



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Social Roles in Virtual World Games

A case study of the social role of rated battleground leader in
World of Warcraft

Gregory Troha & Karl Young

Field of study: Social psychology

Level: C

Credits: 15 credits

Thesis defence: Spring 2016

Supervisor: Kalle Berggren

Department of Sociology

Thesis in Social psychology

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Background	4
Purpose and question formulation.....	8
Previous Research.....	9
Theory.....	12
Roles and social construction of knowledge.....	12
Dramaturgical concepts of acting.....	13
Emotion work and feeling rules.....	15
Method and materials.....	18
Choice of respondents.....	18
Procedure.....	19
Preunderstanding and delimitation.....	20
Analysis.....	21
Validity and reliability.....	22
Ethical considerations.....	23
Analysis & results.....	26
Responsibilities as a rated battleground leader.....	28
Performing the role of rated battleground leader.....	35
Discussion.....	44
References.....	48
Appendix.....	50
Ethics and privacy statement.....	50
Interview guide.....	51

Abstract

The authors of this paper take a different approach to studying interaction in the online game World of Warcraft than traditional social psychological studies have in the past. Asking the question “what does it mean to be a RBG leader?” and conducting online interviews with experienced RBG leaders, they draw upon Berger and Luckmann’s views on interaction and social construction of knowledge, Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective, and Hochschild’s concepts of emotion work and feeling rules. With this study the authors intend to lay the groundwork for future studies on the subject of RBG leadership, as well as analyze the social role of RBG leader from an interactionist perspective. The authors found that the role carries three main responsibilities: strategic planning, tactical maneuvering and human asset management. Certain dramaturgical concepts evidenced themselves in respondents’ reported actions, illustrating both similarities and differences between online- and face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, the authors sought to identify dramaturgical concepts of acting as introduced by Goffman, complemented by Hochschild’s concepts of feeling rules and emotion work. In the discussion section the authors shed light upon the implications of their findings and suggest future studies to be done on the role of RBG leader and the potential for using games as a platform for learning and developing of specific skills transferrable to ‘real life’.

Key words: World of Warcraft, Rated battleground, Interaction.

Background

The inception of the internet has altered the way people interact in everyday life. Using the internet allows people all over the world to instantaneously connect and interact without the constraints of geographical location.

One of the many things the internet is used for is an ancient pastime - games. These online games come in many shapes, forms and categories. While some people prefer playing games alone, others prefer playing games together with other people. These multiplayer games vary greatly in size, with some multiplayer games garnering the interest of millions of players.

Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) are one of the most popular types of games today. Many studies have been done in the field of MMOGs and virtual worlds resulting in many new, exciting concepts and theories related to online-content. The MMOG World of Warcraft (WoW) had around ten million subscribers at the beginning of 2015 and is maybe the most thoroughly studied game of all. Much interest has been directed towards the game in part because of its massive drawing power, but also because of possible links between online-leadership roles and work-life performance in leadership roles (Goh and Wasko 2009).

Since launching in November 2004, World of Warcraft has had a playerbase in the millions and the massively multiplayer online role-playing game is still alive and continues to grow today. Upon launch, the game had a maximum level cap¹ of 60 and the developers have since continued to add content to the game which now allows players to reach level 100. In the game each player creates their own in-game character, choosing from 13 different races, such as Orcs, Trolls and Goblins, and 11 different *classes* such as Warlock, Mage and Warrior, each with a vastly different pool of *spells* and *abilities*. Starting at level 1 the player completes quests and dungeons while dispatching of computer generated creatures to gather experience and gain levels.

As the player progresses through the massive seven-continent world, the challenges presented to the player become more difficult while the player's book of spells grows with their continued progression. Alongside the growing spellbook each character has a set of spells, specific to their class that they must choose between and are mutually exclusive, called

¹ *Level cap* refers to the maximum level that can be reached by your character.

talents. There is also a system which allows characters to slightly modify some of their spells by using magically-infused scrolls called *glyphs*². Once reaching the maximum character level of 100, while no longer able continue leveling up, the player may engage in what is known as the “end-game content”³.

Roles are, as suggested by the game’s categorization, central to MMOGs and especially so in massively multiplayer online role-playing games such as WoW. There are several roles in the game a player may choose from: defending his allies from threats, focusing on dealing damage, disabling enemies’ actions or healing the wounds of his allies. But there are also roles such as the *raid*⁴ leader, *guild*⁵ master and *rated battleground (RBG)* leader which are roles of a social nature, rather than being imposed on a player by the mechanics of the game.

Much work has been done examining the role of the guild master and related role-components, both in terms of managing direct expressions of behavior from the guild master himself and from the members of the raid group in order to promote performance and progression toward the group’s common goals. However, these studies have also shown that guild masters engage in emotion work, managing feelings and the expression of emotions, pertaining to both themselves and their guild members.

World of Warcraft players can engage in player versus player (PvP) combat and that is what a large part of the community occupy themselves with once reaching level 100. Players often face off in PvP-oriented arenas and battlegrounds in which players team up with one another to engage other teams of players in combat, each team trying to leverage their skills and class-compositions to win.

In a rated battleground two teams of 10 to 15 players each compete in a battleground⁶ in which one team wins by more effectively completing the objectives, such as capturing flags or defending bases. The games are played with a ranking system, with players on the winning team gaining rating⁷ while the opposing team loses an equal amount. Players who find

² *Talents* and *Glyphs* are in-game customization options becoming available to the character as he levels up.

³ *End-game content* refers to game content only accessible by characters that have reached maximum level.

⁴ *Raiding* is an activity where a group of 10-40 people come together in order to kill computer controlled monsters in large dungeons.

⁵ *Guilds* are an association of people united for mutual aid or the pursuit of a common goal (often raiding).

⁶ *Battlegrounds* are areas in the game where structured team versus team combat is allowed to occur.

success in RBG's may climb the ranking ladder, earning titles, cosmetic items and other various rewards the more successful they are.

In order to effectively carry out the tasks required to win in a RBG, a team needs a captain. Players in WoW most often refer to this role as RBG leader and the role is distinct from the roles that derive from the player's character class and specialization (such as healer or disabler). It is a social role, one that carries greater-than-average responsibilities and expectations. The function filled by the RBG leader is to coordinate and lead a team of either 10 or 15 players to victory in a goal-oriented PvP environment. At the same time as the player fulfills the role of RBG leader they must also play their own character as a member of the team.

While guilds usually retain a relatively stable foundation of members overtime, creating long-term social relationships within the guild, and raid groups typically maintaining the same player-composition, rated battleground teams are not necessarily bound together in guilds. While some teams retain a core of players, they often rely on finding new group members through the in-game chat system or the game's group-finder interface, a tool that lets any player create a group and add labels which are then searchable by other players.

Players who are serious about attaining high rated battleground ratings most often use voice-communication software, such as *Teamspeak*⁸, and carefully construct their teams, choosing specific classes for their unique abilities and spells in order to put together a team with great synergy and effectiveness.

In a RBG each class has a role in their own right, such as contributing with the ability disable enemy players' actions or healing the wounds of their allies. While each character fills a role in the team, the RBG leader role brings responsibilities beyond the game in the same way 'team-captain' in a soccer game implies a role outside of the soccer field itself.

As evidenced by its massive playerbase, World of Warcraft has captivated an impressive audience. And while games are enjoyable pastimes, certain members of the community

⁷ *Rating* is the measurement of skill in PvP activities and determines where your character is placed on the ranked leaderboard.

⁸ *Teamspeak* is computer software that allows users to connect and communicate using their voices. Commonly referred to as "TS".

voluntarily take upon themselves leadership roles such as RBG leader which place intense demands and responsibilities on the shoulders of those who engage in the role performance. But what exactly does it mean to be the RBG leader, and how do players go about performing this role?

Purpose and question formulation

The purpose of this study is to analyze, through an interactionist perspective, the social role of RBG leader in World of Warcraft.

In order to do so we have posed the following two questions;

1. What is the actor's understanding of expectations of acting and emotional work in their role as RBG leader?
2. How does the actor modify their acting and emotion work when assuming the role of RBG leader?

We will seek to answer these questions using data collected from semi-structured interviews with experienced RBG leaders. We will rely on our theoretical framework, consisting of Berger and Luckmann's theory of socially constructed knowledge, Goffman's dramaturgical concepts of acting and Hochschild's theory of feeling rules and emotion work to analyze and understand the social role of RBG leader in the World of Warcraft.

Previous Research

As mentioned in the purpose and question formulation section it is the intention of the authors to analyze actors' understanding of the social role of RBG leader. In order to do so we will now present pre-existing studies on subjects similar to ours.

There are several noteworthy studies on self-representation in online games (Yee, Bailenson & Ducheneaut 2009; Yee & Bailenson 2007; Ducheneaut & Moore 2004; Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel & Fox, 2002). These studies have shown that people infer their expected behaviors and attitudes from observing their avatar's (in-game character) appearance, a phenomenon known as the Proteus effect (Yee and Bailenson 2007). Reading this whilst working under symbolic interactionist theory, it at first seemed irrelevant to our case. However, a parallel could be drawn between the Proteus effect and the effect significant symbols may have on a player's behavior in a PvP battleground. If the RBG leader is marked with a symbol for the group to see, one could argue that both the leader's and the group's behavior will change accordingly.

Previous research on World of Warcraft has focused on two social roles: guild masters and raid leaders (Williams, Kirschner & Suhaimi-Broder 2014; Holt 2011; Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell & Moore 2007; Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell & Moore 2006b). These articles come to very similar conclusions; a guild master or raid leader has several obligations to their team. Not only must the guild leader play their own character, but also micro-manage all other players' mistakes; "I was always amazed by their presence of mind; how they could perform and observe the actions of nine other players simultaneously. They should be air traffic controllers, I thought." (Holt 2011, 146). A good guild master must also be able to manage any drama that may arise between players to avoid conflict within the guild and to engage in *emotion work*⁹ while raiding "to align the [player's] behavior with feeling rules that characterized the situation at hand" (Williams, Kirschner & Suhaimi-Broder 2014, 133).

Furthermore previous research has been done on the social dynamics of virtual world games and MMORPG¹⁰s such as WoW (Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell & Moore 2006a; Nardi & Harris 2006; Holt 2011). Holt argued that the WoW experience can be divided into three parts: (a)

⁹ *Emotion work* and *feeling rules* are part of Hochschild's (1979) theory. These will be further introduced and explained in the Theory chapter.

¹⁰ *MMORPG* is the abbreviated form of Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game.

“Getting Started” referring to the levelling process and getting to know the game, (b) “The Social World” including discovering guilds and other social activities in the game: “Although players were not required to join guilds, the vast majority I observed had joined one or more guilds over the course of their involvement with the game” (Holt 2011, 155). And finally (c), the “Culture of raiders¹¹”. It is our opinion that there exists a large knowledge gap in regards to what Holt calls the “Culture of raiders”. We argue Holt’s three-part explanation of the WoW experience is missing a large part of the game which, if we were to use Holt’s own terminology, may be referred to as the “Culture of PvP:ers¹²”. Holt describes the Culture of raiders as the end-game players, once you have reached maximum level you are no longer interested in the Getting Started or The Social World parts and your objective is no longer to quest and level up, but now to progress your character’s gear (items such as swords and armor), preparing your character for raiding. However, we argue that raiding is only part of the end-game experience in WoW and that we therefore must fill this knowledge gap with a study of the players that defy Holt’s model and instead engage in PvP activity, which in itself has an equally rich and unique culture.

Lastly, there are studies arguing that games like WoW aren’t actually played for *fun* or for *leisure* but rather quickly become chores (Yee 2006b; Holt 2011). Yee writes about the irony of having to pay a subscription fee to play many MMORPG games such as World of Warcraft. He argues that many MMORPG games are in many aspects similar to real-life work: “I stopped playing because I just didn’t want to commit to the crazy raid times (6+ hours in the evening?)” (Yee 2006b, 69). Holt writes about an experience he had in the game: “A lot of time in [World of Warcraft] was spent *grinding*¹³, which means gaining experience through repetitive non-quest related tasks. Grinding was the most mindlessly boring way to level up quickly, requiring more perseverance than skill.” (Holt 2011, 95-96).

Many of these articles also mention a lack of literature on the topic of WoW and Holt (2011) argues that since the majority of the game’s content only becomes available to players once reaching the maximum level cap, “It is likely that this gap in the literature exists because many researchers lack the time required to reach the level-cap” (Holt 2011, 38).

¹¹ Holt’s (2011) categorization of end-game players, implying that raiding is the only end-game activity.

¹² We argue that there not only exists a “culture of raiders” (Holt 2011), but also a “culture of PvP:ers”, players who engage in Player versus Player activity.

¹³ *Grinding* refers to the process of levelling your character through repetitive tasks such as killing monsters over and over again. ‘Grind’ is synonymous with ‘drudge’, meaning ‘hard dull work’.

In our experience the PvP culture of end-game WoW is equally as rich and unique as that of the raider. We therefore argue that there is a lack of literature in this area and intend to fill that gap with the results of this study.

Theory

In order to properly analyze the social role of RBG leader we have chosen theoretical perspectives that focus on interaction. Berger and Luckmann's theories that pertain to the social construction of knowledge, Goffman's dramaturgical concepts of acting and Hochschild's theory of emotion work and feeling rules will serve to analyze the responsibilities and performance of the role of RBG leader.

Roles and social construction of knowledge

Interaction in a face-to-face situation is highly complex and flexible. As two individuals interact in each other's immediate presence acting in a highly rigid and patterned manner becomes difficult as both parties reciprocally express their subjectivity, leading both parties to have to adjust their understanding of the situation and their impression of the person they are dealing with (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 43-45).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1991) people enter into face-to-face interactions with typified schemes of behavior, labelling and defining situations accordingly. However, the reciprocal nature of face-to-face interactions means actors constantly redefine situations as the interaction progresses (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 44-48).

Berger and Luckmann (1991) use a definition of institutions which, according to themselves, is slightly broader than the definition most sociologists use and it is their definition which we shall refer to in this report: "Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution." (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 72)

The above excerpt carries implications for the understanding of roles and their relation to institutions. The typification of actors' behaviors and actions imply a set of behaviors and actions belonging to that type of actor. However the reverse also holds true, that the actor in question is the performer of that set of behaviors and expressions (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 89-91).

In a context where actors have access to what Berger and Luckmann (1991) refer to as a "common stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 91-92), containing the a sort of

manual of conduct within the institutional order, we may begin to speak of roles. As such we may expect any actor to whom a role is relevant to have an understanding of the actions and behaviors to be performed by that type of actor, by a performer of that role.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) suggest that roles originate in the institutionalization and typification of others as well as one's own performances. This means a person may recognize not only the performance of the actor but also the performance as being playable by any actor. Referring to the role of RBG leader then implies there is a performance associated with acting in that role. For an actor to engage in a set of typified behaviors and actions requires that there exists a linguistic objectification of the relevant set of behaviors and actions. That is, there will be a commonly understood vocabulary referring to them (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 89-94).

Stepping into a role then requires the actor to have an understanding of the role they are about to perform. This understanding of the role represents the institutionalized order in the context. Roles begin to appear when there is a socially defined stock of knowledge from which an actor derives his understanding of the expectations of reciprocal, typified conduct within the role, and its position in the social order. A competent role-performer can be expected to perform the actions and behaviors of the role in accordance with the typified and expected conduct of a performer in said role (Berger and Luckmann 1991, 91-97).

Dramaturgical concepts of acting

Erving Goffman (1959) writes about how the individual presents their self and their activity in everyday life. Goffman's work introduced a new kind of sociological theory, one viewing life through the perspective of theatrical performance deriving principles of dramaturgic action to construct a model of the smooth operations of society. Goffman states that an individual whilst in the presence of others will attempt to gain information about them. Acquiring information about others, such as their beliefs, opinions, status, competence and so on allows the individual to define the situation and understand how to effectively evoke specific responses from other actors (Goffman 1959, 10-12).

An individual may gain information about another person through any number of 'sign-vehicles' available to them. Sign-vehicles such as clothing, mannerisms and expressions serve as clues as to who and what the individual they are dealing with is. Individuals not previously

acquainted with one another may find that they have to rely on their impressions of the other party, taking what they present as truthful and genuine (Goffman 1959, 10-12).

Often individuals will attempt to control the impressions others get of him with the intent of projecting a definition garnering the treatment they desire. The observer may however be impressed by the performance in a way not intended by the actor whether or not the impression formed is warranted by actions of the performer. Taking a pragmatic stance one may speak of the actor having effectively projected a definition of the situation as it is understood by the observer (Goffman 1959, 37-44).

In their reactions to the actor's behavior the observer also projects a definition of the situation. According to Goffman, the definitions of the situation projected by all actors in an interaction combine into an overall definition of the situation, in what he refers to as a working consensus (Goffman 1959, 43-57).

Actors often employ a front, a rather fixed and general mode of behavior and expression allowing observers to quickly define the situation and the role intended to be played by the actor. Goffman speaks of two components of a front, setting and personal front. Setting refers to an actor's clothing, furniture and other scenic items. A personal front refers to items of expressive value, such as posture, vocabulary, tone and mannerisms (Goffman 1959, 13-19).

Dramatic realization refers to behaviors intended to signal and convey information to observers about the actor which may otherwise have gone unnoticed by observers. In interactions situations often arise where the actor may behave in a way which may impress the audience, highlighting the competence and qualities indirectly claimed by the actor when performing within the relevant role. For example an expert within a field may be expected to produce an action, response and or answer in a split-second, and in their doing so they may readily communicate to their audience their skill and ability to properly perform the role (Goffman 1959, 19-22).

While an individual's expressive actions contribute to defining the situation surrounding that individual, often an actor's performance is part of a larger projection fostered by a group of individuals with interlocking phases of performance. In order for one individual to take a dominant role in an interaction there must be an actor taking a role of subordination. Goffman

exemplifies this by referring to the interlocking performances of officers and their subordinates in the army (Goffman 1959, 47-51).

These co-operative performances, combining to present a single routine may be referred to as a team performance. In these team performances we often find that actors will avoid expressive behaviors that compromise the state of being projected by the group to an audience. Actors tend to suppress their heartfelt emotions and opinions for the time being, presenting a state of unanimity among the team (Goffman 1959, 47-51).

So far we have dealt with the actor's expressive behavior serving as symbols of things not immediately available to the senses of the observer by interpreting cues of performance by the actor. The observer however should not be viewed as simply a passive observer, accepting any image projected by an actor. Observers may interpret a performance as being genuine or phony. If by projecting a certain definition of the situation the actor may expect to be treated by others in a certain manner, we expect observers of the performance to look for clues as to the realness of the performance. Expressive behavior by the actor may also be misunderstood by the observer. This type of misrepresentation of the actor's performance may lead to their audience defining the situation in a way not intended by the actor (Goffman 1959, 37-44).

Emotion work and feeling rules

The articles mentioned in the previous research section based on Goffman's theories and the dramaturgical perspective have shown these to be very useful analytical tools (Williams, Kirschner & Suhaimi-Broder 2014). However, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1979) critiques Goffman's perspective: "Goffman's approach might simply be extended and deepened by showing that people not only try to conform outwardly, but do so inwardly as well" (Hochschild 1979, 556). She claims that Goffman in his writings holds a studied disregard for the role of emotion and the self that must naturally go along with performing a social role.

Hochschild (1979) would argue that in order to study a situation where an actor is selectively suppressing or expressing emotion one must zoom out from the given situation in order to look at things such as social structures in order to understand the context of the management of emotion. Hochschild further critiques Goffman's concept of acting by claiming that Goffman's theory portrays a great deal of time being spent on managing direct behavioral

expression (Hochschild 1979, 555-558). However, Hochschild argues that Goffman, when illustrating his points indeed speaks of two sorts of acting: on the one hand the management of direct behavioral expression and on the other the management of proper emotion to which the intended behavior can follow (Hochschild 1979, 555-558).

The paragraph above illustrates the dimension of feeling rules which Hochschild argues is a key-component of any social role. From a dramaturgical perspective the actor commits to modifying his behavior in order to conform to the expectations on the role that he has engaged in by modifying the presentation of himself in order to impress the audience as desired. In the same manner that the actor commits to managing his direct behavioral expressions Hochschild would argue that they also commit to a set of feeling rules. In the same way that an actor *behaves* in a way that conforms to rules and expectations, they also *feel* in a way that conforms to rules and expectations (Hochschild 1979, 564).

Hochschild (1979) further argues that social factors not only affect how emotions are expressed, but also “guide the microactions of labeling, interpreting and managing emotion” (Hochschild 1979, 555). She suggests an interactive model of emotion where normal adults have a “considerable capacity to control emotion” (Hochschild 1979, 555). When controlling emotions, Hochschild argues that the feelings we display are based on what is considered appropriate in that specific situation: “We assess the ‘appropriateness’ of a feeling by making a comparison between feeling and situation, not by examining the feeling in abstracto.” (Hochschild 1979, 560).

If Hochschild’s notion is agreed upon, the use Goffman’s theories to analyze the results of a qualitative online interview on the subjective experience of a RBG leader would be expected to bear fruit only in the field of behavior. As much of the previous literature that relates to our field of study shows; there is a component apparent in the role of the guild leader, namely emotion work, that would likely be a component of the role of the RBG leader as well. As such, Hochschild’s theories will be used with the intent to analyze the components of the role of RBG leader which relate to the realm of affect.

Using Goffman's dramaturgical perspective as a tool for analysis may suffice to explain to observed and reported behavior of the RBG leader but does not account for the full extent of experience within the given roll. Assuming that, as earlier studies show, emotion work is a

component of the role guild leader and that it then also is a component of the role RBG leader, one simply cannot ignore the emotional aspect as part of a role.

Method and materials

As previously mentioned our intention with this study is to analyze actors' understandings of the social role of RBG leader.

Choice of respondents

In order to properly study actors' understandings of the role, we have chosen to conduct interviews with people with considerable experience leading rated battleground groups. We have limited our selection process to one of the game servers in the World of Warcraft. This server was chosen at random out of all the European servers in the game.

When determining validity of potential candidates we chose to limit the respondents based on their World of Warcraft PvP-rankings. The PvP-ladder works by giving each player a personal *Matchmaking Rating* (MMR), which serves show to their level of skill relative to other players. We chose to set a minimum requirement to their current rating of 1800 MMR¹⁴. Anyone below this rating is deemed too inexperienced for the purpose of this study and will therefore not be invited to participate.

The participant sample was created by sending out requests in the in-game chat channels. The game has an advertisement-tool which is intended to facilitate group-finding between players for multi-player activities. This was instead utilized by setting up an advertisement stating our interest in finding respondents for a study on RBG leadership. It was through this tool that people contacted us showing their interest. We informed whoever responded to the advertisement about what the study was and how it would be conducted and then asked if that is something that would interest them. Since we had little power to dictate who would see, let alone respond to our advertisement, the studies' sample is a randomly selected comfort sample. All 10 of the initial respondents who took part in the study completed the interviews. All respondents were asked to read our Ethics and Privacy Statement (refer to Appendix) and were asked to inform us of whether or not they agree and understand. This includes the respondents being over 18 years of age as to avoid having to acquire parental consent.

¹⁴ MMR's in the playerbase range between 1000-3000 and by limiting the study to 1800+ we are reaching the top 5000 players in Europe. (Blizzard Entertainment, 2016a).

Procedure

After acquiring informed consent from the participants the online interviews were conducted through Skype. Kozinets (2010) explains that the only difference between conducting interviews online and face-to-face is that the online interview “occurs through the mediation of some technological apparatus” (Kozinets 2010, 46), but that this, in fact, makes a big difference. In online interviews there is only one communicative modality, namely the voice. Any other modalities we are used to, such as individual identifiers and body language are completely absent in the online scenario. According to Kozinets (2010), this can make data difficult to interpret and this difficulty can in turn undermine the data’s utility for understanding other social contexts.

However, Kozinets (2010) also argues that, similar to in-person interviews, the online interview many times may suffice to answer your research question without requiring further data, such as journals and depth interviews. In order to properly perform ‘online depth interviews’ Kozinets (2010) states that you must “bring in a detailed subjective understanding of the lived experience of online participants (what is called a ‘phenomenological understanding’)” and “hear people’s recollections and interpretations of events” (Kozinets 2010, 47). This is what we have strived towards doing in the online interviews conducted for this study.

The interviews were recorded at full length and then manually transcribed. Software used for recording was “Amolto Call Recorder For Skype” which is freeware found at Amolto.com. The recordings have since been destroyed and the transcriptions have served as the material used for analysis.

The interviews conducted were, in the words of Berg, Lune and Lune (2004), semistandardized. While still using a number of predetermined questions, as one would in a standardized interview, the semistandardized interviews allow a great deal of space for ‘free-talk’ by the respondent, and allowing the interviewer to alter the order in which questions were asked when deemed a natural follow-up to the topic at hand (Berg, Lune and Lune 2004, 70-73).

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the study is to analyze the role of RBG leader. Therefore, the aim is to analyze and understand rather than explain a phenomenon and the results not being intended to be generalizable to the greater population. However, we may expect there to be a certain representativity in respondents experiences in the role of RBG leader as the performance of the role takes place in an institutional context. With that in mind, the choice of qualitative methods came naturally. Interviews serve the purpose of giving in-depth information from a smaller number of respondents and this is exactly what we needed in order to create an understanding of the role of RBG leader: in-depth information.

The study focuses on an interaction that occurs over the internet. In order to comfortably find and interview the right people, there was no simple way to do so “in real life”. Instead, we found ourselves finding people through the game. There is no way to easily tell which country a person lives in, in an international arena such as World of Warcraft, and as such the interviews would have to be conducted over the internet.

An interview manuscript was created beforehand and tested on one respondent as a part of a previous course this semester. This respondent has been included in the sample of this study, simply because the interview manuscript has seen little change since the initial ‘test-run’ interview was conducted (refer to Appendix for interview guide).

Preunderstanding and delimitation

Both authors of the study have considerable experience playing World of Warcraft. We’ve played the game for some 10 years and have tried our hands at all aspects of end-game content. Our preunderstanding not only of game mechanics and game terminology but also the different institutions existing in the game has therefore been of great use during the course of the study. However, the same preunderstanding led to the necessity to take a step back in order to introduce the uninitiated to the intricacy of many of the game’s mechanical and technical properties.

The game World of Warcraft is one filled with a multitude of adventures and possible experiences. In reaching the maximum level-cap of 100 players may begin to engage in end-game content. One is not limited to enjoyed only one part of the experience, and while some focus on only one aspect of the end-game content many players engage in both the ‘culture of

raiders' as well as the 'culture of PvP:ers'. However, the interactions and the role of interest in this study are performed specifically within rated PvP battlegrounds - RBG's.

As an RBG team consists of ten players there are many different roles, experiences and interactions taking place. The role of interest in this study has been that of the RBG leader. Specifically we have focused on the *what* and the *how* of the role, as explained in the purpose and question formulation section. As such the experiences of the nine other players within an RBG team, while interesting and rich in their own right, have not been dealt with in this study. Nor has the study dealt with any other aspect of the respondents experiences in WoW, such as leveling, raiding or social interactions outside of the context of RBG leadership.

Analysis

The coding process led us to create three main categories of particular interest. We decided to code these categories as following: (1) *Strategic planning*, pertaining to all the strategic aspects of leading a RBG group such as class composition, role distribution and character modification:

You need to have great knowledge of the game and you need to understand what all the different classes have, [...] how they work together, what cooldowns they use, in order to understand how can we most efficiently do this and get what we want done, done. - Martin.

(2) *Tactical maneuvering* refers to present moment adaptations in team-maneuvers as part of the strategic plan to be employed:

It's very important to manage people in a way that you know how this player works, or you can just by the voice of him tell how this player works. And there's always other things, like Talents, you can just see on the player if he's playing good or not. If he's going to be a good player and by the experience of course. So after that, managing if this guy is capable of doing that or not. - Fredrik

(3) *Human asset management*, pertaining to all the actions a RBG leader performs in order to manage the players on the team, such as recruitment, fostering a positive environment, or conflict resolution:

Yeah, well being the leader of the group clearly you need to be more vocal and you need to be talking, give positive reinforcement and such, and [...] even if you get pissed off you don't need to let everybody know how you feel. You need to keep the spirit up and keep everybody going and playing at their best. - Martin

For the second part of the analysis, no specific coding was done. Instead, we identified concepts of acting, emotion work and feeling rules evidenced in respondent's experience. This data was not subject to any particular kind of filtering process, but rather a type of pairing of respondent's experience with the theoretical concepts introduced in the theory section.

In the transcription process we debated whether or not to include cursing and language of offensive nature. We decided to keep our modification of the transcriptions to a minimum, therefore leaving some curses in the text. The only alterations made to the transcriptions, post-transcribing, are grammatical corrections and changing from spoken- to written parlance. In places where large chunks of the interview have been removed instead you will find a "[...]", as per common practice.

Every participant when being quoted in this study has been given several fabricated names to further ensure the anonymity of the participant and remove the risk of someone piecing together quotes that may have come from the same source. The authors of this study are the only ones who know which names pertain to which interview.

Validity and reliability

In any given study researchers are limited by many factors which may pose problems in gathering data, analysis and so forth. Using a randomly selected comfort sample for the study is highly convenient but may also pose certain problems. This method of respondent selection may attract certain personality types more than others and may lead to the sample not being representative of the general population. Furthermore only 10 interviews were conducted, resulting in a very small sample size which is not conducive to a result that can be generalized to the population of RBG leaders.

The study also took on the form of a 'netnography' (Kozinets 2010) in it's dealing with online games and social roles within them. Online-games are notoriously filled with so-called

‘trolls¹⁵’, which may compromise not only the validity but also the reliability of the study. Conducting the interviews with respondents over VoIP software¹⁶ may further increase the risk of ‘trolls’ as there is no face-to-face interaction. A more appropriate method would be to find respondents in-game and then to either book interviews in person or to require two-way web camera use. This would however require both more time and funds than what was available to the researchers.

In requiring respondents to be highly experienced in the role of RBG leader likely resulted in a sample with a good understanding of the role of RBG leader and the expectations on it, but could possibly also have been problematic. Persons with vast experience in the role may experience it not as much as a role, but as a natural part of their identity, which could lead to problems verbalizing their behaviors and emotional expressions. Furthermore one cannot dismiss the possibility of a great deal of self-serving bias in answering questions about behavior within a competitive setting.

As far as validity is concerned the method of data collection, namely semi-structured interviews, served well in collecting relevant data. As the aim of the study was to analyze the social role of RBG leader through an interactionist perspective the actor’s understanding of the role is of central importance. Through an interactionist lens the actor’s understanding of the role is formed through mutual exchange with other parties, and their understanding of the role is as much about their behavior as it is the expectations of behavior that they internalize in their acting. The selected interview questions further serve the purpose of examining the actor’s understanding of the role and as such the researchers believe that the validity of the study is of a respectable standard.

Ethical considerations

During the planning of the study steps were taken to ensure the highest ethical standards possible in accordance with Forskningsrådets principles of research ethics. Forskningsrådet write that researchers are obliged to inform respondents of the purpose of the study, to inform respondents that participation in the study is voluntary and that they have to right to at any

¹⁵ The word ‘troll’ refers to a person who intentionally commits actions of a provocative nature over the internet. The name is rumoured to be derived from ‘trolling’ (fishing) and was supposedly used to describe the behavior as ‘trolling for reaction’.

¹⁶ VoIP software (voice over internet protocol) is computer software used for voice-based communication. Examples of this include Teamspeak (TS) and Skype.

point discontinue their participation in the study without negative consequences. Respondents must also be informed of potential risks of uncomfot or injury (Forskningsrådet 1996, 7-8).

Informants were sent an ethics and privacy statement (see appendix) before the interviews were conducted. The ethics and privacy statement informed respondents that their participation was voluntary and of their right to discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequence. The researchers did not anticipate any risk of discomfort or injury and did therefore not touch on that subject in the ethics and privacy statement.

Forskningsrådet (1996) write that researchers are obliged to obtain informed consent from respondents before continuing with the study. In certain situations informed consent must be obtained from parents. Furthermore respondents have the right to determine the extent of their participation and may at any time discontinue their participation without pressure, manipulation or influence from the researchers (Forskningsrådet 1996, 9-11).

The ethics and privacy statement created for purposes of the study required the respondents to answer with “I am over 18 years of age and consent to participating in the study” in order to formally give their consent to participating in the study. Respondents were also reminded of their right to discontinue their participation at any time.

Researchers are, according to Forskningsrådets (1996) guidelines, obliged to provide the highest standards of confidentiality. Any data containing respondents personal information must be stored and reported in a manner that removes the possibility of a respondent's identity being discovered. Furthermore, in cases where researchers are in possession of sensitive or highly personal information they are to sign an agreement of professional secrecy in regards to the relevant information (Forskningsrådet 1996, 12-13).

The only personal information collected in the study were VoIP software accounts used to conduct interviews with respondents as well as confirming the respondents being at least 18 years of age. In contacting potential respondents the researchers interacted with the respondents in-game which unavoidably led to seeing the names of their online avatars. These names were treated with the same standards of confidentiality which researchers are obliged to extend to a person's real-world name. Respondents avatar names, VoIP software

account names and all audio recordings were deleted after going through the coding and transcription process. None of the above data was saved or reported.

Lastly, Forskningsrådet (1996) require researchers to refrain from using any data collected from respondents for any purposes other than those of the study. The researchers have not and will not use any collected data for any other purposes than those of the study (Forskningsrådet 1996, 14).

Analysis & results

While much previous research has been done on end-game content, most of it has focused on guilds and raiding. Little attention has been paid to a part of the end-game content which occupies a massive part of the player base, namely the PvP-environment.

As introduced in the previous research section, studies have shown that guild masters, another social role within World of Warcraft, display and develop leadership qualities transferrable to work-life situations. While there are obvious similarities between the role of RBG leader and that of the guild master, we instead take a step back due to the lack of previous literature on the PvP end-game content and attempt to fill this glaring gap in the literature by asking “what does it mean to be a RBG leader?”

Returning to the metaphor of our RBG leader as the ‘team-captain’ in a soccer game having implications above and beyond the soccer field, it is of interest to ask what the purpose of having a team-captain or RBG leader is. When elaborating on what it means to be the RBG leader respondents emphasized the competitive nature of playing:

Well as I said before, being the RBG leader, you pretty much, you're the shot-caller. You're the one who decides what happens, so. If I'm, as an RBG leader, if I don't make right calls and tell people to do... Eh, like, if all my calls are incorrect we're gonna lose the game and everybody's gonna get very pissed off at me. And a lot of the burden on win or loss comes down to my decision making process. - Martin

They have to play in the right way. That's why the leader is there, to call what is supposed to happen, if we're supposed to push or not supposed to push, call out the strategic parts and tell people like "This is what's gonna happen now". - James

It means that you have a great responsibility, because, when you have the title as a leader you have to understand that you are the person that needs to take the team to do everything it can in order [for] the team to succeed with what you have. - Ali

They want a leader for a reason, they want a leader because they want to know what to do when it starts. - Andreas

Stepping into the role of RBG leader a player takes on duties and expectations intended to more effectively be able to gain a competitive advantage, playing a very intricate game in a

ten-player team environment against another team attempting to resist their maneuvers. The role as such is performed in a social context, outside of the game itself, and is concerned with the organization and mobilization of a ten-player team with the purpose of effectively attaining the end goal of competition: winning.

Roles arise out of the institutionalization and typification of both others' as well as one's own behaviors. An actor may recognize the self as the performer of an institutionalized pattern of behaviors, of a role performance, whilst also recognizing that the performance is playable by others as well.

As such the actor of a role should have an understanding of the expectations and behaviors implicated in performing the role. The chosen literature from Berger and Luckmann deals with the the social construction of knowledge and was for that reason chosen as the theoretical tool for analyzing the actors' understanding of the responsibilities implied in the role of RBG leader. Furthermore the literature from Goffman and the dramaturgical perspective used in it, together with the concepts of feeling rules and emotion work introduced by Arlie Russell Hochschild are used as the tools for the second part of the analysis pertaining to how to actor goes about their performance.

Having dealt with the question of *why* there is an RBG leader we may with greater clarity shift our gaze to dealing with the formulation of the research questions:

1. What is the actor's understanding of expectations of acting and emotional work in their role as RBG leader?
2. How does the actor modify his acting and emotion work when assuming the role of RBG leader?

To satisfyingly achieve the purpose of the study, to fill the knowledge gap in the literature about the role of RBG leader, the authors of the study have decided to pose two research questions in the interest of being able to conduct an analysis of the role sufficient in explaining both the actor's understanding what they are expected to do, as well as how the actor goes about performing his act.

Moving forward the analysis will take a two-part shape, first using the general perspective of symbolic interactionism in explaining the actor's understanding of what they are to do in their

role. Worded differently, the first question we ask is: what is the actor's understanding of their duties and responsibilities in the role of RBG leader? Moving forward we will refer to these expectations of tasks and functions of the RBG leader simply as responsibilities.

The second part of the analysis will incorporate theories and concepts introduced by Goffman and Hochschild, enabling us to analyze the dramaturgical methods employed by the actors in performing the act. Combining the two-part analysis it is the intention of the authors to lay the groundwork for future studies on the role, providing an understanding of what an RBG leader does as well as providing an analysis of how actors perform the role.

Responsibilities as a rated battleground leader

The only requirements for a player to be eligible to enter into a RBG is having reached level 100 and being part of a group consisting of 10 players, also having reached the maximum level of 100. In the background section of this report explained how a player in the game World of Warcraft has a role in the game which is defined by what spells and abilities are available to the type of character he or she is playing. The role of RBG leader however is not imposed on the player by the game.

The existence of the role of RBG leader is evidence of institutional order within the community of World of Warcraft players. Players most often organize their teams in a similar manner, utilizing roles with specific responsibilities and duties to be performed by the actor in question. It is these responsibilities and duties that are the focus of the first research question posed in this study.

Analysis of data collected from interviews with respondents experienced in leading RBG's resulted in the finding of three areas of responsibilities. While respondents reported different methods of performing the role, all respondents similarly spoke of these three areas of responsibility and the expectation to perform those tasks. As such we may speak of these responsibilities as well as the behavioral and affective tasks detailed in the next section of the analysis as being implied in the performance of actors of the type in question, namely the performer of the role RBG leader.

Respondents often first detailed the expectation on the RBG leader to be responsible for strategic planning. In order to to effectively compete in RBG's performers of the RBG leader

role often emphasized the importance of formulating a strategy before entering their team into a game. While respondents often reported using different strategies, they all reported being expected to be the one responsible for formulating the team's strategy.

I'd say one of the most important parts is the healing. Well basically, there's a couple of different roles; you have the healers, you have the damage dealers, and then you have the objective specialists who might, for example, try to steal the flag, which is one objective. Or just be generally annoying, trying to draw off the main group or something similar to that. - Martin

The thing is like, when I think about a rated battleground I think about, like, what type of team... As I said - if there's a capture the flag, when you have to take the flag and win with 3 points - I want a rogue in my team, I want a hunter in my team. So it's a special lineup I want. If it's another battleground, I want another type of classes in my group. - Johan

You have to have the right type of group, you have to have adjusted it to your type of tactics, in order to defeat the opposite team. - Andreas

The quotes above illustrate how the leader invites players to his team depending on the strategy intended to be used. As each of the 11 classes in World of Warcraft have different abilities and spells the leader adjusts the composition of his team, inviting players with the ability to perform specific tasks in order to effectively execute the chosen strategy.

Furthermore respondents in their role of RBG leader reported being expected to not only formulate a strategic composition of team members based on their abilities and spells but also to strategize how to outmaneuver the opposing team, giving each player specific tasks to perform.

Well before [the RBG] starts, the leader is gonna give an overall strategic overview, or like, he's gonna say what's gonna happen in the battleground. - Johan

First of all I set up the strategy. Right after I set up the group and choose the guys I want in the group I choose the strategy. And I give the guys the roles. - Ali

It's very, very, very important to know how to manage the right players and give them the right roles. Especially if you play with double rogue for example, knowing what a rogue is

capable of doing and stuff like that. And healers... Managing people overall, just knowing how to use people in the right way. - Fredrik

As in a game of soccer, where types of players are assigned different roles such as striker or defender depending on their abilities to perform certain tasks efficiently, so are players in a RBG. Whereas in a game of soccer teams often have coaches responsible for strategically assigning players with roles, respondents all report feeling the expectation to perform that task in their role of RBG leader.

When speaking of responsibilities in the area of strategic planning respondents also often spoke of being expected to instruct players on his team how to strategically modify their characters to, in the most efficient manner possible, fulfill the tasks given to individual players on the team.

You need to have great knowledge of the game and you need to understand what all the different classes have, [...] how they work together, what cooldowns they use, in order to understand how can we most efficiently do this and get what we want done, done. - Jimmy

As detailed in the background section of the report players in World of Warcraft are able to select between a few different talents and glyphs, allowing the player to slightly alter their character's spells and abilities in exchange for a nominal sum of in-game currency. Respondents often touched on the importance of players choosing the correct talents and glyphs in order to effectively perform their assigned role.

I would check out people if they're playing with the wrong glyphs or talents or just playing in the wrong way and I will be able to call it out. - James

If you look at his talents, he's playing with the right talents. And they just use him for the wrong things. - Fredrik

In summary, the first area of responsibility of the RBG leader is strategic planning. Strategic planning encompasses planning of team-composition, distribution of roles as well as character modification. However, respondents also reported being responsible for tactics as well as strategy. All strategic planning deals with events in the future, while tactics more relate to maneuvering in the present moment as part of a larger strategic plan.

Well I start off basically by telling everyone what to do as an overall and then throughout the game I will call tactics: how to push, when to push, if something is missing I will call that out: 'this is missing can we please get some more interrupts, some more CC, can healers be more vocal, tell us what to do, tell us if you need to fall back, if you need to get mana', keeping people updated: 'you need to speak', because else we will lose. Or just trying to keep people playing the game and not losing their focus, basically. - James

To be the RBG leader you [have to] make sure that people do as I say and do what they're supposed to do...They have to play in the right way. That's why the leader is there: to call what is supposed to happen, if we're supposed to push or not supposed to push, to call the tactical parts and tell people like 'this is what's gonna happen now'. - Fredrik

One respondent, Adam, spoke of competence in tactics as one of the most important qualities as an RBG leader:

He will call the tactics that people are meant to do throughout the BG and he will also be able to call other tactics depending on what the other team is doing. The other people have a responsibility to listen to the leader and do whatever he says because if the people do what the leader does and says, the team is gonna end up winning. As long as everyone does what they're supposed to do. - Adam

When speaking about tactics respondents tended to get very specific about what tactical maneuvers they tended to employ as RBG leader. As mentioned above tactics refer to maneuvers in the present moment as part of a larger, overall plan. The second category of responsibility as RBG leader therefore is tactical maneuvering.

The third part of the RBG leaders' responsibilities has been coded as Human Asset Management. Human asset management has several subcategories which will be further explained as this section of the paper progresses.

By now we have established that the RBG leader role includes a wide array of responsibilities. This section will cover the list of responsibilities that pertain to managing the team's ten players and thus enhancing the team's performance in a rated battleground. The first noteworthy category within human aspect management is *fostering a winning environment*, exemplified by the following quote:

Yeah, well being the leader of the group clearly you need to be more vocal and you need to be talking, give positive reinforcement and such, and [...] even if you get pissed off you don't need to let everybody know how you feel. You need to keep the spirit up and keep everybody going and playing at their best. - Martin

In an additional example of the RBG leader fostering a winning environment, Jimmy mentioned that their team usually take breaks between games, allowing players to maintain focus during extended gaming sessions:

Well, usually when we have a negative event, maybe we lose a game and somebody's really upset, we start by taking like a 10 or 15 minute break. People get to go to the bathroom, get some water, get some coke, or whatever they want. Then if there's somebody who's really really being a problem I usually jump into a different voice channel, ask them to come with me and I'll talk to them, figure out what's wrong and try to solve the problem. - Jimmy

Jimmy's example portrays very clearly some of the different responsibilities of the RBG leader: not only does he give players time to take breaks in order to keep the team focused, but also trying to remedy any problems his players may have. Ali gives another example of how the responsibilities of the RBG leader can be portrayed:

And if they have any question I can explain it to them before. I mean, I'll do everything for them. I'm pretty much like a servant. I try to give them everything they want, they need. But I still make the orders. - Ali

Yeah, [communication is] really important, yeah. I try to do it for the best. I also tell them 'if you don't understand the tactics, please feel free to ask any questions', I always do that. And sometimes some people ask, it's not often, but it's clear. They also respond 'it's clear, I understand'. So, I always put that bit in the end 'if you have any questions blabla'. I also try to put myself in the RBG so I don't have to do as much, I don't have to play as actively. I do this for a reason, in order to concentrate on the tactics and to do maneuvers and depending on the situation in the battleground. So I always try to have a clear communication, even though I'm not using TS or Skype, sometimes I've been close to 2k without using TS and such, just writing. - Johan

As shown by the above quote, communication plays a central role in RBG leadership and a team potential for success a team. As explained earlier, many teams use voice communication

software such as Teamspeak to communicate while playing RBG's. On the topic of RBG leadership, many respondents spoke of the importance of communicating with their team. The communication can be divided into two parts; the tactical/strategical and the personal.

The tactical/strategical communication includes informing the team of the overall strategy to be employed in the game, conveying real-time tactical maneuvers and changes to the game-plan, making target-calls and announcements asking for specific tasks to be carried out. The second part on the other hand, personal communication, is a key aspect of human asset management. Many RBG leaders prefer to keep the voice channel reserved for tactical communication during games and instead leave conflict resolution to be dealt with between games.

Well if it happens in-game you just need to like, be the loudest and say 'we'll talk about it after the game and not now because we have to win now' or at least not lose and look like the worst players on earth. So hold your dignity and discuss it after the game. - David

In times where conflict does arise within the RBG team, the leader is the player people turn to in order to resolve the situation before it can affect the outcome of the game.

[...] but of course when a conflict does arise, which it eventually always does, it's important for the leader to step up and take charge of the situation. - Martin

When conflict cannot be resolved the RBG leader must take further actions to ensure that his team will continue winning games. This brings us to the second category within human asset management: *talent acquisition and management*.

As a leader there are few assets with which to win games, except for the players themselves. The players may be viewed as assets which must be managed, and in some cases micromanaged, in order to foster an environment that will allow the players to perform well and win games.

It's basically the people you choose that make the environment right, so you have to have the right people that won't flame each other and that will understand each other. [...] By inviting the right people. - Douglas

Respondents explained that when building their RBG team they try to see what type of people they're dealing with. The group will perform better if there is synergy between people, if the individuals come together and play as a team, rather than as ten individual players. One respondent, Douglas, gave the perfect example of this:

If I need 3 healers for my RBG and I have 10 to choose from from my Friends List, I would choose not only by class to get the best heals possible, but I know that this guy can play with him as well as he can play with this guy, but the lineup would be worse. I would still choose the person synergy over the class synergy. So yeah. And yeah that's it. - Douglas

Not only must the RBG leader bring together ten players, including himself, to set aside their differences and play as a team, but he must also play matchmaker. He must in what is often a short matter of time decide what type of people he is dealing with and judge whether or not these people are suited to work together.

Talent acquisition and management includes not only the recruitment process and building of the team, but also the responsibility of the RBG leader to remove and replace players who are not contributing in the desired manner. This is a form of conflict resolution, which in turn is one of the ways to help foster a winning environment for the team:

Managing [conflict] would be either to tell people to just be quiet until the game is finished and then after the game either replace the bad sources when it comes to them being someone you easily could replace with someone who doesn't have this negative vibe. - Adam

The above section illustrates the many sides of human asset management; building a functioning group with communication and mutual understanding, keeping team spirit up, keeping your players focused and most importantly - creating a team environment that enables each player's best performance.

In summary we have found three areas of responsibility in the role of RBG leader. These three areas we have coded as strategic planning, tactical maneuvering and human asset management. While respondents tended to perform these tasks in different ways respondents similarly spoke of the expectation to perform these tasks in the role of RBG leader.

Performing the role of rated battleground leader

To this point the analysis has dealt with the actor's understanding of the responsibilities belonging to the role of RBG leader using the chosen literature from Berger and Luckmann. As such, the analysis to this point has dealt with the actor's understanding of the *what* pertaining to the role.

Erving Goffman became the first sociologist to study face-to-face interaction using the metaphor of theatrical acting and stagecraft to illustrate the methods employed by the actor in presenting the self in a social context. Using the dramaturgical perspective employed by Goffman allows for analysis not only of the *what* of a role, but also the *how*. Combining the views of both Goffman and Hochschild allows for an comprehensive analysis of the rules of *how* to perform a role, both in terms of behavior and affect.

While the work of both sociologists deal with face-to-face interaction it is the opinion of the authors that there are aspects of it which may still be used for analysis of interaction through modern mediums of communication, such as VoIP software communication.

Asking respondents whether or not they felt it was important to communicate competence in their role of RBG leader resulted in some interesting findings. As players do not interact face-to-face but instead over VoIP software called Teamspeak (TS), they emphasized the importance of quickly making members of their team aware of the role they intended to play using Teamspeak as the stage on which they perform this act.

Yeah I absolutely think so, with every team playing or leading RBGs you can show more competence. In choosing the right words, or having the solution for every problem you're up against. I think that's important, absolutely. That the guys know they can trust me and what I say and they just do it because they know it works most of the time. - Conan

Before the game starts I just talk to the whole group with the TS and there are some ABC's, I say that everyone has to listen to me, everyone has to be vocal, everyone who doesn't wanna follow me has to leave the group and stuff like that. I make it clear before the RBG starts. Therefore they will follow me the first game at least, and if it works they say "alright you are a good leader I'll shut up. - Richard

In the quotes above respondents speak about how they use Teamspeak as a medium through which they may project an impression onto their audience, effectively signaling the role they intend to play and their competence in that role. In this way the RBG leader influences the way others define the situation, correctly labeling him as the RBG leader and garnering the responsive treatment customary for that type of actor.

Data collected from interviews with RBG leaders show recurrent patterns of expressive behavior employed by actors in this role, which may be evidence of a personal front. As actors are not physically present before one another we may expect them to rely on cues such as intonation, word-selection, and other cues derived from speech.

I try to be as calm as possible and as objective as possible. I try to say 'do this, do this', even though we're down with many points and if someone does a mistake I'm trying to say 'do this, do this' and not blame someone. - Ali

But the more fun that people have the better the team is going to play as long as they keep to the strictness and do the strategic and objective game-play. - Fredrik

It's probably going to be that the players who are not leading [...] will expect him to be a bit calm. - James

Above we find three quite typical answers from respondents when asked how they feel they are to act in their role. In looking for recurring themes of expressive behavior we find that respondents mention the words "calm", "objective", "strict" and "vocal" nearly every time they speak about how an RBG leader should act. Respondents report acting in this manner in the beginning of an interaction with the intent to function as a personal front which signals the role the actor intends to play as well as his competence and ability to do so. However, components of a front pertaining to setting could not be identified as actors are not in each other's physical presence.

As evident, first impressions are very important in influencing how others come to define a situation. However, once a situation is defined it is not immune to being redefined, and actors often make use of expressive behaviors as an interaction progresses, dramatically highlighting performance which otherwise may go unnoticed.

Once again, as the interactions of interest to this study happen over the internet we must rely on respondents vocal cues to find evidence of dramatic realization. Beneath answers from respondents Andreas and David serve as examples of this. Andreas explains how he often will increase his expressive behaviors in his role as RBG leader when playing with new people, dramatically highlighting parts of his performance.

I give out strategy before the game but I also tell the strategy during the game and give the tactics during the game, in voice chat. 'do that, do that'. Yeah, let's say if I invite 9 new people that I don't know, I would be like super, like a leader all the time. But if I know these people since before, I'm friends with them then of course I'm gonna joke around a bit. But when the game starts I'm gonna be all business. -Johan

David on the other hand provides a different example of dramatic realization. By expressing himself without a moment's hesitation he impresses his audience, signaling to them both his competence in his role as well as making his actions significant and meaningful to those who observe him.

You have to have the guts to make decisions in a split second and make calls that people learn to follow and if you succeed the first 9 times they will follow on the 10th. - Jesper

The analysis in this section so far has dealt with the actors' expressive behavior, and the methods used to impress the audience. The reader with a keen eye may have noticed from earlier quotes provided that respondents often reference an interplay with members of their team combining to form the dynamics detailed in this section. As evidenced by the following quotes there is a relationship between the different roles on the team:

As a leader, as I said before, I would give out information, be objective, tell them if they need something, be clear with the information and make sure people follow my orders. When I'm not the leader, I would just stay back and listen, try to follow as best as I can. That's pretty much it. I wouldn't flame and stuff like that .. If he makes a bad decision I'm not gonna like insult him and such, if you know what I mean. But if the leader doesn't lead at all then I jump in and lead. - Ali

That's what it comes down to. The RBG leader making a call and people following it. That's not saying I'm seeing everything and doing everything, but I'm taking all the information that comes in through all the 10 people that call out stuff, sorting it out in-game and making the decisions off of that. - Douglas

Throughout the analysis we have seen quotes where respondents reference interlocking performances between the RBG leader and other members of the team. In order for the RBG leader to fulfil the role in question and the behaviors implied with it, others must take on roles with behaviors which result in multiple actors combining to create a single routine - on where the RBG leader leads, and the other members follow.

Respondents consistently reference this when speaking of their own role. Not only do they have certain actions and behaviors implied in their role, but they expect certain behaviors from members of their team which lie in relation to the role of the RBG-leader. For the leader to lead, the others must follow.

When I'm not the leader I don't talk, even if I'm a good leader in my opinion or some humble opinions of other players, I'm trying not to be too vocal. I'm trying to help the guys if I see that the game plan is failing or they don't get the game plan but I don't, I try to not piss the actual RBG leader off. I don't want to do his job, if it's his job. because I don't want people to do this when I'm the leader, so I don't do it when others are leader. - Arnold

When asking respondents if they had experienced situations where other players questioned their abilities in the role of RBG leader most respondents tended to recognize this situation. One respondent, Conan, spoke of a situation where another player criticized him due to what that player felt were strategical mistakes on the part of the RBG leader. As detailed previously in the analysis one of the expectations on the actor in the role of RBG leader is to formulate the strategic plan for the team. This player, seeing a strategic mistake on the part of the RBG leader, interpreted this as the RBG leader attempting to convey the possessions of qualities he indeed did not possess.

I was playing rogue and he was playing rogue as well, and he just said that my spec sucked and that I don't know how to play rogue, and so yeah. First off he questioned my experience as a player, and then when the RBG turned into a disaster, we just lost in AB, he said things like I don't know nothing about the game and how I could start a group like this and that I'm boosted and things like that. - Conan

Another respondent found himself in a similar situation as a result of expressing himself without confidence. While uncertainty in one's decision does not necessarily reflect a lack of

competence in a role, other players may have seen this as symbolizing something not intended to be projected by the RBG leader.

It's happened a couple of times, but like, before I started leading the really high rating RBGs, it was, I was pretty unconfident in myself and it would happen. People would be like 'what the hell is the leader doing'. - George

Expressive behavior on the part of the RBG leader may be unintentional, and in sometimes where intentional it may be misunderstood by observers. This type of misrepresentation on the part of the actor may cause to observers defining the situation in a way not intended by the actor, leading to possible conflict and loss of trust in the RBG leaders abilities to effectively play his part.

While respondents most often did say they did not feel there was anything they could do to avoid this, we do find striking similarities in respondents' reported behaviour. Perhaps actors, while feeling they have few ways to prevent this from happening, do indeed prevent it by conforming to the expectations on their role and by avoiding acting outside of the boundaries of the role.

So far we have dealt with the dramaturgical methods employed by the actor in order to influence observers definition of the situation. However, according to Hochschild this presents a limited view of a role performance. In the next part of the analysis we focus instead on the affective aspects of the role of RBG leader using the concepts of feeling rules and emotion work introduced by Arlie Russell Hochschild.

As many of the questioned posed during the interviews conducted for the purpose of this study revolve around expectations it seems only natural we focus on Hochschild's 'expect to feel'-rule in the following section of the paper.

The feeling rules that pertain to the role of RBG leader showed themselves to be not subjective to each player, but rather intersubjective between RBG leaders and their players. In Goffmanian terms, the 'expect to feel' rules of RBG leadership have become a working consensus. While many of the respondents had their own ideas of what their players might expect from them in regards to emotional display, there were several recurring themes in the

interviews. The RBG leader is expected to stay calm at all times and to not show ‘negative’ emotions, such as anger or frustration towards his or her team:

[Players] will expect [the RBG leader] to be calm. But if they know me they will know that I'm not going to be calm if they make a wrong move or do something that fucks up for the rest of team, because I don't respect that in my groups. [...] If I have a higher experience than them they will probably expect me to get emotional, maybe in a negative way. But if they are higher they will either - I don't know, it's very hard. It's really up to the player. But they know that I will react to things emotionally, definitely. Because they know that the leader always wants to win. - Fredrik

In the above quote Fredrik admits that the expectation is for him to be calm and have a display of positive emotions when leading the group. The following quotes from James’ and Ali’s interviews further support this claim:

The absolute best is to be positive, especially when people do positive things in the battleground. It’s always good to be positive. There's nothing bad about being positive, but it's not realistic to say that you're always gonna be positive. [...] if someone does something that is not meant to happen, unless you make a mistake or a big mistake - of course humans can make mistakes - but you don't make mistakes over and over again. So in the beginning it might be like ‘oh fuck it, we'll win the game anyway, it's fine’. That's the reaction that everyone aims for, but when it comes down to a close game or if you're facing someone that you know, more close feelings are starting to hit you and that will escalate in you maybe being a bit negative towards the actions of the player. - James

I actually am more selective and I try to be less emotional or angry when stressful situations occur. I try to be as calm as possible and as objective as possible. I try to say ‘do this, do this’, even though we're down with many points and if someone does a mistake I'm trying to say ‘do this, do this’ and not blame someone or show someone I'm their boss. I never do that as a leader, because I think that it's unnecessary energy. - Ali

These quotes all mention the RBG leader being, or trying to be, calm and positive in his role, and in accordance with Hochschild’s theory we believe that calmness in RBG leadership has been idealized by the players. Knowing that the ‘expect to feel’ and ‘should ideally feel’ often coincide, this idealization of the expectation on RBG leaders to remain calm during their time leading the team then also becomes the ‘should ideally feel’.

Much like any other rule, feeling rules can be broken. This is true even in the setting of RBG leadership, as exemplified by Fredrik. The expectation is for him to be calm but he has no intention of staying calm if one of his players make too many mistakes or risks losing the game. He acknowledges the expectation but tells us that he will break the rule if his players don't perform.

While the RBG leader must act in accordance with this set of feeling rules in place, they are also expected to perform, to a varying extent, emotion work. When discussing emotion work it is important to keep in mind that emotion work can be done not only by you to yourself, but through interaction also by you to others and by others to you.

Many of the ways in which emotion work takes place are bound to face-to-face interaction, and may therefore not be applicable to the RBG scenario. This has rendered the expressive technique inapplicable in this situation. The bodily technique will in this study only represent the level of voice used in communication, as the RBG leader lacks power over any other physical , communicative modalities. The cognitive is where we will find the majority of emotion work done by RBG leaders simply because of the many ways applicable to a voice-only interaction scenario. One of the recurring subjects of emotion work is conflict resolution:

[...] but of course when a conflict does arise, which it eventually always does, it's important for the leader to step up and take charge of the situation. - Martin

The undesired, yet present, feelings of conflict and negativity must be suppressed in order for the team to continue functioning. As has been stated in previous parts of this study, many of the respondents answered in similar fashion to that of Martin, implying it is the RBG leader's responsibility to resolve conflict.

When managing the team the RBG leader must also suppress his own negative emotions in such a way that they do not affect the team in an undesirable manner:

Oh yeah definitely. As soon as someone does something wrong you can't immediately scream at them or get totally mad and delete them from *Battle.net*. Or just because they

don't take you this day, because someone was there before you. I think that's totally unacceptable. It always needs to be calm and collected in a way, but yet demanding.

- David

While many of the respondents mentioned suppressing negative emotions and resolving conflict, one of the respondents brought to light a different type of emotion work. Entertaining the team while they're waiting for games, a form of promoting a positive attitude and winning environment:

[...] and of course there's some people that are really quiet and only say the stuff they have to say, like if they're CC'd or they saw anything I didn't see but they won't talk the rest of the time. They'll be muted between games and yeah I think you need keep entertaining the people. It's a lot about entertaining and seriously, you need to have fun in queues. Because if you're on high MMR's then you have 20-30 minutes queues from time to time. - Jesper

There are a great deal of responsibilities that the RBG leader is expected to deal with while also playing his own character and steering the team towards victory. Many of them strategic and game-specific, while many others pertain to managing the players themselves. In lieu of the feeling rules that exist in an RBG setting it is suffice to say that managing the team involves several tasks pertaining to influencing other people's affect: conflict resolution, suppressing negative emotion, providing positive reinforcement and even entertaining your teammates.

As dealt with in the first part of the analysis actor's have a socially constructed understanding of the implications of a role, the responsibilities and tasks to be performed as well as how they are to be performed. In performing a role the actor attempts to control others impression of him in order to garner wanted responses from them. Despite the interactions studied not taking place in a face-to-face manner actor's still find ways to communicate their role to others using the modalities of communication available to them.

In analyzing respondents reported behavior in the role of RBG leader we find certain commonly used methods of acting such as the use of fronts, dramatic realization and team-performances to communicate the actor's role as well as his competence and possession of the qualities necessary to fulfil the role of RBG leader.

While the actor is expected to modify their outward expression in the role, they also conform to rules of behavior in terms of affect. Respondents display an understanding and expectation to adhere to feeling rules as well as the influence the feelings of others.

Discussion

The theoretical tools for analysis chosen in this study are worth a moment's discussion. Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* deals with the subject of knowledge from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. As such, it has served its purpose well in analysing an actor's understanding, knowledge if you will, of a role and the responsibilities implied in it.

It was our belief that continuing to build on the symbolic interactionist track using concepts introduced by Goffman and Hochschild would allow for an comprehensive analysis of the role, both in terms of the actor's knowledge of it as well as an analysis of the performance of the role in terms of behavior and affect.

As the role of interest in this study, the role of rated battleground leader, is one is performed specifically within the game World of Warcraft the role performance is mediated through the actor's in-game character and most often over VoIP software, Teamspeak. As such the interactions studied are of a different character than those which take place face-to-face, lacking certain communication modalities available only to an actor while in the physical presence of others.

Therefore, in applying the chosen literature written by Goffman and Hochschild for analysis of these interactions, certain dramaturgical concepts did not seem to be transferrable to interactions over these VoIP software such as Teamspeak. However, many did. Both Goffman's book and the Hochschild article were written in a period before these sorts of interactions existed. Granted, interactions before the inception of the internet were primarily of a face-to-face nature, but not all.

Written letters and telephones are examples of non face-to-face interactions, however they differ drastically from the interactions which have been the focus of this report. A written letter or an email certainly does allow for actors to create meaning above and beyond the words produced. However these interactions are more limited than the relevant interactions in this study. The availability of voice-communication allows actors to employ another communication modality, as well as the ability to communicate instantaneously.

Understanding interactions taking place on modern technological platforms therefore requires a different approach than traditional platforms for interaction.

The authors of the study find that it has proven to be an interesting exercise in identifying these dramaturgical concepts which evidence themselves in interactions through online-communication mediums as they do in face-to-face interaction, as well as seeing which concepts are only applicable in face-to-face interaction.

As discussed in earlier sections there have been many studies done on the game World of Warcraft, garnering some very interesting findings. Much of the previous research has focused on two social roles within World of Warcraft: raid leaders and guild masters. As we, the authors of this study, have a lot of experience with this game we found it surprising that no studies had been done on the role of RBG leader.

In conducting this study we have found that the role of rated battleground leader implies the performance of certain tasks which we have coded as strategic planning, tactical maneuvering and human asset management. Interviews with respondents who have a vast experience in performing this role resulted in the finding that these actors all detailed these tasks as being implied in the role.

Furthermore in accordance with the purpose of this study we sought to identify concepts of dramaturgical concepts of acting as well as the responsibilities implied in the role of RBG leader. This resulted in finding that actors often, just as in face-to-face interaction in everyday life, employed certain strategies to project a desired definition of the situation to other members of the team. Actors tended to put on a front, behaving in a strict, objective and cold manner in order to quickly establish the role they intended to play.

Continuing to use their voice as the primary modality for communication players often also employed dramatic realization in order to highlight their continued performance of the role, as well as their doing so in an effective and competent manner.

Actors also often spoke of expecting other members of the team to respect- and adhere to the institutional order. Phases of interlocking performances by the RBG leader and the other members of the team are evidence of team performances being utilized to more effectively

manage the definition of the situation as understood by all members of the team. In the analysis we also illustrated certain actors' experiences when interactions did not go as intended - in not performing the role in a manner which effectively projected the desired definition of the situation certain respondents detailed the consequences of their actions being misrepresented.

Rules pertaining to expression of emotions and affect also evidenced themselves in interviews with respondents. Not only is there an apparent set of feeling rules in the role of RBG leader such as acting in a calm albeit strict manner, but there is also considerable emotion work to be performed. Many respondents felt it was their 'job' as RBG leader to manage conflict and maintain a positive team spirit.

As no previous studies have been done on this role it was our intention to study this role and produce material which would allow the reader to gain an understanding of the implications of this role in the most comprehensive manner possible. It is our hope that this report may pique the interest of our peers and serve as the foundation for future studies on this role.

It is our belief that individuals who engage in the performance of the role of RBG leader display skills and qualities which may be transferrable to working life. In fact, these individuals partake in an activity where they develop intricate strategic and tactical plans as well as manage and lead teams of 10 people. In other words we believe these individuals are, in their playing the game World of Warcraft as RBG leader, practising and refining general leadership qualities.

Future studies on the role of RBG leader pertaining to leadership and development of real-life transferrable skills are likely to be fruitful and lead to very interesting findings. As evidenced by the findings in the analysis section, the actors which we have studied are taking upon themselves a leadership role. However, this leadership role is performed in an online setting, which as illustrated in this report is of a different nature than more traditional leadership settings. Perhaps new sociological models need to be created to deal with leadership in settings such as MMORPG's.

If indeed this role does function as a platform for developing skills in the fields of management and leadership that would carry implications in the field of education. Perhaps

games may be used as a platform to teach specific skills to children and adults with learning- and attention difficulties in ordinary learning environments. However, this study has not dealt directly with leadership and development of skills but rather we have attempted to lay out the groundwork for future academic research.

It is our hope that this report may serve to give the reader an understanding of the role of RBG leader without having to spend an inordinate amount of time exploring the game. In the interest of intellectual honesty we therefore do not feel it is our place to conclusively answer whether or not actors performing the role of RBG leader do indeed develop these skills. We hope that future studies may further examine this.

References

- Allport, G. W. (1985). The historical background of social psychology (Vol. 1). *The handbook of social psychology*.
- Amichai-Hamburger, Y., Wainapel, G., & Fox, S. (2002). " On the Internet no one knows I'm an introvert": Extroversion, neuroticism, and Internet interaction. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 5(2), 125-128.
- Berg, B. L., Lune, H., & Lune, H. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (Vol. 5). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (No. 10). Penguin UK.
- Blizzard Entertainment (2016a). Rated Battlegrounds - PvP Ladders. Retrieved from: <http://eu.battle.net/wow/en/pvp/leaderboards/rbg#page=101>
- Blizzard Entertainment (2016b). World of Warcraft: Warlords of Draenor: *News*. Retrieved from: <http://eu.battle.net/wow/en/>
- Ducheneaut, N., & Moore, R. J. (2004). The social side of gaming: a study of interaction patterns in a massively multiplayer online game. In *Proceedings of the 2004 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 360-369). ACM.
- Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., & Moore, R. J. (2006a). Alone together?: exploring the social dynamics of massively multiplayer online games. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in computing systems* (pp. 407-416). ACM.
- Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., & Moore, Robert J. (2006b). Building an MMO with Mass Appeal: A Look at Gameplay in World of Warcraft. *Games and Culture* 1(4). 281-317.
- Ducheneaut, N., Yee, N., Nickell, E., & Moore, Robert J. (2007). The Life and Death of Online Gaming Communities: A Look at Guilds in World of Warcraft. *CHI 2007 Proceedings*. 839-848.
- Forskningsrådet, H. S. (1996). Forskningsetiska principer i humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning. Retrieved from: <http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf>
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Goh, S. H., & Wasko, M. M. (2009). Leadership in MMOGS: Emergent and transformational leadership candidates. *AMCIS 2009 Proceedings*, 538.

Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American journal of sociology*, 551-575.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.

Holt, Nicholas A. (2011). *Deep Involvement in the World of Warcraft: An 'Elfnography'*.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Sage publications.

Nardi, B., & Harris, J. (2006). Strangers and friends: Collaborative play in World of Warcraft. In *Proceedings of the 2006 20th anniversary conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 149-158). ACM.

Prax, P. (2010). *Leadership style in World of Warcraft guilds*. Uppsala: Uppsala University.

Williams, J. Patrick., Kirschner, David., & Suhaimi-Broder, Zahirah. (2014). Structural Roles in Massively Multiplayer Online Games: A case study of guild and raid leaders in World of Warcraft. *Symbolic Interaction and New Social Media: Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. 43, 121-142.

Yee, N. (2006a). Life as a guild leader. *The Daedalus Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.nickyee.com/daedalus/archives/print/001516.php>

Yee, N. (2006b). The Labor of Fun: How Video Games Blur the Boundaries of Work and Play. *Games and Culture* 1(1) 68-71.

Yee, N. & Bailenson, J. N. (2007). The Proteus effect: The effect of transformed self-representation on behavior. *Human Communication Research* 33(3). 271-290.

Yee, N., Bailenson, Jeremy N., Ducheneaut, N. (2009). The Proteus effect: Implications of transformed digital self-representation on online and offline behavior. *Communication Research* 36(2). 285-312.

Appendix

Ethics and privacy statement

Thank you for your interest in participating in our study. The study is part of a bachelor's thesis under the Institution of Sociology at Uppsala University. Our thesis supervisor is Kalle Berggren and can be reached for any questions regarding the study at kalle.berggren@soc.uu.se. We are committed to working with high ethical standards and are obliged to obtain informed consent. If you decide to participate in the study you have the right to stop at any time regardless of reason. Before the interview begins you will be given a short explanation of the interview process, its purpose and subject.

The research team is committed to respecting your human dignity, integrity, freedom and participation and ensure diligent work to avoid exposing you to injury or severe burden. None of your personal data will be collected and we promise to respect your privacy and anonymity, both on- and offline. Collected voice data will be treated confidentially and destroyed once transcribed to text.

Both members of the researcher team, Karl and Gregory, will be working with transcription and analysis of the collected data. During the interview only one of the researchers will be conducting the interview.

Once again we appreciate your interest in participating in our study. If you still wish to participate please reply to this message with "I am over 18 years of age and consent to participating in the study". We remind you again that you may stop at anytime during the interview if you feel uncomfortable or for any other reason.

Interview guide

Formalities

Hi and thank you for participating in our interview. This interview is a part of our bachelor's thesis in social psychology. We are studying the social role of RBG Leaders. The interview will take about 45 minutes, and once again, you have the right to end the interview at any given time, should you want to, without any negative consequences for you. The interview will be transcribed and anonymized so that none of the information is traceable back to you. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

Introduction

1. I understand that a battleground is an objectives oriented PvP environment where two teams of between 10 and 40 players face-off. Can you tell me about the difference between a battleground and a rated battleground?
2. Do you feel like strategy is a big part of playing rated battlegrounds?
3. Tell me about how you play an RBG, where do you find a team and what roles do you need to be filled?
4. What responsibilities do you have as an RBG leader?

Questions

- So you have a lot of experience in the role of RBG leader. To my understanding this role seems to carry greater-than-average responsibilities. Could you tell me more about this role and what it means to be the RBG leader?
- Before you begin an RBG session, how do people know who the RBG leader is?
- What qualities and behaviors do you feel other players expect from a good RBG leader?
- Do you feel it is important to communicate that your competence as an RBG leader?
- How do you communicate this to the team?
- Do you feel that your team expects you to behave in a certain way as an RBG leader? How?
- Knowing how people expect you to behave, how does this influence your behavior?
- Do you feel people expect you to be selective in your emotional expressions as RBG leader?
- What emotional expressions do you feel people expect you to express in the role of RBG leader?
- Do you feel there are any emotional expressions that are inappropriate in the role of RBG leader?
- How do you manage a situation where conflict or negativity arises in the team?
- Can you tell me about a time where this happened and how you managed it?
- How would you manage a situation where someone questioned you in your role of RBG leader?
- Do you behave in any way to prevent situations like these from happening?
- How do you manage a situation where everything is going well in a game?

- Do you feel it is your responsibility as RBG leader to manage these situations and foster a positive team environment?
- How do you manage a situation where another player is playing poorly or not following the game plan?
- How important is having good skills in managing people for being a good RBG leader?
- Do you feel it is challenging leading and managing a 10-player team while also playing your own character in the game?
- Does leading an RBG sometimes feel frustrating?
- How do you manage negative emotions in your role as RBG leader?
- Do you feel others expect you to suppress negative emotions as an RBG leader?
- Do you find that you sometimes ventilate your frustrations to another player privately, for example through whisper or a private voice-chat?
- Does doing the work that comes with being an RBG leader come naturally to you or does it just “come with the job”?
- In what ways do you behave differently when playing an RBG as RBG leader as opposed to as a member of the team with less responsibility?
- Is there anything you feel is important about the role of RBG leader that we may have missed and you would like to add?

Then we would like to extend our thanks to you for giving us your time and participating in our study!