, but the proud warrior that once occupied that body, had long since seized his panicking attempts to put it out. He was now walking the lonely road through the eternal fields of the after-life.

Their slogan of “you will never walk alone” suddenly had a very hollow ring to it. Every man for himself was now the order of the day. The chance of survival was close to none. Everyone was running around screaming.

“I’m not even supposed to be here for crying out loud! You just be happy I’m helping you fight this dragon.”

“Can’t anyone control that freaking rogue? We have rules, and a chain of command for the love of God. If nobody followed our rules it would just be total anarchy. I make the calls of when to fight and when to run!”

Never before had they been in these parts of the barren wastelands. Before leaving the secure town of Ironforge behind, they had allied themselves with some highly skilled veterans to help with bringing the dragon down. Because down it had to go! The legend had it that the dragons of The Blasted Lands held guard over some of the most precious metals in the entire known world. Metals that could be used to forge mighty swords and armor.

But all that seemed to matter little now...

The story above is an imaginary scene from the game World of Warcraft. Even though none of this really took place, it is included to illustrate some of the mechanics in the game. The game mechanics combined with the human factors, are some of the issues which we will try to cover in this report.

All the members of this project group have been playing games for many years and take great interest in especially multiplayer games and how relations between people emerge in such games. Anyone who has spent a few hours in a multiplayer game has probably experienced how people act and interact in different ways. We have all experienced the good and bad things about such games. How people interact with each other and the game has been our starting point. What we intend to clarify is whether or not the player is influenced by the context of a group and if there is a mutual exchange between players. In the following sections we will clarify the scope of this project and how we will approach the subject.

2.1 Problem area

Games in the genre of “Massively Multiplayer Online Games” (MMOGs) have during the last couple of years exploded in terms of player population and popularity. Why, could one ask? What do these games provide that make people, month after month, pay fairly big amounts of money to play? Is it the chance to experience grand adventures, epic battles or the opportunity to rise as a hero in a world of chaos? Or is it something completely non-game related, like chatting, forming new friendships etc.?

In the beginning it is fairly reasonable to expect that the main focus of a player in any MMOG is to explore and learn how to act within the game world, but as time passes and you get more and more familiar with your surroundings other objectives arise; at some point you know everything there is to know about the world and you are faced with a dilemma – what to do now? Either you quit the game completely or you find new objectives within the game – e.g. acquiring the best item, being the best player at a specific game mechanic or building strong social relations. These objectives then serve as a means to keep playing, even though the game itself does not instruct you to. One could say that you stop playing the designers game and instead start to play within the world.

So why is this interesting? Well, people tend to approach games in a very rational fashion; how do I optimize my chance of winning. This is due to how games are structured – a cost-benefit principle where every move should be weighed according to the overall goal of the game. This is certainly the case if we were talking about single player games, where every move only affects you. So, would it be a sensible assumption to make when we are talking multiplayer games, MMOGs in particular? During our initial studies, we saw a tendency that people seemed to deviate from this assumption. Why is that? It seems there is something else affecting the player, when he enters a social

context. Why would anyone emphasise a non-game related issues, like social interaction, in a situation where winning is everything? Of course there are anomalies among players – not everyone is playing to win a game, but it is, as we see it, a minority in comparison with most players (Smith, forthcoming).

During this report we will try to clarify the key factors when people participating in certain group structures – e.g. do players always choose, as one could expect, the rational choice in a particular context? In exploring this phenomenon we are using the MMOG *World of Warcraft* as a case study. This game is currently the biggest MMOG on the marked, with more than 5 million subscribing users (Blizzard.com). It's truly a game which has managed to appeal to players in a broader perspective. People of every age, play this game. It has become a leading title within this genre and is probably shaping the next generation of MMOGs.

2.2 Problem statement

Based upon the problem area we will try to answer the following question:

When playing World of Warcraft, what are the key factors of the relationship between the player and the group?

To understand why players make certain choices regarding group structures, we will initially have to clarify how the game facilitates group structures and what types of players it is dealing with. We will therefore use the following questions as means to answer the before-mentioned statement.

How are groups structured within World of Warcraft?

Which type of players takes part in these structures?

2.3 Problem limitation

As part of our problem limitation we have chosen only to focus on World of Warcraft. This is done due to two factors. First of all because of the extreme focus which World of Warcraft is experiencing at this time, which has, as mentioned in the first section, managed to capture the essence for

many types of players and thereby their way of playing. Secondly we wanted a problem area of manageable size.

In our analysis we will be using different theories to verify or explain certain findings. We will not at any time try to verify or substantiate the theories, but merely use them as a foundation from which we will try to explain player behaviour in a social context.

2.4 *The report*

In the following section there will be a brief introduction to the report and how this is structured. In order to answer our problem statement we have decided to divide the report into two sections, where each part respectively will handle “the group” and “the player”. Each chapter will be organised in the following way:

- Theory – the theory will be used to analyse the mechanics of the game and will be introduced at the beginning of each chapter.
- The analysis – the theory combined with the empirical material should give us some answers to our initial (sub-) problem statement.
- Conclusion – there will be a summary of all our findings regarding the analysis.

The consequence of this structure is that we do not have a purely theoretical chapter, where all the theory is introduced at once, but rather it is split up into smaller parts and explained when needed.

3 The World of Warcraft

We will use World of Warcraft as a case study and will therefore give a short introduction to the game and the world in which it takes place.

The game was released in the fall of 2004 by Blizzard Entertainment and immediately became a run-away hit. Within months it reached 1.5 million subscribers in the US and Europe (Mmog-chart.com) and with the recent launch in Asia, this number is expected to grow significantly. As mentioned there are currently 5 million active subscribers, which is a record when talking about MMOGs.

The whole world is built around the universe from Blizzard's previous strategy games in the Warcraft series (currently consisting of three iterations of the game and numerous expansions for all) and based on the world of Azeroth, where two factions are at war. As a player, you have to decide which faction you are going to fight for - the Alliance or the Horde. With up to 20.000 people on each server you will engage in battles to eradicate the other faction and control the lands of Azeroth.

The initial games in the Warcraft series were strategy games, where you controlled different armies. You also had to maintain and build camps, in order to support the armies, collect resources and expand your kingdom. What makes World of Warcraft different from the other games in the series is that you are only controlling a single character and all the interaction is taking place in a persistent online world. The perspective has changed from being a "God-like" perspective where the player sees all; to a 3rd person perspective in the game world.



Figure 1: The character creation screen (Screenshot).

When entering World of Warcraft for the first time you have to create your character, where each of the two factions has 4 races to choose from. Then you have to choose things like your class, looks, and of course a name for your character. When you first enter the world you are a so-called “low level” character, which means you start in a similar low level area. By completing quest given to you by *Non Player Characters* (NPCs), you slowly gain experience, which makes you rise in levels. The level range is from 1-60. Depending on your level you can venture further into the world.

The world consists of two continents – Kalimdor and Eastern Kingdom – each of them has numerous areas, varying in all kinds of terrain; from hot deserts to lush jungle, over snowy mountains and into hostile swamps. Furthermore, if you ever played the previous Warcraft games from Blizzard, you will notice many of the same locations implemented in World of Warcraft, such as the Dark Portal, the Tomb of Uther, and Stratholme.

As a low level character your main way of gathering experience is through doing and solving quests. The world is filled with NPCs, from whom you can acquire different kinds of quests. By doing and completing these quests you will gain more and more knowledge about the world and at the same time receive money, equipment, potions etc. which will help you to explore and survive in the world.

When reaching level 60 the game allows you to venture further and fight the real monsters of the game. The so-called end-game content consists of huge dragons, powerful warlords and other bestial creatures lurking in the dark corners of Azeroth.

There is, of course, a lot more to the game than the above mentioned, but this was just to give a short introduction which will form the basis for this report. In the next chapter we will clarify and explain how we have done our empirical research.

4 Method

In order to answer our preliminary questions we have devised some empirical studies. How and why, we have chosen to do this will be introduced in the following chapter. Furthermore, we will discuss different areas of influence and reflect on some of the choices we have made.

4.1 *Empirical studies*

In order to answer our problem statement we will be using part theory and part empirical data. In this section we will introduce the methods we have used to gather the empirical data needed. We have three different approaches; a heuristic walkthrough/inspection of the game, an online questionnaire and lastly a focus group session. Each of these has given us different aspects of the game, which will help form the basis of our analysis.

4.1.1 A heuristic approach

As part of our preliminary research we did a heuristic walkthrough of the game to see what the game mechanics allowed the players in regards to groups and structures. This is based on our observations within the game and will be used as an objective view of what the game facilitates. We do not intend to use our own experience with the game as data, but merely as a description of how the game mechanics function.

We have all been part of the game since it launched, experiencing various guild structures, both large and small. All the while, observing the game, ourselves and the players around us. As active participant we have experienced many facets of the game, including much of the endgame material. Because of this we may have a subjective view on some of the material used. On the other hand we have substantial knowledge on what it means to be a player this particular game.

4.1.2 Online survey

As part of the empirical data collection, we chose to make a quantitative survey, so that we would get a broad perspective on how the game mechanics are perceived by players. We decided to make an online questionnaire which would be posted on multiple websites concerning World of Warcraft. In achieving this we used a web-tool called “SurveyMonkey” to create the questionnaire. It is di-

vided into six sections regarding the respondent and his experience with games, including World of Warcraft. The questionnaire is enclosed in Appendix E in its entirety.

General Information: Questions concerning the respondents' personal data, such as age, gender and which region they are located in, e.g. Europe, North America etc. This was included simply to get an idea of who the respondents were and what their background was.

Game Experience: To get a clear idea of which players are currently engaged in World of Warcraft, we formulated a section which would give us the opportunity to view the players' experience with games in a more general sense. What games have the respondents played before and how long have they been playing.

World of Warcraft: These questions are primarily asked to get a view of how much time the respondents are using on World of Warcraft or related subjects, such as the game's official website. Furthermore, we wanted to try and classify the respondent according to Richard Bartle's player types (see chapter 6.1 for further information on Bartle's theory) in order to see how this would fit our assumption of people's playing style in World of Warcraft. This issue was further explored in other sections of the questionnaire.

Guild: In the report we are trying to uncover how people structure themselves within certain groups, where guilds can be seen as one of the primary and persistent group structures in World of Warcraft. For this reason it seemed natural to get the player's opinion and experience with these structures.

Community: When focussing on virtual worlds, people often refer to the community surrounding the game and how this affects the players and the way the game is experienced. Therefore we found it to be of importance to collect information on how players used the community to advance within the game. Furthermore it could be interesting to know how people thought the community viewed them and their guild.

Playing the Game: This section handles every aspect concerning in-game issues, e.g. play style, reason for playing, etc. Like the World of Warcraft section, these questions are asked in order to get a basic idea of what type of player we are dealing with and how they act within the game world.

In accordance with The Market Research Society's "Questionnaire Design Guidelines" we did a few tests in order to see if the questions made sense, and whether the time required by the respondent exceeded 15 minutes, which in our experience will make one lose patience and quit half way through. Furthermore, we made a small introduction for the forums telling them who we were, what we were doing and what we would use the results for. The introduction also stated that all results collected in the survey would be held anonymous (see Appendix A).

The survey ran for 6 days and when closed, 442 people had participated. All the results are located in Appendix F.

4.1.3 Focus group

To clarify some of the questions obtained via the questionnaire we decided to make a focus group. The idea was to ask some of the same questions but with the goal of getting more qualitative answers, to compare with the statistical material provided by the questionnaire. Furthermore, we wanted to emphasize the questions about guilds and other group structures within the game, along with organisational questions, e.g. how does a guild organise itself in World of Warcraft. Before the session started every participant was asked to fill out a small questionnaire which would let us get some general information about them (see appendix B and C).

The focus group consisted of five participants in the age 25-29 where everyone had been playing computer games for more than 15 years. Furthermore, they had all been playing or were still playing World of Warcraft for several hours a week and everyone had experience with other MMOGs as well. The entire session was recorded and the sound file in its full length can be found on <http://www.itu.dk/people/sla/focusgroup/focusgroup.wav>

4.2 Lessons to learn

In retrospect, some elements could have been structured differently and for this reason some of the results might have been contaminated. In the following section we will try to clarify these mistakes and evaluate their effect.

4.2.1 Online survey

During the design of the questionnaire some minor mistakes were made, which resulted in some people being forced to answer specific questions which were not relevant for them. For example, if you were not in a guild you would still have to answer questions regarding how your guild was organised and such. But when examining the data it turned out that only *one person* was not in a guild, so it was decided simply to disregard the person's answers concerning guilds when doing the cross references.

Furthermore, we had, in some of the questions, made too few possible answers. This seemed to be a good idea before we launched the survey, it would make it easier for us to categorize the answers. As a result, people could not answer as freely as they wanted, but instead only had the choices which were available. An example of this kind of question could be:

1. *How do you define your guild?*

- a. *We like to explore the game and be the first guild there*
- b. *Our main goal of our guild is to socialize with other members and other players in general.*
- c. ...

Instead, the question should have been formulated in such a way, that it gave the respondent the possibility of rating the statements, e.g.:

2. *Rate the following statements:*

- a. *My guild likes to explore the game and be the first guild there*
- b. *The main goal of my guild is to socialize members between and other players in general*
- c. ...

This could probably have given some more accurate answers and without making the respondent feel pressured into giving a specific answer.

The questionnaire was released on pre-selected forums, such as the official World of Warcraft website, which meant that only a specific group of people answered the questionnaire. We are aware of this fact, and know that we may not have reached all types who might play World of Warcraft.

4.2.2 Focus group

The participants used in the focus group were mainly university students and for this reason should be expected to have an analytic and reflective approach to e.g. games. Furthermore, some of the participants are studying games in an academic context. This is, of course, not necessarily a bad thing, but makes you wonder if the answers given resemble those of ordinary World of Warcraft players. One could imagine that answers given by an “expert” would be more abstract and not minded on the specific game. We do not think this is the case and believe our results work in the context presented.

5 The group

In the following chapter, we will try to answer one of the sub-questions presented in the introduction chapter:

How do players organize themselves within these group structures in World of Warcraft?

In order to identify the group structures in World of Warcraft and how they are organised, we will be using organisational theory combined with findings from our empirical material. We find that the organisational theories chosen are highly adaptable for analysing group structures and behaviour in massively multiplayer online games. In this chapter, two models are introduced and briefly explained, we will then use them in relation to World of Warcraft. Before embarking on this short foray, into the realm of organisational theory, we need a definition of what an organisation *is* and what it *is not*. After the theoretical introduction we will put this into work; where does it all fit and why.

Organisational theory is often used to help companies structure themselves, in order to get the optimal outcome of a certain situation, but the theory is not limited to this specific context. It can be applied in all situations where people choose to participate in formalized groups, even in computer games. The theory is based on organisations in a more abstract sense and can for this reason it can also be applied to the study of computer games.

5.1 What is an organisation?

The definition of an organisation used in this report is a simple one, yet one that is broad and generalized enough to embody a wide variety of collaborations between people. A definition of what constitutes an organisation that seems widely accepted (Bakka & Fivelsdal, 2004, p. 12-15 and Christiansen, et al., 2000, p. 13.);

An organisation is in interaction with the surroundings and consists of social entities guided by formalized cooperation with the aim of reaching one or more goals.
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There are certain implicit and important points to be drawn from this definition. First of all, an organisation is in constant interaction with its *surroundings*. No man is an island, and neither is an organisation. Secondly an organisation is *a number* of people (or social entities if you will) thereby excluding the possibility of a one-man organisation. Third the organisation is *formalized*, meaning that there are rules of conduct within the organisation, and possible rules about how external actions and communication should be carried out. Fourthly there is talk of *cooperation* - a group of people gathered in one place does not make an organisation by itself - they have to be working together. Which brings us to the last point; the cooperation between the people has *the purpose of reaching a common objective* – the mutual goal(s). In order to reach these objectives, the group will have to form some sort of consensus of what the objectives are and how they are reached. This consensus will serve as common ground when deciding the actions which need to be taken in order to reach the objectives.

5.2 Leavitt and the model of change

The first model being introduced is the Open System Model by H. J. Leavitt from 1965 (Bakka & Fivelsdal 2004, p. 308). This model shows how the elements of an organisation are closely connected, and that all elements react dynamical to changes, both internally and externally. An organisation is always dependent on its surroundings. It is dependent on input from the outside world such as resources, workforce, machinery and money. Leavitt's model is an excellent tool for mapping out the effects that internal and external changes will have on a given organization. The model consists of four elements that are closely intertwined.

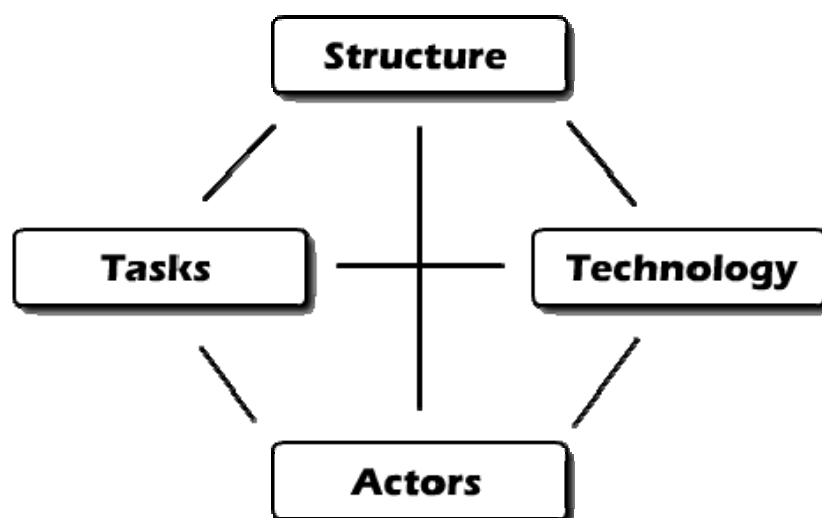


Figure 2:H.J. Leavitt's Open System Model (Bakka & Fivelsdahl, 2004, p. 308)

One of the main critics of the model is that it does not include the surroundings as a main component (Bakka & Fivelsdahl, 2004, p. 312). The definition of an organisation mentioned surroundings as a key element of an organisation. Whether or not the critic is relevant is not to be a topic in this chapter, merely it will be mentioned that changes *in* and influence *from* the surroundings will always indirectly impact the model. Change is one element of the model and can either be internal (from the four elements) or external, such as new national laws, new products from competitors, the invention of new technology, etc. We will use the model in the original version, because of its simplicity.

Each of the elements will in the following be explained. Furthermore, we will try to clarify some of the effects of each element in regards to the other elements.

5.2.1 Tasks

Description: *Tasks* are the different functions carried out in the organisation. For example, the daily work hereunder routine jobs (such as bookkeeping/administration) and large scale project work. The tasks can be the *common goal* of the organisation, when relating this to the definition of an organisation.

Effect: The element of tasks, changes directly when the company takes on more and/or different projects. Indirectly it changes when new technology and/or more actors are added to the organisation, resulting in different tasks being carried out.

5.2.2 Structure

Description: The term *structure* is used to describe both the *layout* of the organisation and the communication flow. Is the organisation structured vertically, with a clear chain of command, or is it a flat horizontal structure, with more of an informal communication flow? The communication flow is dependent on the structural form of the organisation. If many decision-makers need to be informed about future actions, the actions take longer to initialize. The structure is the *formalized cooperation*.

Effect: The way the organisation is structured has clear impact on what kind of tasks it can undertake, and hence what technology and actors are needed. Again, some of the other elements demand

certain structures in order for the organisation to function. Running a nuclear power plant demands a higher level of hierarchical organisation structure than running a small pottery company.

5.2.3 Technology

Description: *Technology* is every kind of hardware and software located in the organisation, including physical locations, furniture, computers, network, etc. It also includes the *knowledge* on how to operate these. The technology is what is needed to reach the common goals in the organisation.

Effect: The technology can be influenced by replacing, removing or adding new technology. As stated above, the type of tasks in the organisation puts different emphases on which types of technology are required.

5.2.4 Actors

Description: In the definition of an organisation, *social entities* are used as a label for the people. Leavitt refers to them as *actors*, but they are the same thing. Without actors, there would not be any organization. Hence, if you have no workers there would not be anything to organize, and no way to reach the common goals¹.

Effect: The current structure in any given company will change when more actors are added, and more actors are needed when new and/or different tasks are taken on. Some actors enter the organisation with technology (as in knowledge) and they might require the structure to adapt.

5.2.5 Influencing the model

One or more of the elements in Leavitt's Open System Model can be deliberately influenced, but it is impossible to totally control the process, because of the dynamic relationship between the elements. The model shall be seen as organic and coherent. It is not possible to control the outcome when changing an element. If something is changed, a chain reaction is started, influencing every element in the model like rings in the water. For example, if you add more members to your organi-

¹ You might even argue that there would not be any common goals either, since these are set forward by the actors.

sation (actors), it brings more knowledge (technology) to the organisation and everyone in the organization now has more people to communicate with (structure), but it also gives you the ability to do more tasks.

5.3 The organisational life-cycle

Another model which is directly applicable for analyzing group structures in World of Warcraft is Richard Daft's formalized model of the organisational life-cycle (Christiansen, et al, 2000, p. 194). The model is simple and easy to understand and yet abstract enough to be applicable when analysing virtual worlds.

As an organisation grows different needs arise. At the beginning, when the organisation only consists of 10 people, one man could easily manage the entire organisation. But when the number increases it becomes an entirely different matter. New management is needed and more formalized workflow is called for. If nothing is done, the organisation will simply not flourish.

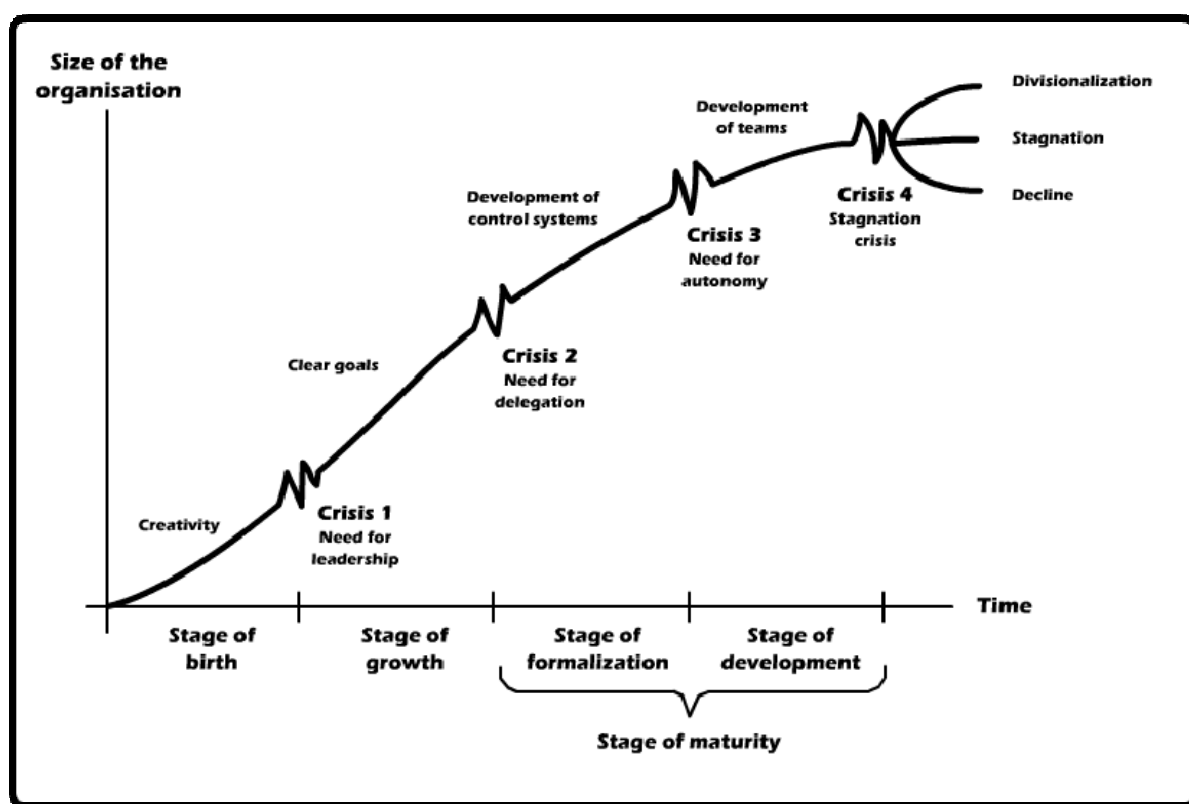


Figure 3: The life cycle of an organisation (Christiansen, et al, 2000, p. 194)

The model consists of three stages with the last stage being split into two sub-stages. Each stage ends with a crisis that has to be solved, in order for the organisation to continue its growth.

5.3.1 Birth stage

In the first stage of the model, all the activities are centred on getting the organisation up and running. It is a stage with a high degree of creativity and a very low degree of formality. Everything is an opportunity and no “stupid” questions exist. The structure is very organic and can quickly adapt to the challenges it faces.

When the organisation grows, more management is required. The current management, or lack thereof, might not be able to single-handedly manage the organisation anymore. A need for new and/or changed leadership is required for the future growth; this is the first crises that an organisation faces.

5.3.2 Growth stage

If the leadership crisis is handled, the organisation enters a stage of growth. More tasks can now be taken on, and more control is being implemented, in order to ensure that the tasks are being carried out effectively and correctly. The structure becomes much more formalized and a clearer chain of command emerges. The actors in the organisation gain a stronger feeling of belonging to a collective because the tasks are divided between the participants.

A new crisis emerges when the organisation continues to grow. When the actors develop a higher degree of knowledge, and thereby feel the urge to run the departments themselves, a new crisis occurs.

5.3.3 Maturity stage

This last stage of the life-cycle model is divided into two sub-stages, which are both centred on the growing maturity of the organisation.

The stage of formalization

In this stage more standardized procedures and control instances are implemented in all aspects of the organisation. For example, experts will be centralized in specialized staff groups, so that their knowledge is best applied throughout the organisation.

Crisis occurs when the implemented procedures and control instances take power and control away from the individuals. This leads to the feeling of inefficiency among the actors, and furthermore the feeling of constant surveillance.

The stage of development

The bureaucracy from the previous stage has been replaced by a higher degree of social control. The organisation becomes more team-oriented and people in the organisation must develop a higher level of self-discipline. This on the other hand lowers the need for standardized procedures and control instances.

5.3.4 Restart

At this time the organisation cannot grow any further in its current form. The growth stalls and the last crisis will come about. From here the organisation can go in three directions;

- The organisation will be divided into smaller divisions or self-controlling units. These units then go through the stages in model, starting from the stage of birth.
- The organisation cannot overcome this crisis. This in itself is not a problem, but it simply “locks” the organisation in its current form. The team-based organisation as described in the stage above can exist indefinitely if implemented properly.
- The organisation becomes smaller. Worst case scenario will be that it dies. There is neither the will nor the resources to solve this crisis, or the organisation might have overgrown itself and its market.

5.3.5 Problems with the model

The only problem we find with Daft’s model of the life-cycle is that it implies that all organisations *want* to grow. That is true for the general organisation, but in all areas of our society we will be able to find companies, organisations and other gatherings of people that insist on *not* growing. They feel that their unique touch, or collective feeling will be lost if the growth becomes the main objective. Some organisations want (even need) to stay in the birth stage of the life cycle, so that creativity can flow properly in the organisation and they have neither the ambition nor the means of becoming a larger organisation, which consists of smaller self-controlling units, as described in the stage of development.

5.4 *Groups in World of Warcraft*

In the next section, we will try to clarify how group structures are implemented and used in World of Warcraft. This will be based on our heuristic observations of the game. The definition of an organisation will be used as the foundation for identifying groups in the game.

5.4.1 Group structures

In World of Warcraft there are three different group structures, in which all players can participate. These groups are used in different situations and serve as a foundation for every organisation inside the game. Briefly they can be described as follows;

- **Guilds:** The guilds are the primary way of making persistent organisations within the game. A guild can contain as many members as you wish, and will last until the guild-leader decides to disband the guild.
- **Normal groups:** These can be seen as small temporal organisations, where five people can choose to partake. The group will last as long as the members wish, but if a member goes offline he will automatically be dismissed from the group.
- **Raids:** Also a temporal group, but with the possibility of uniting up to 40 people instead of 5 as the normal group allows. A full raid will consist of 8 groups with 5 members in each. This group is used as a temporal group structure, but with persistency in regard to people going offline – they will still be part of the raid when entering the game again.

The last two types of groups can consist of players from the guild that unite in smaller ad-hoc groups or bigger raid groups with a temporary common goal. Other players from other guilds and non-guild players can also participate in these groups without leaving their guild, and often the groups disband after the common goal is reached or the goal becomes unobtainable.

Often the normal groups are organised with a vertical structure where one leader makes decision on what tasks each group member should be performing, e.g. what tactic should be used in a given situation. It is also the leader who decides how the group should be constituted, that being who gets invited or removed from the group.

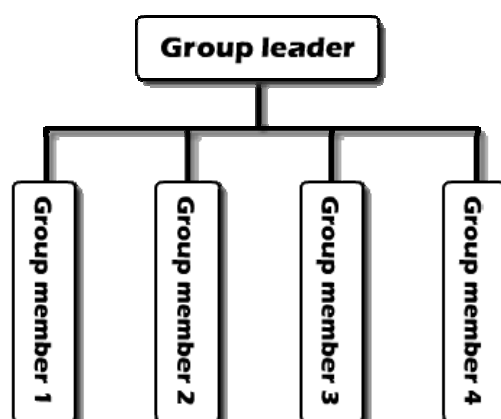


Figure 4: A small 5 man group in World of Warcraft.

Raid groups are also organised this way with one leader for the entire group, he then in turn can appoint sub-leaders. Although, the sub-leaders have no real authority they act as the extended arms of the raid-leader, solving smaller local problems inside the subgroup. All their actions can still be overridden by the raid-leader. People with great knowledge about the game or the given situation will often be in charge of a smaller group. This ensures that the raid-leader will not have to handle all questions that might rise during a raid session. For example a group leader could handle the tactical positioning of the group members before larger battles.

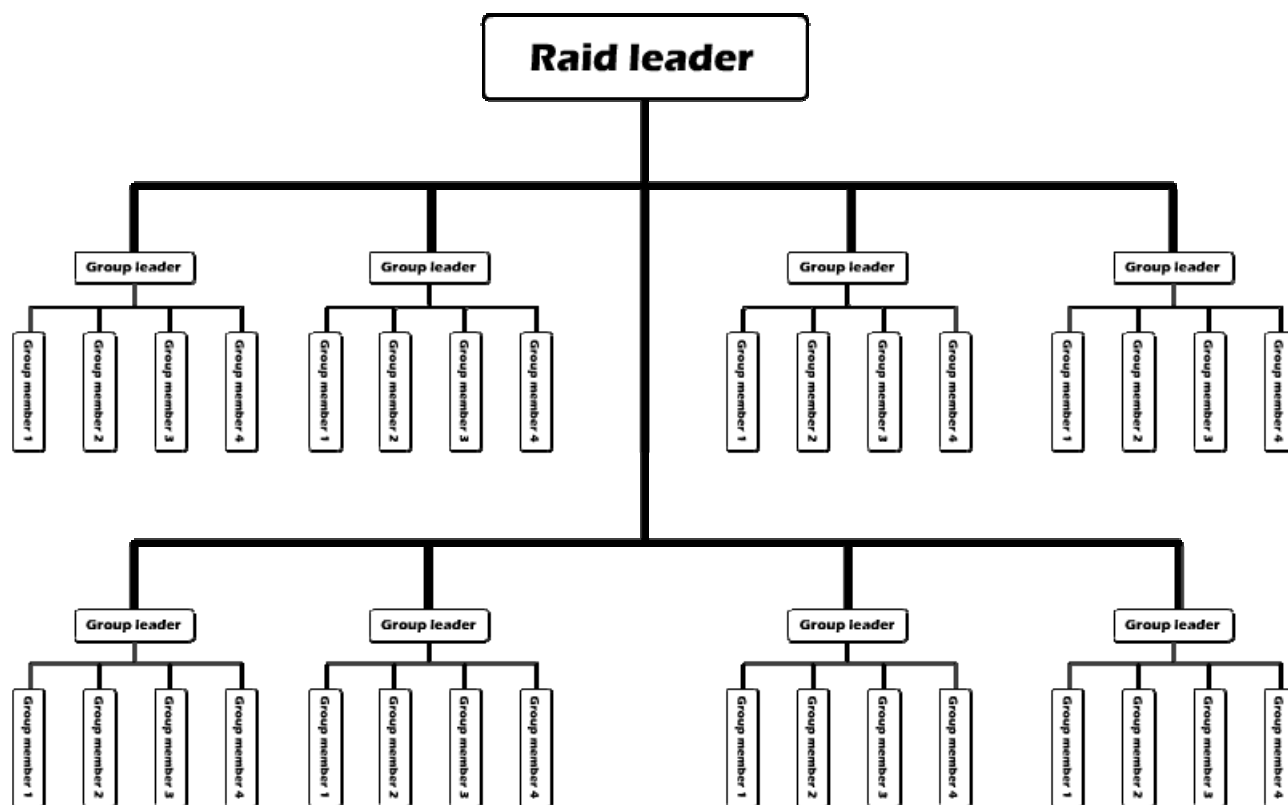


Figure 5: A larger 40 man raid group in World of Warcraft.

Another approach of structuring the smaller groups, in a raid, could be to divide the different classes in separate groups in order to ease the communication flow, e.g. the class which needs to do close melee attacks on a monster, will be put together in one group, so they can coordinate the attack without involving everyone else. This is a reasonable approach when a large amount of information needs to be communicated.

5.4.2 Guild structure

A guild can be structured in many ways, depending on size, purpose and/or social background. The game mechanics facilitate a very strict hierarchical structure of guilds. This can be seen in the way ranks are implemented in the game. When making a guild you can appoint different ranks to the members, which allows them access to different guild tools, e.g. special chat rooms and information posters. In decreasing order the ranks are:

- Guild-leader
- Officer
- Veteran
- Member
- Initiate

Even though the game only facilitates a vertical structure, our observations have shown that people tend to make their own structures. One guild used a structure where specific people handled things like money, items or other ingredients needed by the guild. These people did not influence the decisions in the guild, but would rather serve as information holders.

Another guild used the different classes in the game to structure their organisation – a class representative would be picked from each class and would serve as a courier between the guild-leader and the members of that class. This decreased the amount of information and decisions made by the guild-leaders, since everything would have been debated between the members first.

It is fairly easy to see how the raids and groups structure themselves in a classic vertical organisation, where information flows vertically back and forth (or up and down if you will). This is also

reasonable because of the situations where these structures are used – often hectic battles where someone has to make a decision instantly, without any time to debate.

5.4.3 Networks of interest

You can view the temporal groups as a network of interest. A player remains in the guild for longer periods of time, but constantly participates in smaller groups, which have the same goal as the player himself, e.g. obtaining certain items in the game. When the goal is reached the group disbands and the player “returns” to the guild and assumes a “role” of availability for other groups.

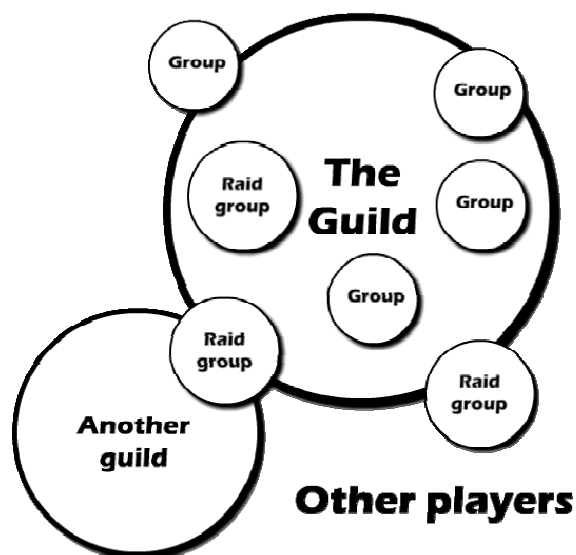


Figure 6: Network structures (adapted from Bakka & Fivelsdal, 2004, p. 98).

The guild acts as a base for the player. This is where he belongs, but the guild is more of a two-sided organisation. The player can actively participate in trying to achieve the common goal, or just use the guild structure as a form of hub, in which he returns to look for new objectives.

5.5 Groups

We will in the next section combine the theoretical models, introduced earlier, with our empirical findings. First we will use Leavitt’s model to explain how the dynamics of a group in World of Warcraft works, and then use the lifecycle model to clarify how these groups evolve in the game.

5.5.1 Leavitt and World of Warcraft

As explained in Leavitt's model any change made in an organisation will have some consequences regarding structure, technology, tasks and actors. In this section we will look at each of the 4 factors in Leavitt's model and see what they represent in World of Warcraft, and how they relate to each other.

Tasks: In World of Warcraft tasks can be seen as the different quests, or the different instances that the guilds can actively take part in. Each of the three group structures found in World of Warcraft can have very different tasks. The normal group and raid group often have small short termed goals, such as acquiring certain items, while the guild is based on more long termed goals, e.g. the best "player-vs.-environment" guild. In our online survey we asked people what the purpose of their guild was (see figure 7). This illustrates what some of the main objectives of a guild might be.

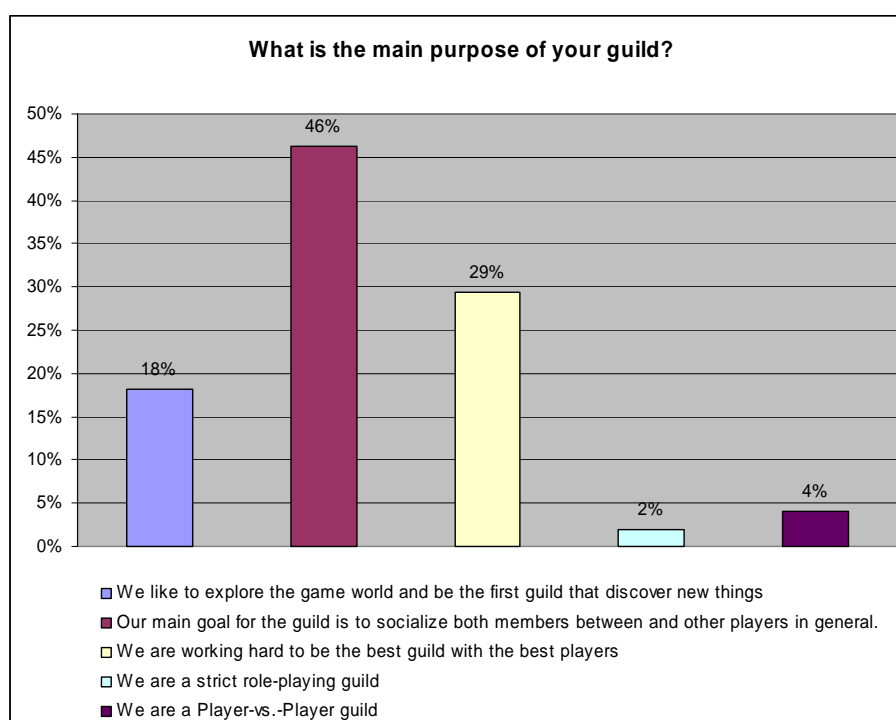


Figure 7: What is the main purpose of the guild.

These can be seen as the common consensus, of the type mentioned in the definition of an organisation (see page 17). The tasks can also be the overall goals of the guild, which can and probably will be divided into several more obtainable subtasks, e.g. the first guild which kills a specific monster, the biggest guild or a guild consisting of close friends.

Technology: Equipment and items worn by the members of a guild in World of Warcraft can be seen as technology. If a new member, with poor equipment, were to join a guild, this would influence how a guild would priorities tasks and how they would structure themselves. For example it requires certain items to handle specific quests or monsters within the game. If some members did not possess these, the guild would have to help them acquire them; thereby changing the current tasks and structure of the guild. Knowledge can also be seen as technology. New knowledge will therefore create the same type of scenario as the above – certain knowledge will change how the guild does specific things.

Structure: As mentioned earlier the game itself only offered a very hierarchical structure which some guilds choose to use, but not all. It is very context dependent which structure a guild chooses to implement. One thing which strongly influenced the way a guild is structured is the number of players. A large guild, when communicating, has to relay the information to many people, and if not handled properly some of the information would be lost. The way to solve this, as we have observed, is to use officers to handle information in specific groups in the guild. By doing so the guild-leader delegates some of the work, thereby making a hierarchy in the guild – a vertical organisation. This kind of structure is often used when the guild has game specific goals, like completing end-game content². In these situations there is no time to debate, everyone has to know who is in charge and then follow orders – as in normal military fashion.

The observations stated above were also verified in the focus group, where one of the participants stated the following:

“Vi var ikke så opsatte på at lave et kæmpe guild, for os var det meget vigtigt at det blev rimelig intimt... øhh... og vi havde, vi havde meget magt over det [...] Vi ville gerne ha' utrolig meget magt over hvordan tonen var og hvordan det kørte og sådan nogen ting, så det blev et behageligt miljø at være i. Men altså det betød så osse, altså det gav os osse nogle problemer når man så pludselig blev level 60 og man så var i et guild hvor man var 10 spillere måske ik', og... øhh... nu havde man kørt alle de der instances igennem og... øhh... nu manglede man bare... nu skulle man i Molten Core og sådan noget ik', og så er man presset ik', for det kan man ikke gøre vel med et guild på 10 personer”³

² By end-game content is meant things and events which are only obtainable when you reach level 60.

That the guild had a specific structure and that had directly impacted the types of tasks they were able to undertake. They had to change one or more of the elements (from Leavitt's model) in order to successfully be able to venture into Molten Core.

On the other hand smaller guilds with a different objective – e.g. socializing – would structure themselves in a more horizontal organisation, where the communication would be handled “on the fly”. Such guilds do not see the urge to make specific ways to communicate, since the information needed, is distributed when people are online.

Actors: The actors in Leavitt's model are represented in the game by the players themselves. They are the ones who make up the organisation and by doing so create the consensus in which the organisations functions. If the players do not feel, or want to be a part of this agreement, they will quickly depart from the guild. This can be seen from the statement given by a participant in the focus group. To the question “what constitutes a well functioning guild” the person answered:

“... det er nok et guild som har et rimelig klart formål som alle medlemmerne er enige i”⁴

How players perceive themselves and others, along with their reasons for entering group structures will be explained further in the chapter “The players”.

5.5.2 The life cycle of the guilds

A larger guild requires more administration and leadership, than a smaller guild. This can be explained by the *life-cycle of the organisation* (see page 22). At certain points a guild has to go through the stages of this model in order to evolve. The first stage is the need for leadership, where a guild-leader might start to use other tools to handle information within the guild. E.g. many guilds are using websites, forums and other chat tools to handle the daily administration, which the game does not support (see figure 8).

³ English translation: “We were not so determined to form a large guild, for us it was much more important that it became more intimate... uhm... and that we had a lot of control over it [...] We wanted to have big control over how the tone was and how it all went and things like that so it would become a pleasant environment to be in. But that also meant that it gave us a lot of problems when you suddenly became level 60 and you were in a guild with 10 players right and... uhm... now you had run through all the instances and... uhm... now you only needed... now you should go to Molten Core and things like that right, and then you are under pressure right, because you can't do that with a guild of 10 persons.

⁴ English translation: “... it is properly a guild that has a fairly clear purpose that all the members can agree to”.

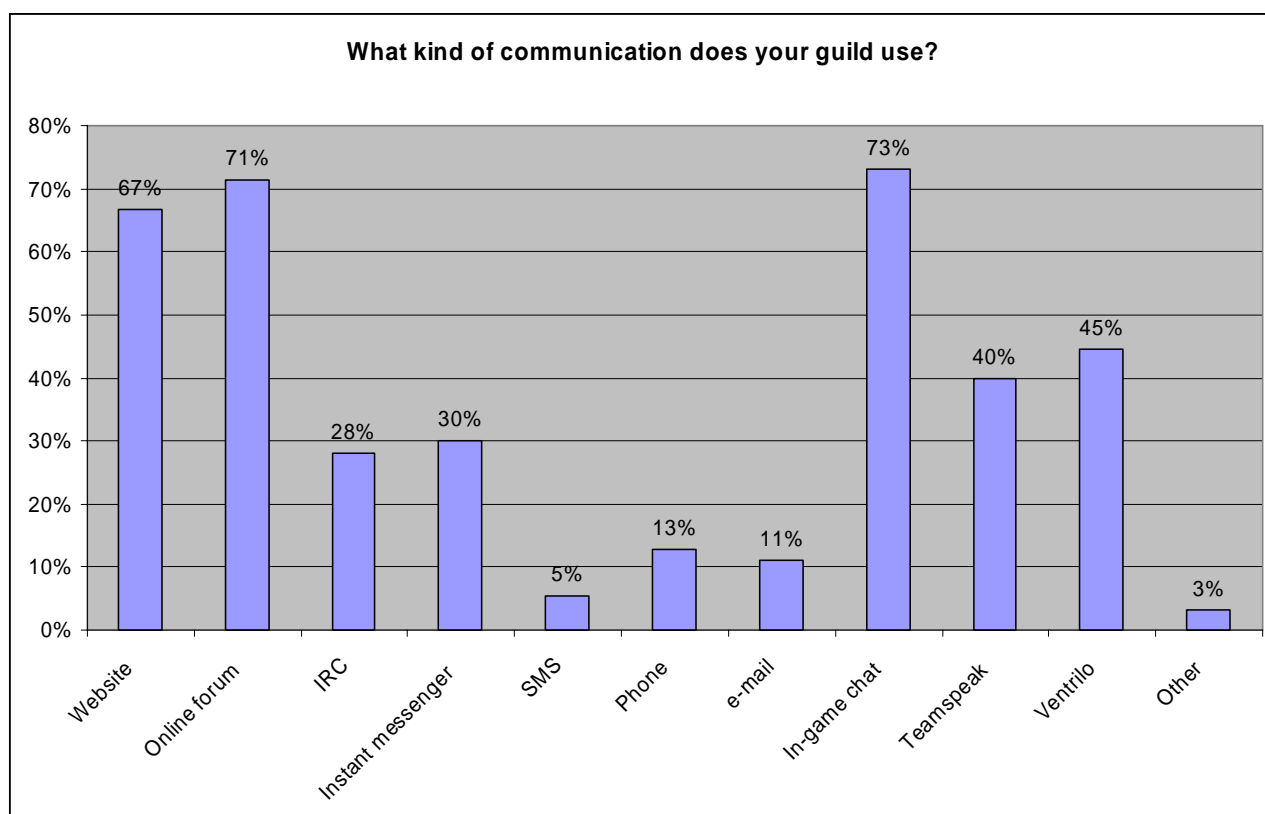


Figure 8: What kind of communication does your guild use?

The need for leadership also implies that the person in this position must have certain abilities in order to lead people. One of the participants in the focus group expressed it like this:

”... det tror jeg også er vigtigt for et guild, måske ikke så meget et lille guild, men hvis vi altså snakker store guilds hvor vi har 40, 50, 60 eller 100 plus spillere, så tror jeg det er utrolig vigtigt at der er en sådan rimelig... altså en aktiv ledelse. [...] for når man er så mange så at stå 40 mand uden en leder og så sige ’nu skal vi i Molten Core’ det ville aldrig komme til at fungere ordenligt [...] der bliver nød til at være en som folk lytter til og som accepterer at der er en som giver orden.”⁵

Even though, the guild-leader has a systematic way of dealing with the work processes, there will, at a certain point, be a demand to delegate some of the control functions to other people in order to continue the growth – the guild reaches the second crisis. Where the smaller guilds would stall

⁵ English translation: “... I think it’s important for a guild, maybe not so much the smaller guilds, but if we’re talking large guilds with 40-50-60 or 100 plus players, then I think it is very important that there is a form of... an active management. [...] because when you’re standing 40 man without a leader and say ‘now we’re going to Molten Core’ it would never work properly [...] there has to be someone that people listens to and accepts that it is someone that gives the order”.

here, the large guilds would, on the other hand, have to employ a large number of leaders to handle the daily administration and communication. This is also reflected in how larger guilds choose to structure themselves. It requires a lot of coordination and leadership to convey every single message to many people, even if you are using external tools. A participant in the focus group explained that a good guild-leader would delegate work to others, in order to handle the important issues himself:

“Guild lederens role er at finde en god raid leder [...] det bør ikke være ham selv som er det, han har formentlig andre ting at tage sig til.”⁶

After the delegation phase the third crisis comes along – a need for autonomy. This is where the guild needs to make certain standards in order to handle tasks. An example could be the way you sign up for certain events, e.g. raids. The guilds, we observed, all used their website as a method to register for a raid. The participants in the focus group had the same experience:

“der er enkelte ting som ikke organiseres i spillet, altså in game, eksempelvis Molten Core raids, så hvis man skal være 40 personer som skal ind og gøre en virkelig... en job for at få ned altså X antal monstre derinde så må man altså... så må det organiseres bedre... så må man vide om man har nok præster for eksempel og man må vide om man har nok tanker et er ikke muligt at organisere det her via... uanset hvor stort guild man har så kan man ikke organisere dette via, via, altså den chat man har in game.”⁷

The important thing to notice about the life-cycle is that it explains how and why an organisation must evolve in order to continue growth. A guild that refuses to use external tools will stall, at a certain point, no matter what they do. The game simply does not have the tools to maintain a high level of leadership and communication. A small guild will stay a small guild due to the fact that people will not be satisfied with the way things are and therefore leave.

If a guild manages to overcome the third crisis it will in most cases stall at this point. The game does not facilitate the possibility of splitting the larger guilds into smaller groups, thereby leaving guilds in the fourth crisis without any means of handling this. However, in our observation we saw

⁶ English translation: “It is the role of the guild-leader to find a good raid-leader [...] it should not be himself since he properly has other things to do.”

⁷ English translation: “there are some things that you cannot organise in the game, in-game, for example Molten Core raids, then if you’re 40 persons that need to go in to do a really... to do a job of getting down X number of monsters in there then you must... then it must be organised better... then you must know if you have enough priests or enough tanks and that is not possible to organise via... no matter how large your guild is then you cannot organise this via, via the in-game chat.”

the tendency that players tried to overcome the fourth crisis, by creating small informal groups, with the purpose of doing something different than the rest of the guild, e.g. focus on player-vs.-player activities. These groups will rarely exist over longer periods of time, and will have a steady replacement of players within, much like a raid or normal group, which exist only with the purpose of doing a specific thing.

5.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to answer one of the preliminary question and by doing so create a foundation for understanding group structures in World of Warcraft. The question we wanted to answer was:

How do players organize themselves within these group structures in World of Warcraft?

So what have we learned during our analysis? Large persistent groups in virtual worlds, function according to the same principles as real life organisations. What defines this, is the collaborative effort, made by a group of people to reach a common goal. We have found that guilds distinguish themselves in the way they are structured. The game facilitates a very simple hierarchical model for organizing guilds. However, players use this system in a flexible way, transforming it, to suit their purpose.

Furthermore, we have used Leavitt's model to describe how elements in the guild influence each other, and how this shapes the organisation. The four elements exist in a dynamic relationship, where changes made in one of the elements affects the others, thereby changing the organisation. The goals which the guild can undertake are dependent on the combination of these four elements. The life cycle also shapes the guild as an organisation. Some guilds choose to maintain a small number of people in order to keep coordination to a minimum; because, they want to keep an informal atmosphere. Other guilds choose to grow, thereby going through several different stages before they achieve a new balance of Leavitt's four elements. The reasons for staying small or growing big depends on the goals undertaken.

The important thing to extract from this, is, that the organisation of a guild is very context specific – depending on the relationship between the elements in Leavitt's model and what phase of the life-cycle it is currently in.

6 The players

In the definition of an organisation all the people were just numbers or social entities. In Leavitt's model of an organisation, the actors have influence on how the organisation as a whole is developed, and what the goal of the organisation becomes. But who are these social entities? Looking at them merely quantitatively tells us very little of how the players act and behave.

What we gained from the previous chapter, on organisational theory, was that there is a clear correlation between the activities in the group and members; they influence the structure of the group. The group consists on many different *types* of players, each having a different objective and different means of reaching it.

In this chapter, we will zoom in on the actors of Leavitt's model. We will look closer at who they are, and with the empirical material collected try and offer some conclusion on why and how they choose to engage in group structures. Thereby we will try and answer the second question from the problem statement; "Which type of players take part in these structures?"

Before we venture into an analysis of this we need to stretch our theoretical legs. In order to categorize the players, we have opted to use the player types taxonomy developed by Richard Bartle (1996). This theory is chosen on the basis of its universal acclaim and broad use. The theory will be briefly explained in the following text, followed by an analysis of the empirical material in conjunction with these taxonomies. There will also be a short elaboration on the issue of rationality.

6.1 *Player types and player styles*

Richard Bartle initially created his model over player types when analyzing players in some of the early MUDs⁸. In his article (Bartle, 1996) he presents a taxonomy of four different player types, and how they act in the games which they participate in. His taxonomy has since become the foundation of many an analysis of computer games in general.

⁸ MUDs: Multi-User Dungeon is a multi-player computer game that combines elements of role-playing games, hack and slash style computer games, and social instant messaging chat rooms. Typically running on a bulletin board system or Internet server, the game is usually text driven, where players read descriptions of rooms, objects, events, other characters, and computer-controlled creatures or non-player characters (NPCs) in a virtual world. They may interact with each other and the surroundings by typing commands that resemble a natural language, usually English (Wikipedia.org)

In his article, he groups the players as *Socialisers*, *Killers*, *Explorers* and *Achievers*. These types are later elaborated on in his book “Designing Virtual Worlds” (2003, p. 130), where he introduces the element of implicit and explicit player behaviour in order to encompass and categorize the players more precisely.

Even though, the newer model is more detailed and now includes 8 types compared to the original 4, it is still stating the same about the players; how they play and what they look for when playing. Bartle talks about playing styles, in both his article and book, but the type taxonomy is by far the most used. He states that the different types may exist simultaneously in a player, but that there is always one which is predominant; players have a “primary style” (Bartle, 1996).

In his book he talks about how progressions among the different types, he writes: “People can switch paths, if they have some moment of epiphany” (Bartle, 2003, p. 132). Our view is that the lines between the types may be more fluent. We will discuss this later in the text, in regard to context of game and group. The four player types will be briefly described in the following;

Achievers: For *achievers*, achieving is the main goal, which is quite apparent from the title of this category. How the goal of achieving presents itself is somewhat more complex. The main goal may be to rise in level rapidly, to have the best equipment or simply just to have and be the best in the game. Socializing is important in order to be able to impress people of less worth, in the achievers eye. Killing may be an achievement in itself, if points and status is attached to it. Exploration may be the means to an end, if it results in advancement in some way.

Socialisers: *Socialisers* join the game in order to interact with other players at some level. It can be anywhere from talking about real life everyday occurrences, to chatting about the game and/or other players of the game. The game becomes a backdrop for virtual interaction. Socialisers, can turn to achievement if it means rising in ranks, and thereby enhancing their social status, enabling them expand their network. They mainly explore in order to have something to talk about, or meet new people. They rarely find any point in the destruction of others, unless it is in a social cause, such as righting a wrong which has been committed against them or a close friend.

Killers: *Killers* take pleasure in the inconvenience and destruction of others, enjoying the hunt of unsuspecting prey. They may, in socializing with others, impose themselves and make life miserable for their surroundings, even if the intent is noble (which it occasionally is). They find exploration tedious unless it leads to fighting or great equipment, which makes them better at destruction.

Achieving is in the same category as the latter mentioned, it may be a necessity in order to further develop skills of destruction.

Explorers: *Explorers* like to examine the world they are in on multiple levels. One thing is the virtual geography of the world itself; another is the mechanical construct on which it is built, the rules and boundaries which constitute the laws of nature in the game. Socializing is a means of getting information. An *Explorer* achieves because the achievement may allow access to new places or new knowledge. Killing other players may be an exploration in itself, if the explorer is trying to understand his own skill level and by that, what he will be able to kill, but the intensions are very different from that of a killer.

6.1.1 Interest graph

Bartle then goes on to insert these types in what he calls an *interest graph*, which is intended for game designers to use, when constructing virtual worlds. By focusing and enabling different specific elements, the game designer will be able to attract and/or repel certain player types.

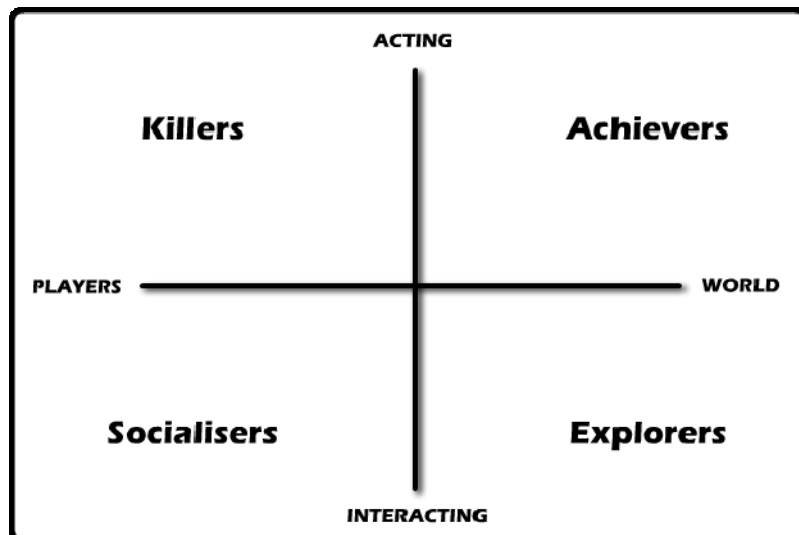


Figure 9: Player types influence graph (Bartle, 2003, p. 131).

This graph focuses on two distinctly different aspects of the game: How the player is playing and what the player is playing against. How the player plays, is the vertical line with its two points of *acting* and *interacting*. The difference between the two is that in one case you are acting upon someone or something, in the other you are interacting with someone or something; the distinction

being *upon* and *with*. The vertical line represents the world and the player. Players focus on the world they are in, or on other players.

6.1.2 The balance of player types

In a given game world, each of these player types has influence on the number of the other types. This can be illustrated with the graph in figure 10.

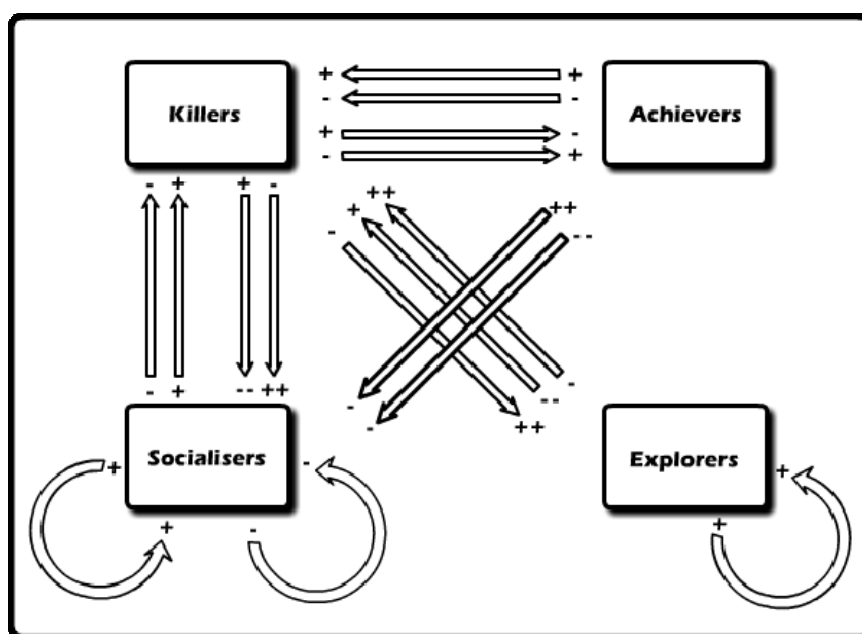


Figure 10: The player types and their mutual influence (Bartle, 2003, p. 135).

In the graph the plus means an increase in number and the minus means a decrease. Socialisers have a balance among themselves, if the majority of players are Socialisers. Killers and Socialisers influence each other greatly. Greatly increasing the number of Killers will decrease the number of Socialisers dramatically. Killers and Achievers mutually affect each other and balance each other out. Increasing the number of Killers will slightly decrease the number of Achievers, which will in turn decrease the number of Killers, and thereby increase the number of Achievers. Explorers are basically unaffected by the other player types. However, increasing this number will put a damper on the number of Killers.

As the goals of each type are distinctly different, what is considered important in the game by one player is irrelevant to another. What choices and actions the player takes in the game are dependent on the objectives set up by the player. What constitutes the rational choice and goal for one player is different for another.

6.2 *The rational player*

The assumption, is, that the individual members of any given group might behave and act irrational, but upon entering a formalized organisation the combined action of the group become very rational. Even though, the individuals still act more or less irrationally the group is moving towards the common goals in a rational fashion.

But what can be defined as rational behaviour? The aim of this section is not to get into a deeper discussion of the different uses and meanings of the topic of rationality, as this lies well beyond the scope of this project, but merely to clarify how we tend to use it. It is to give a basic primer of both what rationality means, and to give an overview of what we are referring to when we are talking about rational players throughout the report.

If we consult the dictionary⁹ it will tell us that being rational means;

1. Having or exercising the ability to reason.
2. Of sound mind; sane.
3. Consistent with or based on reason; logical: rational behaviour.

Opposite the antonyms¹⁰ of the word are; illogical, irrational, ridiculous, unrealistic, unreasonable and unsound.

So a rational person can be described as a person that is able “to keep his head straight” and think clearly in stressed situations. It is a person that can make a sound judgment on the basis of the information at hand. A judgment, by such a person, cannot be anything but the right, logical and most meaningful decision.

A rational person

- always tries to gain the most from any given situation.
- always tries to do this by using the least amount of resources.
- has complete information¹¹ as to what decision to make.

⁹ rational. Answers.com. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://www.answers.com/topic/rational>, accessed December 06, 2005.

¹⁰ rational. Answers.com. Antonyms, Answers Corporation, 2005. <http://www.answers.com/topic/rational>, accessed December 06, 2005.

¹¹ Complete information; the situation where a person knows all the consequences for all the possible actions at a given situation. Complete information is rarely present, even in games with finite and very quantifiable actions such as Chess. No player will be able to think through all actions and predict the end result.

The rational person is seen as a being that *always* chooses rationally and will *always* try to optimize the outcome of all actions taken. It is the Mr. Spock of Star Trek. Every action is based upon the logic of situation and nothing else.

6.2.1 Cake cutter

The Cake Cutter game is a good example of a zero-sum game¹². The basic setup, for the game, is that two people need to divide a cake between them. In order for the division to be as fair as possible, it is agreed that one of them divides the cake and then the other then chooses which of the two pieces he takes. One is the *cutter* and one the *chooser*. This game shows that even though the cutter could gain a much larger piece of the cake, by for example dividing the cake in two with one piece being 75% of the cake and the other 25%, the cutter very rarely, if ever, does this. Simply because, the loss is too great if the larger piece is picked by the chooser. Instead the cutter always tries to create two pieces of the cake that are almost the same size, give or take a few crumbs (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 240). It is the rational choice of the cutter to do so.

		Chooser's strategies	
		Choose bigger piece	Choose smaller piece
Cutter's strategies	Cut cake as evenly as possible	Half the cake minus a crumb	Half the cake plus a crumb
	Make one piece bigger than the other	Small piece	Big piece

Figure 11: The cake division payoff grid (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 240).

The behavior of the players depends on how the game is designed. If the cutter and the chooser where the same person, all cutter/choosers would only leave a single crumb for the other player. But in this version of the game the players are forced to act on the actions of the opposing player.

¹² When a game ends, the gain that one player gets from winning is equals the loss of the other player, hence the phrase *zero-sum* since the combined outcome is zero (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 240). Cooperative games are usually not zero-sum games, as the role of winner and loser is not divided between the players, but elements of these games could very well be zero-sum games. The acquisition of equipment in World of Warcraft is very much a zero-sum game, I get the sword and you do not.

6.3 *Empirical material and analysis*

As stated in chapter 4 we did an online survey and held a focus group session to gather empirical material to help in the analysis of the player behaviour in World of Warcraft.

The online survey was divided into two overall sections;

- The general area; how the game is played.
- The group context, how and why players are in groups.

In the following we have highlighted some of the findings, which proved both relevant for our research and very interesting. We have categorised all the participants in the Bartle's player types. This was done on basis of the answers by the participants in the online survey.

6.3.1 The general area

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
How many hours a week do you play World of Warcraft?	43.8 % 30 - 50 hours	41.2 % 16 - 30 hours	53.0 % 16 - 30 hours	38.5 % 16 - 30 hours

Table 1: Survey: Hours played

In the focus group 3 of the participants played between 30 and 50 hours a week and 2 of them played between 16 and 30 hours.

In regard to the player types we introduced earlier, the information we gathered proved interesting point; the players who were most occupied with achieving and being the best in the game, where also the ones that put in the most time. The cause however was one which was much debated in our focus group, where the general consensus was that the game appealed a great deal to achievers because of the lack of down-time¹³.

¹³ Down-time; a period where you have nothing to do in the game world and therefore often start talking with the other players.

“... der er det her med at man har quests hele tiden [...] man kan bliver level 60 kun ved at lave quests hele tiden og det skaber en slags meget bedre følelse af indlevelse i verdenen og du følger at du har noget at lave hele tiden.”¹⁴

The participants of the focus group went on to compare World of Warcraft with other MMOGs, which they felt actively facilitated the presence of down-time. The consensus was that in World of Warcraft there is always something to achieve. Maybe this is why the *Achievers* in the game, can spend so much time in the world.

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Which type of server do you play on, when playing World of Warcraft?	85.0 % PvP servers ¹⁵	98.1 % PvP servers	61.4 % PvP servers	59.0 % PvP servers

Table 2: Survey: Server type

There seems to be a division when it comes to what type of servers the players chose to play on. *Killers* and *Achievers* prefer player vs. player servers, where *Socialisers* and *Explorers* are more likely to choose a different type of server, mainly player versus environment.

The distinction between the *Killer/Achiever* group and the *Socialiser/Explorer* group is however substantial enough to make a point regarding Bartle's theory. It seems that the preference to *interact* rather than *act upon* the world is apparent in the choice of servers.

This in turn tells us something about the game; the PvP activity in World of Warcraft is as much an element of achieving, as it is an opportunity to impose oneself on others. It has, its own point system and level system. Rising in level in the PvP system makes you eligible for some very desirable rewards; rewards that are all very appealing to an *Achiever*.

Taken into account the primary motivation of the Killer group is imposition on others, and the fact that dying in World of Warcraft is a rather small imposition (the only real consequence is that you loose a couple of minutes) we can deduct that World of Warcraft is very much an *Achievers* game.

¹⁴ English translation: "... there is this that you have quests all the time [...] you can become level 60 only by doing quests all the time and that creates a much better feeling of immersion in the world and you feel that you have something to do all the time."

¹⁵ PvP server: A Player versus Player server type; a server where it is ok to try and kill other players without their prior consent. As opposite to PvE (Player versus Environment) servers where all players have to actively chose to participate in PvP combat.

6.3.2 The group context

Leaders and officers

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Are you member or leader?	8.8 % are guild- leaders	9.6 % are guild- leaders	9.9 % are guild- leaders	6.6 % are guild- leaders

Table 3: Survey: Leadership

Some of the player types are more likely to be leaders than other. There is a slight inconsistency between which group of players represents the most guild-leaders, and which group represents the most officers. *Explorers* seem to be least likely to lead a guild, being the only group that stands out in that respect; however *Killers* are the least likely to be officers.

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Are you member or leader?	28.8 % are officers	25.0 % are officers	38.3 % are officers	31.9 % are officers

Table 4: Survey: The officers club

We believe there are several reasons for this. *Explorers* like to tinker with the game; the responsibility of managing a guild requires much social interaction, which is undesirable when the world itself is what fascinates you. But then the question arises, why does such a relatively large group of *Explorers* choose to be officers? Many of the jobs appointed to officers are those of raid-leader. A part of these jobs is to seek out and share knowledge of the world. This allows an *Explorer* to use his skills. As mentioned, relatively few *Killers* choose to be officers; however they are more likely to be actual guild-leaders. This could again be partially explained by Bartle's theory; *Killers* wish to impose on others, which can be achieved by having the deciding vote in how things are done. The group most likely to be guild-leaders and officers is the group of players who enjoy social interaction. The function of guild-leader and that of officer can be a very social one. There may be other job functions, as mentioned earlier, but making sure that everyone gets together and that everyone is happy, requires social skills, which can best be applied if you find some kind of reward in them.

Being part of a guild

This leads us to the area of why people join guilds. One of the most interesting and puzzling observations we made, was the fact that everybody, regardless of player style seemed to agree that the main reason for joining a guild was the social aspect. Also in our focus group it was stressed that if

players could not relate to the community in which they found themselves, it could have dire consequences, such as quitting the game all together.

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Why are you part of a guild?	75.9 % are in guilds because of social interaction	78.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.	98.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.	87.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.

Table 5: Survey: Reasons for being in a guild

One of the first remarks of our focus group was a player reasoning why he started playing;

“Jeg kendte alle dem i mit guild real-life osse, ik’... så øhh... og så kommer det her nye massive multiplayer spil ud [...] så begyndte jeg at spille med alle min venner... vi havde et guild fra et tidligere spil”¹⁶

There seemed to be a general agreement among the players we interviewed, that this was a reason, many shared. Later in the meeting a discussion formed regarding the importance of being able to socially connect with the people of your guild. Even from players who quite explicitly expressed their desire to achieve, it became clear, that the breaking point for some of them was their inability to relate to the other players in their group. Some had gone so far as to stop playing the game because of it.

The purpose of the guild

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Why are you part of a guild?	75.9 % are in guilds because of social interaction	78.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.	98.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.	87.8 % are in guilds because of social interaction.

Table 6: Survey: Reasons for being in a guild

It seems only natural; the very core of a multiplayer game is the presence of others, and therefore the possibility to interact. But the intentions behind the interaction were very different. This led us

¹⁶ English translation: “I knew all of them in my guild from real-life right... so ehm... and then come this new massive multiplayer game [...] so I started to play with all my friends, we had a guild from a previous game”.

to look at socialising as a separate entity, not only in the definition presented by Bartle. We found that there were three general aspects of socialising;

1. In-game and out-of-game interaction

Much of the social interaction and decision-making in World of Warcraft is taking place outside the game. As we mentioned earlier the participants discussed the lack of down-time in the game. A consequence of this is that the interaction in the game is usually about what is going on right now. The plans and strategies of most guilds go on in other mediums than the game itself. Another focus group participant who richly enjoyed the Player vs. Player possibilities in the game mentioned that the only way of contacting the enemy and setting up fights was outside the game¹⁷.

2. Relating to the other players

Earlier we mentioned a player in the focus group who took steps to ensure his achievement. He did so by leaving his guild, which actually consisted of some real life friends in order to join an überguild¹⁸. The consequence of this was however that he soon stopped playing the game entirely.

3. Getting the most out of the game

Much of the game is based on group activity, many quests and dungeons are impossible to complete, if you are not playing in a group. Especially when you reach top level, almost all the content requires that you participate in group with other players. The number of players required to complete certain dungeons range anywhere from 5 to 40. This is another factor that would explain the players emphasizing the social aspect of playing.

It seems that communication is what links the players together. In the following there is a recap of the different styles and some proposed reasons for their interaction with other players.

The reason *Socialisers* interact is much the same as described in Bartle's theory. It is quite clear from both our survey, focus group and own experiences that many people team up in guilds with

¹⁷ In World of Warcraft it is not possible to talk with players of the opposing fraction. Everything you say will be received as mere rubbish by the recipient if not they both are part of the same fraction.

¹⁸ Überguild; a guild that only consists of players that are very good at the game and the guild therefore becomes very good at tackling the challenges the game has to offer.

real life friends. This brings us to the three other categories. According to our findings, they all do their fair share of socializing in- and outside the game. But what makes them distinguish themselves is perhaps the intention with which most of their socializing is conducted. Achievers may use socializing as a tool for gaining vital information that will speed up their advancement, find out where the most unique items drop and how to get there or just to speed up the process of levelling. Killers may use communication as a way of taunting their pray, and gaining information on how to kill in new and more sophisticated ways. Explorers can use the interaction with others as a means to find new and yet uncharted areas in the game; be it geographically, in skills or simply bugs which have not been fixed.

Everybody in a multiplayer computer game is a willing participant in the game. Nevertheless, there are many who feel that their choices are limited by the social structure they are in. Common remarks both in our survey and in the focus group were that people felt obligated to play, even when they were not interested.

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
What is the main purpose of your guild?	41.2 % To be the best guild	38.5 % To be the best guild	63.0 % To socialize	49.5 % To socialize

Table 7: Survey: Purpose of the guild

There is a difference between the reason for joining a guild, and what common goal that brings the members together; this is another area where the four styles of play yet again seem to differ in regard to interacting with and acting upon their environment. *Socialisers* and *Explorers* maintain that the purpose of a guild is to socialise, where *Killers* and *Achievers* regard being the best as more vital. There is a difference between the individual reasons for joining a guild (the majority of all players considered this to be socialising) and what the collective purpose is.

More than two thirds of the players have left guilds. What is interesting here is not the fact that they leave guilds but the reasons they give as to why they have left. There is some consistency within the different player types. What a player conceives as being the purpose of the guild in which he is in, reflects on the motives of the player himself.

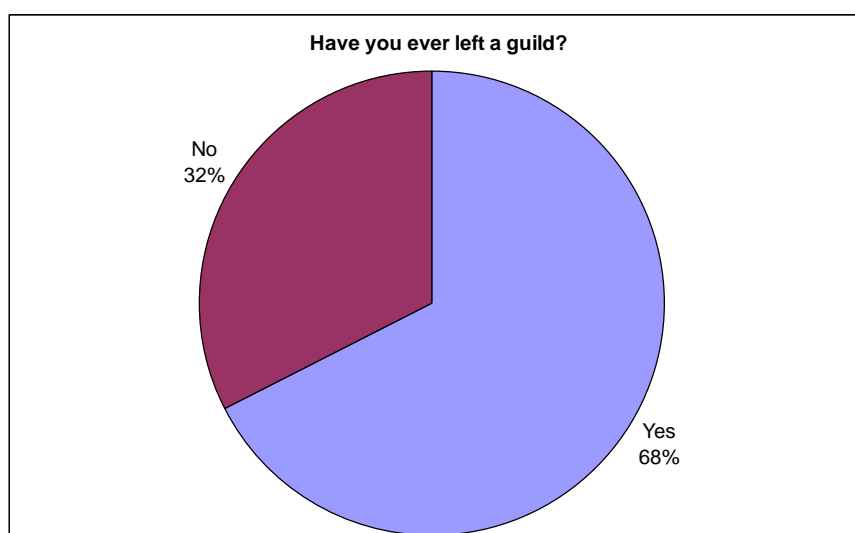


Figure 12: Have you ever left a guild? 68% of the all the asked players said yes.

	Achiever	Killer	Socialiser	Explorer
Have you ever left a guild?	72.3 % have left guilds	63.5 % have left a guild	71.6 % have left guilds	64.8 % have left guilds

Table 8: Survey: Leaving the guild

Achievers and socialisers are above the average and killers and explorers are below. Answers that appeared in the *Achiever* pool, when they were asked to elaborate on why they had left guilds, were things like:

- “To join a more "hardcore" guild”
- “Our goals were not the same in game, some were very casual...”

If you want to be the best in the game, you will want to surround yourself with the best. This was very much in contrast with some of the statements made by *Socialisers* as to why they left certain guilds. They stated things like:

- “I didn't believe the leadership was effective or friendly”
- “The guild-leader treated the guild as if it ws his own personal kingdom. It was the biggest guild on our server. the leadrer violated the guild rules, and kicked people who objected. The guild survived for about 1 week after that.”
- “Was the first guild I ever joined and they did not support each other”

It seems, that *Socialisers* are not only into socializing for there own sake. Many of the reasons they have stated have to do with social injustice; *others* not being treated fairly or friendly. *Explorers*

show some of the same concern, but mainly on their own behalf, it seems that people who enjoy interacting of any kind in the game, also have common goals. *Explorers* wrote things like:

- “Because i was not feeling comfortable there.”
- “there was no interaction no one spoke or did anything together so it became pointless”
- “That guild had little or non social activity”
- “wanted to explore more then you do with just a close irl guild”

Killers seem to be compelled by two conflicting needs, the need to be around people and the need to be without. When answering why they had left guilds in the past, they wrote things like:

- “Because the guildleader was an idiot and gave items to the wrong people - you shouldn't favour some over others”
- “The type of players didn't fit my behavior and style of play. If I don't feel at home within a guild I will rather stay without one.”
- “Just left my guild yesterday, at any given point there where only max 5 ppl online. I joined so I could find ppl to do BG's, Instances, Raids more easy. When there are no ppl online a guild is useless.”
- “Because i was bored.”

6.3.3 Socialising and the group

Socialising and being able to relate to your network in the game, ensures a certain level of longevity for groups. It does however seem, that there is a common motivational foundation between the players, not found in the typology of the four types, but in the area of action and interaction.

As we mentioned earlier in the section on Bartle's theory, we would try and look at how the different playing styles affected and were affected by a group structure. We have found that there are three different aspects regarding group structures which the players of World and Warcraft relate to in different ways:

- The resources of the group, be it knowledge, skill or wealth.
- The fellowship of the group; how the players relate to one another.
- The goal of the group; the overall purpose which is created in consensus with the group.

Achievers spend more time in the game than any other group; this could be the consequence of the nature of the game. Earlier we mentioned the game has little or no down-time, this makes it a per-

fect playground for players with a desire to prove themselves, because there is always something to prove. *Achievers*, like *Killers*, are very goal oriented. *Achievers* are therefore interested in the group as long as the group agrees to *their* personal goals. What *Achievers* get from the group is a place to show of and a place obtain new goals.

Socialisers may not spend as much time in the game as achievers do but they are involved in the game like no other group. They are very dedicated to the social structure in which they participate, taking on responsibilities and fighting the social causes of others. *Socialisers* want to be the back bone of the group. Almost everybody in the game has at one point ore another been a *Socialiser*; talking to real life friends, in game friends and so on. *Socialisers* contribute to the group by knowing all the latest news and all being interested in their fellow players. What they get from the group is companionship and meaning, somewhere to be.

Killers are torn between wanting to be in a group, in order to play the full extend of the game, and wanting to the freedom to roam. *Killers* do not get attached to the people they are playing with, maybe because if they showed empathy they would no longer be able to impose themselves on others. *Killers* are less inclined to stay in groups that do not serve their immediate purposes, they are goal oriented, but the nature of the goals they are pursuing is different then that of the *Achiever* playing style. What the *Killers* get from the group is the ability to fight others on a large scale and be with likeminded with whom they can enjoy their imposition on others.

Explorers, in this game, find it important to not only interact with the game but also interact with other players, though not at the same level as *Socialisers*. Interacting with others and interacting with the game in general seem to overlap in the case of World of Warcraft. This is however somewhat true for all four types. *Explorers* are the ones that always know the way to anywhere. They bring to the group a fountain of knowledge concerning details and strategies that no one has ever heard of. What they get from the group is a place to belong. It seems that feeling “at home” and getting along with their surroundings is of great importance to an *Explorer*. In the figure 13 we have tried to illustrate the relationship between the player and the group.

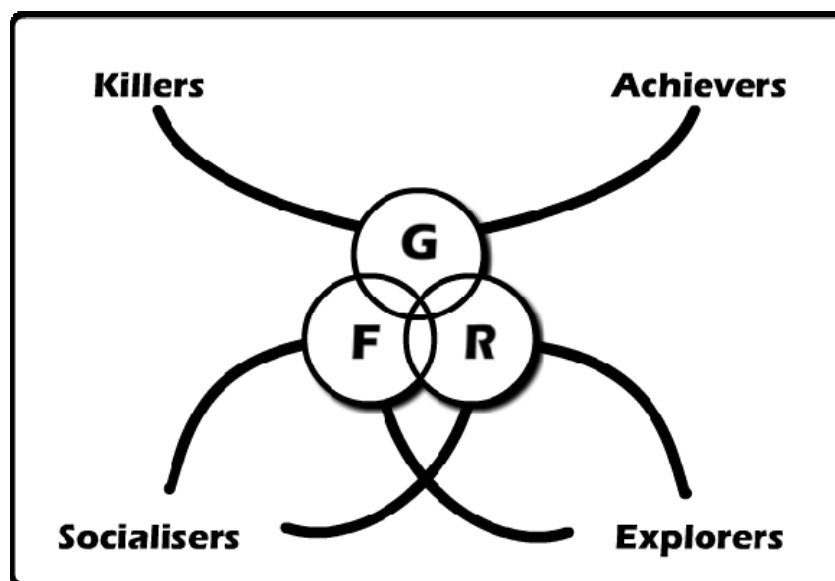


Figure 13: The player types and their influence on the (G)oal, (F)ellowship and (R)esources of the group.

There is a dynamic relationship between the player, the group and the game. Many of the characteristics of Bartle's theory have held up completely in regard to the observations we have done. There does however seem to be areas where the different types overlap; this could very well have something to do with the nature of the game world.

If we look at the original interest graph in which Bartle placed his four types, we can assess, both through own observations and the answers given in the survey, that the focus of the game is tilted towards interaction and the world. The game element which receives the most focus initially in World of Warcraft is the world itself. In the process of levelling up a vast amount of time is spent travelling and generally exploring the world.

In the other end of the game, once you have reached top level the game becomes about interacting with other players. There is very little, if any, to do if you do not participate in group structures.

This leads us to believe that the goals and needs of the player changes as the game evolve. There seems to be a connection between the nature and goals of the groups they are in, and the style in which they play.

If the social climate is well functioning and friendly other needs that require fulfilment emerge, such as playing the satisfying content of your primary playing type. If the social connection between the player and the group is dysfunctional, it matters little what your general motivations are, the social aspect takes precedence. The interaction has to be there, and then the mutual adjustment

takes place, which consists of the intentions of the individual and the general consensus of the group, and through that the playing style emerges. This playing style then again influences the relationship with other players. This dynamic relationship between the player and the group is depicted in the figure 14.

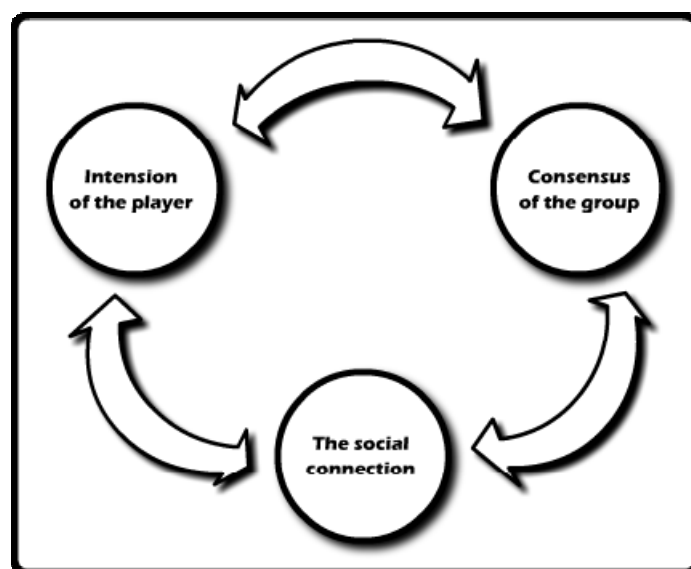


Figure 14: The influence of all the elements.

It is in the area of friction between the player, the group and the game that *the playing styles* exist. There is constantly a process of adaptability going on between the player and the group. It is when the current style of play is unable to coincide with the consensus of the group that the player either has to change playing style or leave the group or the game entirely. There can be diversion between personal goals and the achievements desired in a group. This could be one of the reasons why players can feel frustrated and leave the group.

It is the cake cutter conundrum; the players all want to gain the most from the group and the game world but in trying to achieve this, they all have to adapt to the common consensus of the group and thereby they may need to deviate from their own primary playing style.

6.4 Chapter conclusion

In trying to uncover how the different types relate to each other and the game, we have learned that the motives of the individual players are crucial. The general consensus may be that social interaction is important in the game, but what constitutes good social interaction is some kind of common-

ality in goals among the players. As explored in the chapter on organisational theory, different groups use the structure afforded by the game in different ways. One hypothesis which we present is that when different styles of play get paired in groups, they play certain roles which affect the purpose and thereby the constellation of the group.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Bartle talks of players changing their types based on a moment of epiphany, which leads them to reconsider their reasons for playing. Our view is that the lines between the types are more fluent, because they must always be seen in a context. The contexts which are important in this case, are level and social structure. Depending on which end of the game, the player is playing the tasks for the player are different. The beginning of the game, there is no imposing need to play in a group, much of the content could just as well be in a single player game. The rationality of the player at this stage is only dependent on oneself.

As soon as you choose to join a group the context changes completely, which in turn influences the reasons and motivations for playing. Depending on what the individual motivations of the player are, the group will either challenge or strengthen the playing style. There are three ways the player can respond to the group challenging his style. He can either adapt to the consensus of the group, thereby changing his playing style. There is the option of challenging the group and influence the consensus, to better suit his style. Finally the group may dismiss the player or the player may choose to leave.

Players of multiplayer games do not exist on their own. What, why and how they choose to play must therefore be seen in the light of the social structure in which they find themselves.

7 Conclusion

During the last two chapters we have tried to analyse aspects of World of Warcraft with the intention of answering our problem statement. This was done by first answering how groups are structured within the game and secondly which types of players participate in these structures. Now, on the basis of our analysis, we will try and answer the problem statement:

When playing World of Warcraft, what are the key factors of the relationship between the player and the group?

The key factors of the relationship between the group and the player are: motivations of the player, consensus of the group and the construct of the game.

The group is influenced by the players of which it consists, and the players are influenced by the group in which they play. What experience the player has of the game is partially created by the design of the game and partially created by the consensus of the group. The type of the player is created as a mixture of intentions and context of the group consensus. The motivations, the players and the consensus of the group, are dependent of the construct of the game world; the design affordances which facilitate group dynamics and individuality. It is of great importance to create multifaceted flexible systems in which the players can organise themselves.

The group, or organisation, is defined by various different elements affecting each other. Leavitt's model presented us with the four basic elements of an organisation; actors, structure, tasks and technology. The way a group chooses to weigh these elements against each other, in World of Warcraft, is the framing for how the group is structured.

In World of Warcraft it is the actor element, of the organisation, which ultimately decides which goals are to be pursued; but once the decisions have been made, the other parts of the organisation begin influencing the actors in return.

We examined how the make-up of the actor element had bearing on the way goals are set up in groups. Players come to the game with different intentions; these intentions result in certain play styles. The players influence each other and together they create the objectives which in turn

determine the structure of the group. We have found that what people want, from this game, is dependent on the context in which they play. The different styles are interchangeable. That does, however, not prohibit us, from drawing conclusions as to what the consequences are of certain player styles dominating a group.

If the play style of a player does not correspond with the organisational structure of the group, the player will need to adapt in some way or he will have to leave; either on his own accord or forced by the group. Even if the overall playing style of the group, suits the player there will be a period of mutual adaptation – the group will have to adjust itself to the player and vice versa. It is how well the consensus of the group incorporates the motivations of its players, which determines whether or not the group will have longevity and success.

The choices made by the player regarding the goals of the game are very much based on the play style - what constitutes rationality for the individual player varies. Meaning, that what is a rational choice for a socialising style player is not necessarily the rational choice for a player wanting to achieve.

The consequence of a player participating in a dynamic social context, is, that the game experience is as much influenced by the group as the group is influenced by the player. Since the game does not support organisational flexibility, the persistent groups are difficult to maintain. “No man is an island”, the social entities in World of Warcraft are dependent on each other, in terms of the actions in the game and their motivations. Longevity of the group, means longevity for the player, which is something that game designers would want to ensure.

8 Future Research

In this chapter we will try to expand our view on the discussed topic of this report. What would be the next natural step to take regarding this topic? We will view future work from two different perspectives; an academic and a business.

One thing we have discovered in doing this project is the issue of what we could look at, if time was not an issue. We have only scratched the surface and even so there are lots of areas which could be interesting to dig further into. This will be the topic for the following section – how could we proceed from our current point?

One issue which could make an interesting extension of this project would be Richard Bartle's theory on Persona (Bartle, 2001). Bartle uses this term as a mean for understanding the player in relation to a virtual world. How does one distinguish between the actual person in front of his computer from the character within the game? It could be interesting to examine if there is a relation between the person and how he chooses to interact in different groups. This also goes to proving Bartle's theory on player types - can we put people into these stereo types as he suggests or do we need to explorer the things surrounding the game as well? Do we bring ourselves within the game or can we act on different levels according to the context? These are all big questions and would probably be too big issues to cover in a normal project, but it still makes you wonder.

When discussing our project with people, other games were brought to out attention as well. It would be interesting to examine if our findings also was applicable with these games. Other MMOGs are one thing, but can we use the same theory on other multiplayer games, like first-person-shooters, and still get the same results. World of Warcraft is by far the biggest MMOG at the moment, but has this also changed the game in some way? Would we see the same things, if we looked at one of the smaller MMOGs available? These questions could form the basis for future projects to clarify and uncover.

Game theory is a heavily debated subject in the academic world – what is it or how can we creates it? We chose to use theory on rationality as used in economical studies to uncover some of the issues in our project. This is based upon other circumstances, but was still usable in our case, due to the similarities in games and economy – cost-benefit, where the winner is the one who can optimise

the best. So a step which could be interesting to take is to try and find theories from other studies and see if these could work within a game context. This combined with a discussion on what game theory is at all, could be an interesting subject to involve our self in.

So how could this project be useable for any game company in their effort to create games? When creating a multiplayer game you need to think about how you want people to structure themselves, both within and outside the game. You do not want people to feel pressured into a certain way of playing, but at the same time it is desirable to be able to control how the game is evolving. No control could end in total chaos, while too much control would make players leave the game. Therefore it must be an issue for any designer to try creating an environment where people can form groups and thereby structures in a way they like. It is really not a question if or when they do but how they do it. During this project we have hopefully showed how players relate to group structures in World of Warcraft and vice versa. This game is truly an example of how designer tried to make a really hierarchical structure, but where players change this to accommodate their needs. So if the designer had thought about this during the design process more versatile tools to handle this could have been implemented. One consequence of not doing this is that people need to reach outside the game in order to find tools which can help them organise. Why force people to leave your game if you could have them playing all the time?

9 Resources

All links checked as of December 20, 2005. Not all resources are referenced directly in the text.

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- Rational choice theory: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_choice_theory
- Neoclassical economics: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical_economics
- Utility: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utility>
- Zero-sum: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero-sum>
- Social actions: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_actions
- Prisoner's dilemma: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner%27s_dilemma
- Voight-Kampff machine: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voight-Kampff_machine
- MUD: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUD>

World of Warcraft, Official Community website. Available online at <http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/>

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Appendix A – Introduction text on the forums

Topic: Research project on World of Warcraft

Well meet friends

We are a research group located at the IT-University of Copenhagen and are currently working on a project concerning World of Warcraft and how guilds structure and organize within the game. In order to do this, we need some input from players and hope you got a second to help us out. In the following link you can find a brief questioner, which we greatly hope you will use 10 minutes answering. The results from the survey will be used to form a theory on organisations in virtual worlds.

To clarify we are not a part of Blizzard Entertainment and the results will only be used for research purposes. All information collected in the survey will be held confidential and anonymous.

The questioner can be found at: [link](#)

Appendix B – Questionnaire for the focus group

General information

Name: _____

Age: _____

How many years have you been playing computer games?

Less than 1 year

- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-8 years
- ☐ 9-15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years

How many hours do you play games in general weekly?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours
- ☐ 31-50 hours
- ☐ More than 50 hours

How long have you been playing Massively Multiplayer Online Games?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 2-4 years
- ☐ More than 4 years

How many hours a week do you play MMOGs?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours
- ☐ 31-50 hours
- ☐ More than 50 hours

How would you rate your knowledge of MMOGs?

- ☐ I have just started playing MMOGs
- ☐ I have been playing for some time
- ☐ I have been playing many different MMOGs
- ☐ I have played every MMOG you could ever think of, and then some.

How many hours a week do you play World of Warcraft?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours
- ☐ 31-50 hours
- ☐ More than 50 hours
- ☐ Do not play the game anymore

Appendix C – Results of questionnaire for the focus group

General information

Age: 27, 25, 27, 29, 25

How many years have you been playing computer games?

Less than 1 year

- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-8 years
- ☐ 9-15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years 5

How many hours do you play games in general weekly?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours 2
- ☐ 31-50 hours 3
- ☐ More than 50 hours

How long have you been playing Massively Multiplayer Online Games?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 2-4 years 3
- ☐ More than 4 years 2

How many hours a week do you play MMOGs?

- ☐ 1-5 hours 1
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours 3
- ☐ 31-50 hours 1
- ☐ More than 50 hours

How would you rate your knowledge of MMOGs?

- ☐ I have just started playing MMOGs
- ☐ I have been playing for some time 1
- ☐ I have been playing many different MMOGs 4
- ☐ I have played every MMOG you could ever think of, and then some.

How many hours a week do you play World of Warcraft?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-15 hours
- ☐ 16-30 hours 2
- ☐ 31-50 hours
- ☐ More than 50 hours
- ☐ Do not play the game anymore 3

Appendix D - Questions for the focus group

1. Why have you chosen the guilds your in?
2. What is the function of the guild (not just your guild but guilds in general)?
3. What constitutes a well functioning guild in your mind?
4. Why are guilds important?
5. How are the options for organizing guilds in-game? How are your current guilds organized?
6. Is there a general feeling of commitment to guilds from the member? – if so, how does that show?
7. What qualifications are important in a good guild-leader?
8. Why is it important to have a well liked / good guild-leader?
9. Are the elements in the game that makes some players stand out?
10. Why are these elements important?

Appendix E - Questionnaire

General information:

Age: number

Gender: male/female

Country: drop down

Game Experience:

1. How many years have you been playing computer games? :
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-8 years
 - d. 9-15 years
 - e. More than 15 years
2. How many hours do you play games in general weekly?
 - a. 1-5 hours
 - b. 6-15 hours
 - c. 16-30 hours
 - d. 31-50 hours
 - e. More than 50 hours
3. How would you rate yourself as a player? Single choice,
 - a. Novice
 - b. Casual
 - c. Hardcore
4. How long have you been playing massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs)? Intervals
 - a. Less than 6 months
 - b. Less than 1 year
 - c. 2-4 years
 - d. More than 4 years
5. How many hours a week do you play MMOGs? Intervals
 - a. 1-5 hours
 - b. 6-15 hours
 - c. 16-30 hours
 - d. 31-50 hours
 - e. More than 50 hours
6. What other online games have you played? Multiple choices and other
 - a. Counter-Strike
 - b. Half-Life 2: Death match
 - c. Warcraft (series)
 - d. Starcraft
 - e. Battlefield (series)
 - f. Day of Defeat
 - g. EVE-Online
 - h. EverQuest
 - i. EverQuest 2
 - j. City of Heroes
 - k. Unreal Tournament (series)
 - l. Quake (series)
 - m. Star Wars: Galaxies

- n. DOOM III
 - o. Sims Online
 - p. Neverwinter Nights
 - q. Medal of Honor (series)
 - r. Call of Duty
 - s. Return to Castle Wolfenstein (and RtCW: Enemy Territory)
 - t. Dark Age of Camelot
 - u. Ultima Online
 - v. Anarchy-Online
 - w. Puzzle Pirates
 - x. FarCry
 - y. Age of Empires (series; including Age of Mythology)
 - z. Other
7. How would you rate your knowledge of MMOGs? Single choice (1-5)
- a. I have just started playing MMOGs
 - b. I have been playing for some time
 - c. I have been playing many different MMOGs
 - d. I have played every MMOGs you could ever think of, and then some.

World of Warcraft:

- 1. How long have you played World of Warcraft (WoW)? Single choice / interval
 - a. Less than 1 month
 - b. 1-2 months
 - c. 3-4 months
 - d. 5-6 months
 - e. More than 6 months
- 2. How many hours a week do you play WoW? Single choice / interval
 - a. 1-5 hours
 - b. 6-15 hours
 - c. 16-30 hours
 - d. 31-50 hours
 - e. More than 50 hours
- 3. How many hours do you play per session? Single choice / interval
 - a. Less than 1 hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. 3-4 hours
 - d. 4-8 hours
 - e. 9-12 hours
 - f. More than 13 hours
- 4. How often do you check the official website for World of Warcraft? Single-choice / interval
 - a. Many times a day
 - b. Once a day
 - c. Several times a week
 - d. Once a week
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Never
- 5. Which type of server do you play on? Single Choice
 - a. PvP (Player vs. Player)
 - b. PvE (Player vs. Environment, eg. Normal server)
 - c. RP PvP (Roleplaying PvP)

- d. RP PvE (Normal Role-playing server)
- 6. How many level 60 characters do you have?
 - a. None
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4
 - f. More than 4
- 7. How do you define yourself as a player?
 - a. I like to explore areas of the game
 - b. I like to chat with other players
 - c. I like to be better than other players
 - d. I like kill other players
- 8. Do you feel that your character is special and different from other characters?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Guild:

- 3. Are you part of a guild?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 4. Are you member or leader?
 - a. Member
 - b. Officer
 - c. Guild-leader
- 5. Why are you part of a guild? Multi-choice
 - a. Social interaction with other players
 - b. Fun (and games)
 - c. Achievement (getting good equipment)
 - d. Status
 - e. Other
- 6. How many members are there in your guild? (members, not characters)
 - a. Less than 10
 - b. 11-20
 - c. 21-40
 - d. 41-80
 - e. 81-120
 - f. More than 120
- 7. How easy do you think it is to create a guild within the game?
 - a. Very easy
 - b. Easy
 - c. Neither easy or hard
 - d. Hard
 - e. Very hard
- 8. If you are a guild-leader / -officer: How easy is it to manage the guild with the in-game tools?
 - a. Very easy
 - b. Easy
 - c. Neither easy or hard
 - d. Hard

- e. Very hard
- 9. What kind of communication does your guild use? Multi-choice
 - a. Website
 - b. Online forum
 - c. IRC
 - d. Instant messenger (MSN, Yahoo, ICQ, ect.)
 - e. SMS
 - f. Phone
 - g. e-mail
 - h. other
- 10. Have you ever been forced by the guild to do something that you otherwise would not do?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 11. How do you view the other members of your guild
 - a. I respect them highly
 - b. I like them
 - c. I have no strong opinion of them
 - d. I dislike them
 - e. I loathe the very thought of them.
- 12. How do you think other members of your guild view you?
 - a. They respect me
 - b. They like me
 - c. They have no strong opinion of me.
 - d. They dislike me
 - e. They loathe the very thought of me.
- 13. Have you ever left a guild?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 14. If yes, why?
 - a. Write
- 15. How do you define your guild?
 - a. We like to explore the game and be the first guild there
 - b. Our main goal of our guild is to socialize with other members and other players in general.
 - c. We are working hard to be the best guild with the best players
 - d. We are a strict role-playing guild
 - e. We are a PvP guild

Community:

- 1. Do you use the community around the game (website, etc.) to find strategies and information about the game
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 2. Does the information provided by the community influence your decisions in the game? (eg. Talent builds strategies, hints, etc.)
 - a. Yes, always
 - b. Yes, sometimes
 - c. Not really
 - d. Rarely

- e. Never

The game world / Playing the Game / PvP/PvE

1. Do you engage in PvP activities?
 - a. Yes, most of the time
 - b. Yes, sometimes
 - c. Not often
 - d. Never
2. Do you engage in PvE activities?
 - a. Yes, most of the time
 - b. Yes, sometimes
 - c. Not often
 - d. Never
3. Why do you play PvP?
 - a. I think its fun
 - b. I want the rewards given by PvP
 - c. My entire guild is playing PvP
 - d. It makes me feel powerful
 - e. I like to kill other players'

Wrap up:

1. How long do you plan on continuing playing World of Warcraft?
 - a. Not decided yet
 - b. Until the next good game comes along
 - c. I'm going to stop soon

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix F – Result from the questionnaire

Total respondents: 442

Age:

Total Respondents	441
(skipped this question)	1

Gender:

Male	422
Female	21

Total Respondents	441
(skipped this question)	1

Region?

Africa	0
Asia	1
Australia	0
Europe	438
North America	2
South America	0

Total Respondents	441
(skipped this question)	2

How many years have you been playing computer games?

Less than 1 year	0
1-3 years	19
4-8 years	122
9-15 years	144
More than 15 years	135

Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

How many hours do you play games in general weekly?

1-5 hours	9
6-15 hours	91
16-30 hours	166
31-50 hours	107
More than 50 hours	47

Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

How long have you been playing massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs)?

Less than 6 months	46
Less than 1 year	187
2-4 years	119
More than 4 years	68
Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

How many hours a week do you play MMOGs?

1-5 hours	23
6-15 hours	97
16-30 hours	158
31-50 hours	111
More than 50 hours	31
Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

What other online games have you played?

Counter-Strike	269
Half-Life 2: Death match	105
Warcraft (series)	281
Starcraft	187
Battlefield (series)	184
Day of Defeat	100
EVE-Online	65
EverQuest	41
EverQuest 2	48
City of Heroes	43
Unreal Tournament (series)	206
Quake (series)	190
Star Wars: Galaxies	71
DOOM III	103
Sims Online	11
Neverwinter Nights	128
Medal of Honor (series)	111
Call of Duty	102
Return to Castle Wolfenstein (and RtCW: Enemy Territory)	125
Dark Age of Camelot	51
Ultima Online	59
Anarchy-Online	78
Puzzle Pirates	14
FarCry	95
Age of Empires (series; including Age of Mythology)	167
Other (please specify)	122
Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

How would you rate your knowledge of MMOGs?

I have just started playing MMOGs	92
I have been playing for some time	205
I have been playing many different MMOGs	112
I have played every MMOGs you could ever think of and then some.	11
Total Respondents	420
(skipped this question)	22

How long have you played World of Warcraft (WoW)?

Less than 1 month	3
1-2 months	11
3-4 months	35
5-6 months	71
More than 6 months	296
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

How many hours a week do you play WoW?

1-5 hours	20
6-15 hours	96
16-30 hours	159
31-50 hours	111
More than 50 hours	30
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

How many hours do you play per session?

Less than 1 hour	4
1-2 hours	69
3-4 hours	166
4-8 hours	149
9-12 hours	23
More than 13 hours	5
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

How often to you check the official website for World of Warcraft?

Many times a day	158
Once a day	134
Several times a week	88
Once a week	26
Once a month	5

Never	5
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

Which type of server do you play on when playing World of Warcraft?

Player vs. Player	288
Player vs. Environment (Normal server)	124
Role-playing Player-vs.-Player	27
Role-playing Player-vs.-Environment (Normal Role-playing server)	35
Total Respondents	415
(skipped this question)	27

How many level 60 characters do you have?

None	92
1	232
2	65
3	17
4	4
More than 4	6
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

How do you define yourself as a player?

I like to explore areas of the game	200
I like to chat with other players	83
I like to be better than other players	81
I like kill other players	52
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

Do you feel that your character is special and different from other characters?

Yes	239
No	177
Total Respondents	416
(skipped this question)	26

Are you or have you ever been member of a guild?

Yes	394
No	1
Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

Are you member or leader?

Member	238
Officer	125
Guild-leader	32
Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

Why are you part of a guild?

Social interaction with other players	340
To get the best items in the game	159
To level up fast	25
Status among other players	68
Other (please specify)	75
Total Respondents	393
(skipped this question)	49

How many members are there in your guild? (members not characters)

Less than 10	19
11-20	22
21-40	55
41-80	135
81-120	88
More than 120	76
Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

How easy do you think it is to create a guild within the game?

Very easy	81
Easy	121
Neither easy or hard	127
Hard	56
Very hard	10
Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

If you are a guild-leader / -officer: How easy is it to manage the guild with the in-game tools?

Very easy	20
Easy	81
Neither easy or hard	202
Hard	65
Very hard	16

Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

What kind of communication does your guild use?

Website	263
Online forum	281
IRC	111
Instant messenger (MSN, ICQ, Yahoo, etc.)	118
SMS	21
Phone	50
e-mail	44
In-game chat	288
Teamspeak	157
Ventrilo	176
Other (please specify)	13

Total Respondents	394
(skipped this question)	48

Have you ever been forced by the guild to do something that you otherwise would not do?

Yes	30
No	365

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

If yes what?

Total Respondents	29
(skipped this question)	413

How do you view the other members of your guild?

I respect them highly	104
I like them	223
I have no strong opinion of them	64
I dislike them	2
I strongly dislike them	2

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

How do you think other members of your guild view you?

They respect me	107
They like me	178
They have no strong opinion of me.	106
They dislike me	3
They strongly dislike me	1

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

Have you ever left a guild?

Yes	267
No	128

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

If yes why?

Total Respondents	258
(skipped this question)	184

What is the main purpose of your guild?

We like to explore the game world and be the first guild that discover new things	72
Our main goal for the guild is to socialize both members between and other players in general.	183
We are working hard to be the best guild with the best players	116
We are a strict role-playing guild	8
We are a Player-vs.-Player guild	16

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

If your guild started playing another game instead of World of Warcraft would you follow them and thereby leave the game?

Yes	18
Maybe	147
No	161
I don't know	69

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

Would you ever consider leaving your guild if you got an offer from another guild?

Yes	46
Maybe	138
No	174
I don't know	37

Total Respondents	395
(skipped this question)	47

Do you use the community around the game (website etc.) to find strategies and information about the game?

Yes	363
No	21
Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

Does the information provided by the community influence your decisions in the game? (eg. Talent builds strategies hints etc.)

Yes, always	26
Yes, sometimes	279
Not really	54
Rarely	19
Never	6
Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

Do you participate in the discussions on forums concerning World of Warcraft?

Yes	266
No	118
Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

If yes how many hours a week do you use?

Less than 1 hour	203
1-3 hours	132
4-6 hours	38
More than 6 hours	10
Total Respondents	383
(skipped this question)	59

Have you ever asked other players for help when playing World of Warcraft?

Yes, I do it all the time	52
Yes, sometimes	218
Yes, but rarely	107
No, I don't need help	7
Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

If yes who?

Real-life friends	244
Guild members	340
In-game friends	277
Random players	195
Other (please specify)	9

Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

Do you ever help other players in World of Warcraft?

Yes, I help everyone who needs help	206
Yes, but only people I know	168
Yes, but only people I know outside the game	7
No, wouldn't want to ruin the fun for anyone	3

Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

Are you well respected among people in the community?

Yes, everyone respects me and my opinions	10
Yes, most people respect me and my opinions	167
No, most people doesn't respect me or my opinions	6
No, no one respect me or my opinions	0
I don't know	201

Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

In your opinion how does the community think of your guild?

People respect us, based on our achievements within the game	82
People respect us, based on the players within the guild	133
People dislike us, because of the way we play the game	6
People dislike us, because of the players within the guild	4
I have no idea	159

Total Respondents	384
(skipped this question)	58

Do you engage in Player-vs.-Player activities?

Yes, most of the time	108
Yes, sometimes	185
Not often	75
Never	13

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61

Do you engage in Player-vs.-Environment activities?

Yes, most of the time	275
Yes, sometimes	98
Not often	7
Never	1

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61

Why do you play Player-vs.-Player?

I think its fun	322
I want the rewards given by PvP	136
My entire guild is playing PvP	16
It makes me feel powerful	45
I like to kill other players	108

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61

Rate the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have great respect for people with a high Player-vs.-Player ranking	19	58	102	103	55	44
Player-vs.-Player is the best thing about World of Warcraft	26	35	59	88	112	61
World of Warcraft is the best game ever?	71	107	95	53	39	16
Great equipment equals a skilled player?	7	12	61	32	122	147

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61

Why do you keep on playing World of Warcraft?

The game world is so appealing to me	63
Because of the people within the game	110
I want to be the best before I stop playing	20
It's simply so much fun playing World of Warcraft	188

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61

How long do you plan on continuing playing World of Warcraft?

Not decided yet	279
Until the next good game comes along	70
I'm going to stop soon	32

Total Respondents	381
(skipped this question)	61